



TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL CALL MEETING MINUTES
February 25, 2023

THE BLACK MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL held a Special Call Meeting on Saturday, February 25 at 9:00 a.m. in the Manor House of In The Oaks, 213 Vance Avenue, Black Mountain NC. The purpose of this meeting was to hold a strategic planning meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor C. Michael Sobol called the special meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. with the following members present:

Mayor C. Michael Sobol
Vice Mayor Archie Pertiller
Council Member Pam King
Council Member Bill Christy
Council Member Doug Hay
Council Member Alice Berry

The following staff members were present:

Josh Harrold, Town Manager
Savannah Parrish, Town Clerk

Warren Miller of FountainWorks opened the meeting by introducing himself. Mr. Miller was contracted by town staff to facilitate the strategy meeting. The meeting was held at the Manor House on Montreat College's Black Mountain Campus.

Mr. Miller highlighted several things the council accomplished over the last year, including an updated stormwater master plan, installing solar panels on a town-owned building, entering into a water purchasing agreement with the city of Asheville, installing new water meters, implementing new financial software, implementing a pay and classification study and initiating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Along with several other exercises, Mr. Miller asked the council to reflect on their ten-year vision for Black Mountain. These long-term goals were then narrowed down to tasks which can be accomplished within the next budget year or two. The council identified the following five goals as their top priorities for fiscal year 2023-2024:

1. Implementation of Parks and Recreation Master Plan
2. Updating fire equipment
3. Waste and recycling reduction programs and carts
4. A facility needs assessment
5. Master plan development for the Hemphill and Black Mountain Ventures donated properties

Each council member expressed the importance of environmental sustainability. Other areas of interest and importance identified include traffic and parking concerns, the development of a town composting program, a communications staff person, and a town community center.

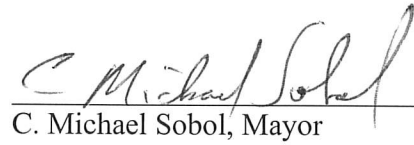
A full retreat summary, compiled by FountainWorks staff, is included in these minutes as an attachment.

3. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor C. Michael Sobol adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

ATTEST:


Savannah Parrish, Town Clerk


C. Michael Sobol, Mayor

Black Mountain Council Retreat

February 25, 2023



The Black Mountain Town Council met for its annual retreat Feb. 25. *Karrigan Monk*



Prepared by:



Meeting Purpose

The Town of Black Mountain Council met from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Saturday, February 25th, 2023, at Manor House on Vance Avenue for its annual retreat. The retreat was professionally facilitated by Warren Miller of Fountainworks. The purpose of this document is to summarize the outputs from the retreat. Comments were captured as the conversation flowed and do not reflect any priority unless otherwise noted.

Objectives:

- Council alignment on the Town's future
- Set priorities for the upcoming calendar year

Welcome

The retreat kicked off with a brief welcome from Mayor Michael Sobol. Town Manager Josh Harrold discussed the goals for the day and introduced Warren Miller of Fountainworks. Miller reviewed the agenda. Following the orientation, Miller led the Council members in a warm-up activity during which the officials each guessed interesting facts about one another.



Where We've Been

Miller then presented a graphic representation of Black Mountain's recent accomplishments, which included:

- Updated stormwater master plan
- Completed solar panel project on a Town-owned building
- Asheville water purchase agreement
- Working on Parks & Recreation Master Plan
- Installing new water meters
- Sidewalk upgrades
- Created a sanitation department and town garbage/recycling service
- Implemented new financial software
- Completed a pay study & implemented recommendations
- Updated comprehensive plan

