

## City of Blue Ridge

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

City of Blue Ridge  
Council and Downtown Development Authority  
Joint Meeting Minutes  
City Hall  
480 West First Street  
September 12, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donna Whitener  
Council Members Robbie Cornelius,  
Rhonda Haight and Harold Herndon  
Council Member and DDA Vice Chairman Nathan Fitts  
City Clerk Kelsey Ledford  
Zoning, Land Development and Project Manager Jeff Stewart  
Attorney Adam Rozen  
DDA Chairman Cesar Martinez  
DDA Treasurer and Secretary Jay Hamilton  
DDA Board Members Brandon Lofton, Nichole Potzauf,  
Gene Holcombe and Susan Catron

- 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 Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.
- 2) FY2019 Millage Rate Hearing (Second Public Hearing):  
Attorney Adam Rozen opened the second public hearing for the FY2019 Millage Rate. There being no comments, Rozen closed the public hearing.
- 3) FY2019 Millage Rate Ordinance (First Reading):  
Attorney Adam Rozen gave an intro of the proposed FY2019 Millage Rate Ordinance, read the first paragraph of the ordinance as well as each section title.
- 4) Welcome statement/introduction:  
Downtown Development Authority Board Chairman, Cesar Martinez introduced himself and the other board members. He also confirmed which committee each board member was on.
- 5) DDA overview:  
The board oversees four different committees: Economic Development, Parking, Design and Community Outreach.

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6) Individual Committee reviews:

- a. Executive: Cesar Martinez presented the boards vision statement and mission statement (attached with final revisions included).
- b. Economic Development: Gene Holcombe discussed funding options and the desire to have Ann Arnold come back and assist with future projects. He presented a press release titled "Bank on Blue Ridge" (attached with final revisions included).
- c. Parking: Brandon Lofton thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve on the DDA. He explained that he was newly appointed but that his plans were to work with property owners with vacant lots to lease for parking and to move employees to designated parking areas which will free prime parking for visitors. He also discussed that he wanted to work on designating parking for train only as well.
- d. Design: Nichole Potzauf gave an update on what her and her committee have and continue to work on including Main Street designation, place making, way finding and historical preservation.
- e. Community Outreach: Susan Catron also commented on being newly appointed. She stated that her focus would be on utilizing and updating the website to include information for downtown as well as working with the chamber for a downtown app.

7) Next steps:

The Council and Board discussed receiving monthly updates from the DDA Chairman, as well as checking on the status of the contracts with Ann Arnold and Executive Parking Systems. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to approve the contract with Executive Parking Systems pending approval of the City Attorney and once approved by the City Attorney, the Mayor could sign the contract. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rhonda Haight. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

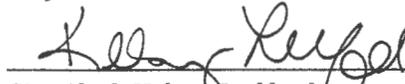
8) Closing remarks:

The Council and board decided to hold quarterly joint meetings on an as needed basis.

9) Adjournment:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Meeting adjourned.

  
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Mayor Donna Whitener

  
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City Clerk Kelsey Ledford

November 12, 2019  
Approved

10/01/2019

## BLUE RIDGE DDA MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

### 1. MISSION

The mission of the Blue Ridge DDA is to enhance the economic potential and preserve the historical character of the downtown district, the heart and hub of Fannin County, through promotional activities, development and an organizational structure that focuses on community involvement with local businesses, residents, retirees and other citizens.

### 2. VISION

Blue Ridge is Appalachia's most inclusive, family-friendly fresh water destination featuring world class dining, shopping, artistic and cultural endeavors, growing economy, entrepreneurial opportunity and all-season recreation. The City of Blue Ridge is also a designated GCA/GM Art Town.

We are committed to preserving our unique community while maintaining a vital, successful and attractive downtown for our residents, merchants and visitors. All citizens of Fannin County will have a greater appreciation, respect and understanding for the historic city center. The Central Business District (CBD) will be valued as a vibrant economic and cultural district and a vital contributor to the community's heritage and identity. The CBD will be better because of the partnerships, investments and an enhanced sense of place. Blue Ridge will have an enriched quality of life in which to live, work and play.

## **“Bank on Blue Ridge” loan program launched by the Blue Ridge Downtown Development Authority**

The City of Blue Ridge’s new Downtown Development Authority (DDA) would like to encourage participation in the “Bank on Blue Ridge” program, a loan program to encourage the economic development of the Central Business District. Through the Georgia Cities Foundation and GA Department of Economic Affairs, the program provides below market-rate gap financing to spur commercial redevelopment.<sup>1</sup>

Eligible funds are intended to be used to fund the purchase of real estate (land and property), expansion and rehabilitation and/or equipment. The funds are not eligible to be used for operating capital, payment of taxes and product development.

“The program sponsored by the Georgia Cities Foundation’s revolving fund helped me in the purchase of my building in downtown Blue Ridge by offering me a low interest loan that in conjunction with a loan from my bank, resulted in a blended mortgage rate below what was being offered at the time from traditional lending institutions. The program is geared toward improvements or purchases of buildings in small downtowns. Our DDA can help others in facilitating the process of revitalizing Blue Ridge’s downtown area. The process takes some time but is well worth the investment.”

Cesar Martinez, DDA Chairman

The Downtown Development Authority is focused on promoting economic development through revitalization and rehabilitation of our downtown community. These funds can help investors or business owners develop, expand or renovate their business which ultimately helps grow business and employment.

Applicants for funds must demonstrate that they have a viable downtown project that is consistent with the community’s plans for downtown development, have a positive economic impact, and clearly identify the proposed uses of the loan funds. The process involves a review and approval process by the Blue Ridge DDA, prior to submission to lending institutions. Businesses and entrepreneurs interested in the “Bank on Blue Ridge” loan program should contact the Downtown Development Authority for further information.

(need contact info to add)

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<sup>1</sup> For full information of the Program and rules, please visit [www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org](http://www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org). The DDA does not guarantee approval or create Program rules.