

## City of Blue Ridge

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480 West First Street • Blue Ridge, Georgia • (706) 632-2091

City of Blue Ridge  
Town Hall Meeting Minutes  
City Hall  
480 West First Street  
March 27, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donna Whitener  
Council Members Robbie Cornelius,  
Nathan Fitts, Kenneth Gaddis,  
Rhonda Haight and Harold Herndon  
City Clerk Kelsey Ledford

1) Call Meeting to Order:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to call the meeting to order. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 4-0, Council Member Harold Herndon was not present at the beginning of the meeting. Motion carried.

2) Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance:

Council Member Robbie Cornelius offered a word of prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) Council Meeting Rules of Procedures (to be presented at each meeting by the City Clerk):

Mayor Donna Whitener stated a copy of the rules were available at the Council Desk and that the City would be following the rules and time restrictions during the town hall meeting.

Council Member Harold Herndon arrived at this time.

4) Georgia Cities Week Activities:

Mayor Donna Whitener briefly described the Mayor's essay contest and explained that she has opened the contest up to every grade level and that each grade level will have a winner. She mentioned visiting the schools in the area.

She then continued by announcing that Advanced Disposal has agreed to donate two containers again this year and that she needed assistance confirming the locations for placement. She explained that this would be for yard clippings and clean up. If trash is collected from the roadsides by groups signed up for Georgia Cities Week, the trash can be placed in the City Hall dumpster. The Council decided to place the containers at the Farmer's Market and the City Hall. Mayor Donna Whitener also mentioned that the Street Department would pick up yard clippings from the roadside if scheduled on two Mondays in the month of April.

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The allotted time limit expired. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to allow additional time. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 5-0. Motion carried.

Council Member Rhonda Haight suggested continuing yard clean up in the fall so that leaves do not stop up the City storm drains.

Mayor Donna Whitener asked if the Council wanted to do a mini health fair downtown for Georgia Mountain Health, the Humane Society and the Red Cross. The Council had no objections to this suggestion.

She continued to discuss planters on East Main Street, and that the Fannin County High School FFA group has offered to help with the beautification. Cesar Martinez suggested that the City would need about 30 planters and he offered to assist in deciding on placement.

Cesar Martinez and Pam Fink proposed placing event banners on East and West Main Streets. He explained that funding could come from the City, Chamber of Commerce and Blue Ridge Business Association. Ms. Fink thought that the cost would be approx. \$35.00 per sign. Mr. Martinez told the Council that the City would need to purchase the hardware for hanging the signs. The Mayor agreed to speak with Jan Hackett with the Chamber to decide on the City funds from hotel/motel to be contributed to this proposal. The conversation concluded with Mr. Martinez agreeing to present a proposal to the Mayor and Council via email.

5) Community Development Block Grant:

Mayor Donna Whitener briefly discussed the current CDBG grant of \$500,000 and that the project construction is to start April 5<sup>th</sup>. She continued to say that she would like to apply for another CDBG in the area of Ada Street in the same area as the Kissel's property. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis gave a brief status of the City's review of the situation involving the Kissel's property and he informed the public that the Council was taking this issue seriously. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis explained that the City was working with Carter & Sloope to improve the flooding issues in the entire area of Ada Street. The allotted time limit expired, Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to disregard the rules and procedures for the duration of the Town Hall meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kenneth Gaddis. The Council voted 5-0. Motion carried. Mayor Donna Whitener asked the Council if they were interested in becoming a Water First Community as recommended by Matt Smith with Carter & Sloope. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis announced that Carter & Sloope was also actively working on the issue at the Blue Ridge Inn.

6) Farmer's Market:

Mayor Donna Whitener discussed the work that she thought needed to be done at the Farmer's Market.

Council Member Kenneth Gaddis asked the public for input in regards to the Farmer's Market. Joe Webb suggested using the Farmer's Market property for a stand alone library or selling the property for a hotel or mixed use. He also stated his concerns in regards to the poor lighting in

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the area of the Farmer's Market and Blue Ridge Community Theater. He stated that an event center was not a business for the City.

Council Member Rhonda Haight expressed that she would like to see the area of the Farmer's Market developed into an art district somehow. Council Member Nathan Fitts stated he would like to see it utilized as a farmer's market. Council Member Rhonda Haight mentioned that art is a common use in this area of town because of the drive in, canoe shop, and community theater. Council Member Nathan Fitts expressed his interest in making it an art district but questioned the costs associated with doing so. Brianne Collar spoke in favor of the art district idea. Mayor Donna Whitener reminded the Council that Jim Sisson was interested in leasing the Farmer's Market property. Brian Pritchard spoke in favor of the City leasing the property to Mr. Sisson.

It was suggested that a committee be formed to brainstorm potential uses for the Farmer's Market. Jan Hackett and Gene Holcomb were named as individuals who should be selected for this committee if it is formed.

7) Downtown Restrooms:

Mayor Donna Whitener announced that the City had a meeting with DCA (Department of Community Affairs) the following day at 10:00 a.m., to discuss the Welcome Center and Restroom Facility. The Council discussed portable, stand-alone restroom stations to be purchased for use during construction and then moved to the free parking lot after the project is completed. The price of the restroom station was discussed. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that it would cost \$50,000 to purchase vs. \$2,500 per month for the rental. The facility plans were discussed. It was decided that Council Members Nathan Fitts and Rhonda Haight attend the meeting with DCA.

8) City Pool:

The Mayor, Council and Tony Byrd discussed the condition of the pool. Some testing of the pool condition is to be done in the coming days and Mr. Byrd is to bring the cost to repair to the next council meeting. They continued to discuss uses of the pool, the possibility of a splash pad, grants available and the possibility of having a joint pool with the County. City resident, Larry Versyn suggested that the City sell the Farmer's Market and use the money for the pool repairs/upgrades. Joe Webb suggested that the City join forces with the County to collectively provide one pool to the entire community.

Council Member Kenneth Gaddis expressed that he would like for the City to apply for the Tony Hawk grant for a skate park.

It was suggested that the County provide a community pool and that the City provide a community skate park, splash pad and nature trail. Zoning, Land Development and Project Manager Jeff Stewart is to organize a meeting with the County and Rec Center to discuss pool options.

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9) Public Comment:

Joe Webb asked to speak on his topics of concerns. He asked the Mayor and Council to look into HB170. He finished his speech with, "if Blue Ridge fails, Fannin County fails".

Brian Pritchard questioned the Council about pool negotiations.

10) Adjournment:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

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Mayor Donna Whitener

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City Clerk Kelsey Ledford

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Approved