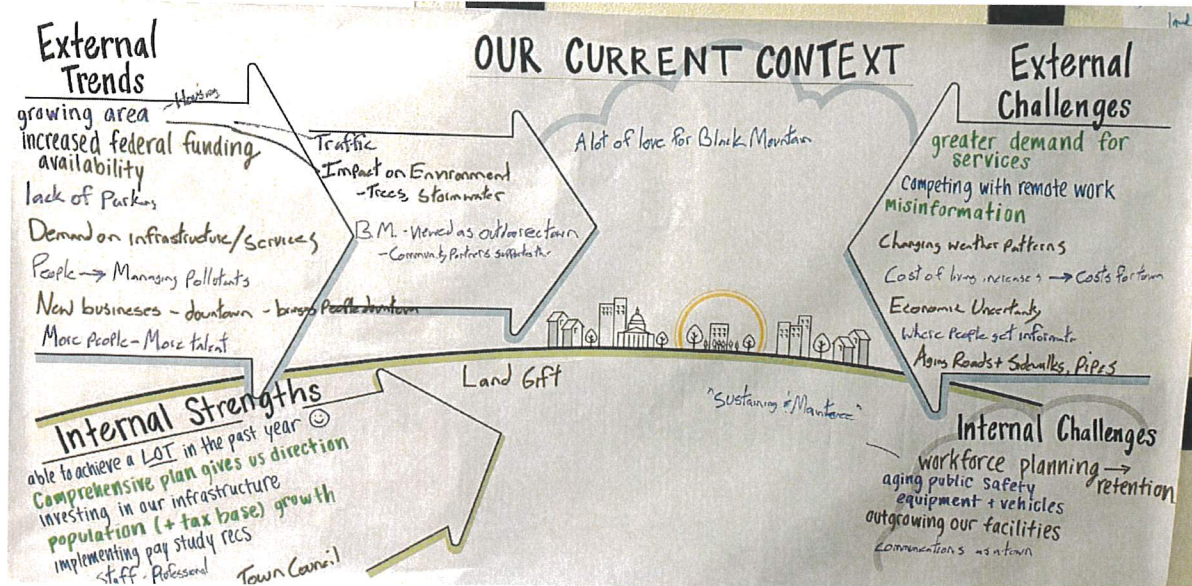
During the discussion, Council members also added:

- Stormwater utility
- Pay & classification study
- Grey Eagle renovations
- Updated Town charter
- Reducing waste & increasing recycling
- Budget training
- Pickleball courts
- Accelerating paving program
- Facility needs assessment
- New full-time employees
- Prioritizing EVs
- New traffic patterns
- Updating & implementing Parks & Rec Master Plan



Current Context

Next, the Council members examined its current context, including external trends, internal strengths, internal challenges as well as both internal and external challenges.



External Trends:

- Growing area
 - Housing costs increasing
 - Traffic
 - Impact on Environment (trees, stormwater)
- Increased federal funding availability
- Lack of parking downtown
- Demand on infrastructure/services
- People → managing pollutants
- New businesses → downtown → bringing people downtown
- More people → more talent
- Black Mountain viewed as outdoor recreation town
 - Community partners are supporting this

Internal Strengths:

- Able to achieve a LOT in the past year
- Comprehensive plan gives us direction
- Investing in our infrastructure
- Population (+ tax base) growth
- Implementing pay study recommendation
- Staff → professional
- Town Council
- Land Gift

External Challenges:

- Greater demand for services
- Competing with remote work
- Misinformation
- Changing weather patterns
- Cost of living increases → costs for Town
- Economic uncertainty
- Where people get information
- Aging roads, sidewalks, pipes

Internal Challenges:

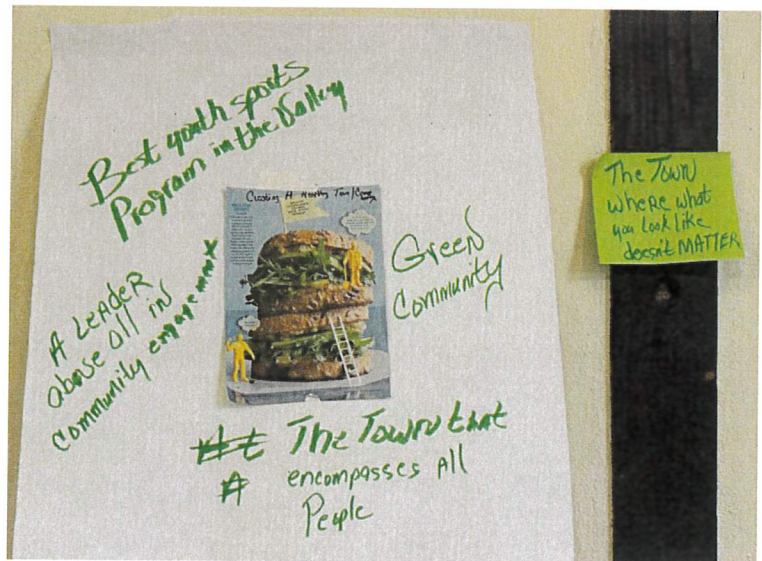
- Workforce planning → retention
- Aging public safety equipment & vehicles
- Outgrowing our facilities
 - Sustaining & maintenance
- Communications as a Town

Visioning

After a short break, the Council members were each challenged to pick a picture that represents their vision of Black Mountain's future. Each Council member gave their picture a title, wrote five futures, and one "wow!" future that would really amaze them.

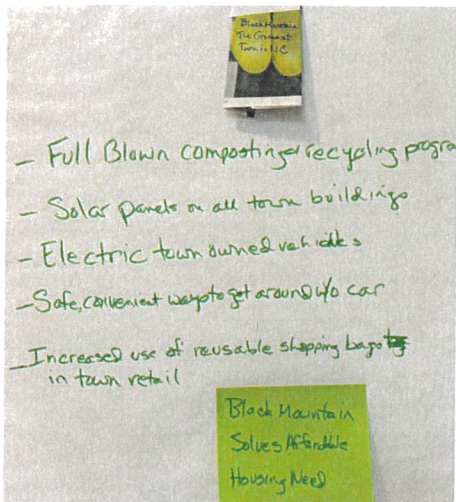
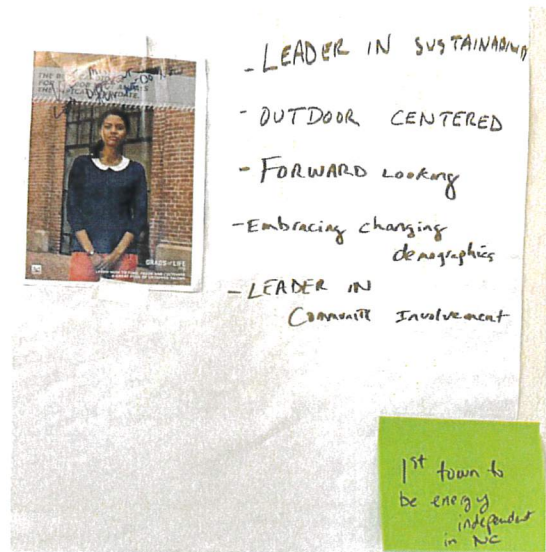
Vision 1: Creating a Healthy Town/Community:

- Best youth sports program in the valley
- A leader above all in community engagement
- Green community
- The town that encompasses all people
- **"Wow!" future:** The town where what you look like doesn't matter



Vision 2: We May Look Different Than We Do Now:

- Leader in sustainability
- Outdoor centered
- Forward looking
- Embracing changing demographics
- Leader in community involvement
- **"Wow!" future:** First town to be energy independent in NC

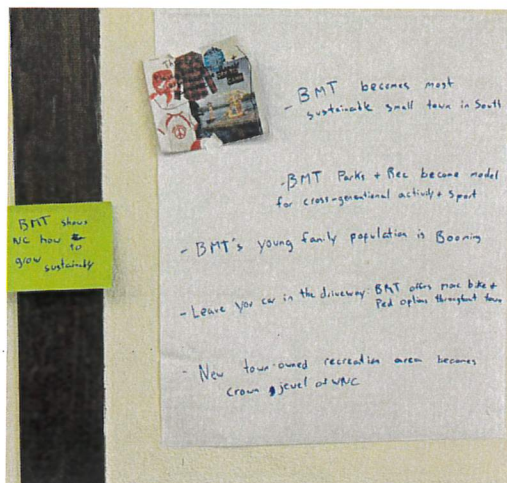
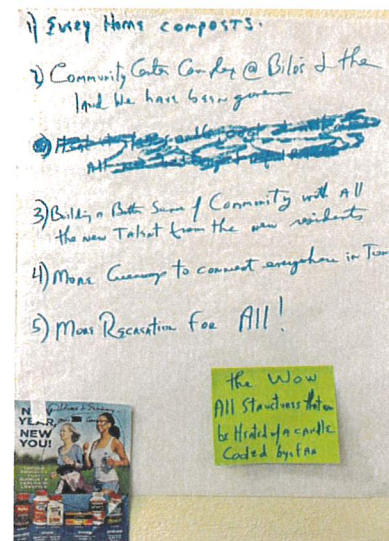


Vision 3: Black Mountain: The Greenest Town in NC

- Full blown composting & recycling program
- Solar panels on all town buildings
- Electric town-owned vehicles
- Safe, convenient ways to get around without car
- Increased use of reusable shopping bags in town retail
- **"Wow!" future:** Black Mountain solves affordable housing need

Vision 4: Outdoors & Exercising – More Greenways:

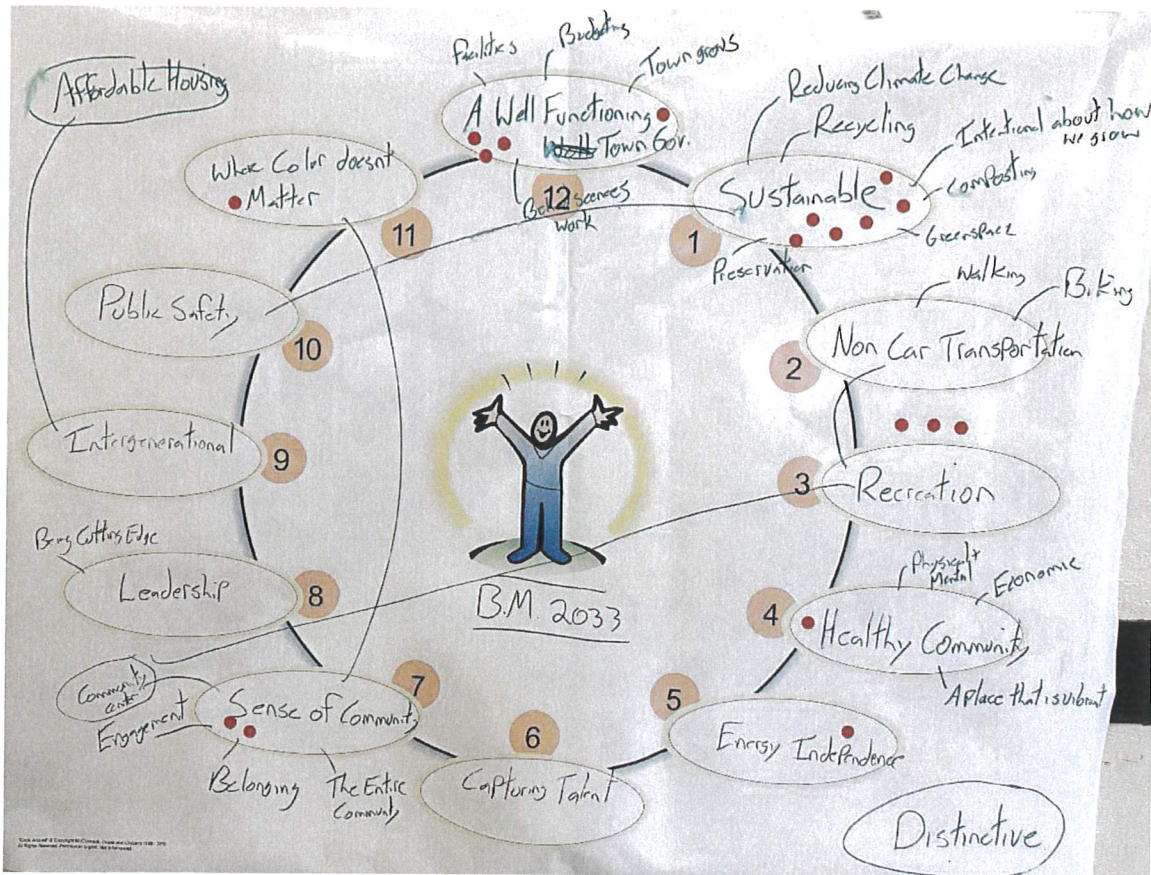
- Every home composts
- Community center complex @ Bilo's & the land we have been given
- Building a better sense of community with all the new talent from the new residents
- More greenways to connect everywhere in town
- More recreation for all!
- **"Wow!" future:** All structures that can be heated with a candle, cooled by a fan



Vision 5: The Ultimate Place to Play, Live, and Experience the Beauty of Western North Carolina

- Black Mountain becomes the most sustainable small town in the South
- Black Mountain Parks & Rec becomes a model for cross-generational activity and sport
- Black Mountain's young family population is booming
- Leave your car in the driveway: Black Mountain offers more bike and pedestrian options throughout town.
- New town-owned recreation area becomes crown jewel of Western North Carolina
- **"Wow!" future:** Black Mountain shows NC how to grow — sustainably

Next, Miller brought the group together again to identify vision themes. Afterward, the Council placed red dots on vision themes for near term focus.



- Sustainable (6 dots)
 - Reducing climate change
 - Recycling
 - Intentional about how we grow
 - Composting
 - Greenspace
 - Preservation
 - [connected to Public Safety]
- A Well-Functioning Town Government (4 dots)
 - Facilities
 - Budgeting
 - Town grows
 - Behind the scenes work
- Recreation ... (3 dots)
 - [connected to Non-car Transportation]
 - [connected to Community Center]
- Sense of Community (•• 2 dots)
 - Engagement
 - Belonging
 - The entire community

- *[connected to Community Center]*
 - *[connected to Where Color Doesn't Matter]*
- Energy Independence • (1 dot)
- Healthy Community • (1 dot)
 - Physical & mental
 - Economic
 - A place that is vibrant
- Where Color Doesn't Matter • (1 dot)
 - *[connected to Sense of Community]*
- Capturing Talent
- Non-car Transportation
 - Walking
 - Biking
 - *[connected to Recreation]*
- Leadership
 - Being cutting edge
- Intergenerational
 - *[connected to Affordable Housing]*
- Public Safety
 - *[connected to Sustainable]*
- Community Center
 - *[connected to Sense of Community]*
 - *[connected to Recreation]*
- Affordable Housing
 - *[connected to Intergenerational]*
- Distinctive

Values

Next, the Town Council participated in a conversation to identify their values. These values will help inform how they engage with one another and set priorities for the community.

We believe in:

- Respecting one another
- Ensuring an equitable future for our community
- Managing our fiscal resources responsibly
- Acting with integrity & honesty and honesty
- Looking toward our future and being proactive
- Protecting our environment
- Ensuring current residents benefit from the Town's growth
- Being good stewards of our community
- Engaging our community transparently
- Supporting the diversity of our people & businesses

Our Why / Values

Respect

Equity

Fiscal Responsibility - working within our resources

Integrity & Honesty - "It's right thing to do" *eg. By doing*

We are future looking + Proactive

Protecting the Environment

Protecting the community we have as we grow

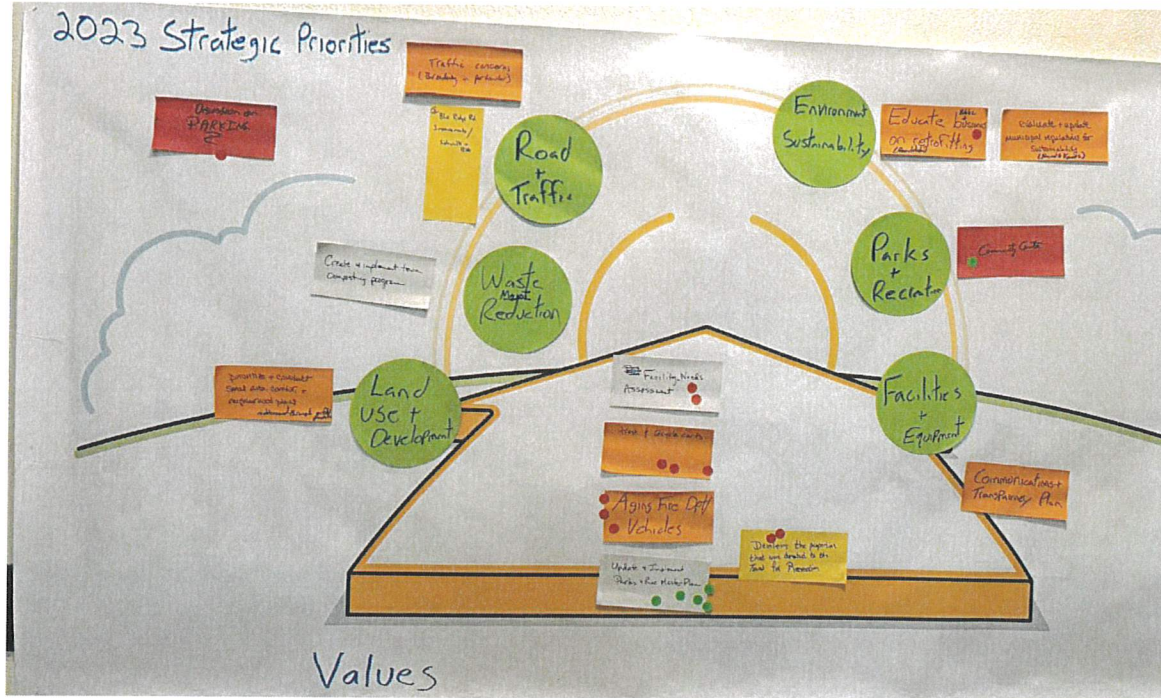
Stewardship of community

Transparency + Community engagement

Supporting Diversity - People & Businesses

Strategic Focus Areas

Following lunch, the Council members began to establish their strategic focus areas and priorities for 2023.



They began with reviewing last year's priorities, all of which have either been completed or are in progress.

- Pay and classification study (completed)
- Grey Eagle renovations (starting in March)
- Reducing waste and increasing recycling (completed)
- Pickleball courts (still to-do, dependent on Parks & Rec Master Plan)
- Updating and implementing the Parks & Rec Master Plan (in-progress)

The green circles in the above photograph (bolded in the bulleted list below) represent six major focus areas. The following actions underneath each focus area were identified as requiring further consideration by Council:

- **Land use & development**
 - Prioritize & conduct small area, corridor & neighborhood plans
- **Waste reduction (and management)**
 - Create & implement town composting program
- **Road & Traffic**
 - Traffic concerns (Broadway in particular)
 - Blue Ridge Rd. improvements/ sidewalk & bike
 - Discussion on parking • (1 red vote)
- **Environmental sustainability**
 - Educate public & business on retrofitting • (1 red vote)
 - Evaluate & update municipal regulations for sustainability (needs focus)

- **Parks & Recreation**
 - Community center • (1 green vote)
- **Facilities & Equipment**
 - Communications & transparency plan

As the group discussed these broad categories, the following **five strategic priorities for 2023** emerged:

1. **Update & implement Parks & Rec Master Plan**
••••• (received 5 green dots)
2. **Trash & recycling carts** (3 red dots)
••• (received 3 red dots)
3. **Aging fire department/vehicles**
••• (received 3 red dots)
4. **Facilities needs assessment**
••• (received 2 red dots)
5. **Developing the properties that were donated to the Town for recreation**
••• (received 2 red dots)

Other priorities the staff already has started or plans to begin include:

- Policy on future vehicle types (e.g. electric, etc.)
- Multi-year budgeting issues
- Identify & prioritize infrastructure issues
- Allocate ARPO
- Road & traffic improvements
- UDO
- Staff: opportunities to improve community and transparency
 - Website
 - Newsletter
 - Communications director
 - Budget for communications
 - Goal: get info out/collect misinformation

Conclusion

Before adjourning, Miller solicited feedback from the Council members about what they appreciated about the retreat. He added that it was exciting to see how aligned the Council is in its goals.