BLACK MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

March 1, 2025 | Council Retreat | Time: 9:00 AM

Montreat Conference Center | Montreat, NC 28757

Black Mountain Town Council held their Annual Retreat on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. at the Montreat Conference Center Upper Anderson Auditorium, 303 Lookout Rd., Montreat, NC 28757.

1. Call to Order

Mayor C. Michael Sobol called the retreat to order at 9:00 a.m. with the following members in attendance: Mayor C. Michael Sobol, Vice Mayor Archie Pertiller, Town Council Member Alice Berry, Town Council Member Doug Hay, Town Council Member Pam King, Town Council Member Ryan Stone.

The following staff members were present: Josh Harrold, Town Manager; Jessica Trotman, Assistant Town Manager; Wesley Barker, Town Clerk; Angela Reece, Project & Facilities Manager; John Coffey, Fire Chief; Steve Parker, Police Chief; Jamey Matthews, Public Works Director; Tammy Holland, Finance Director.

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Town of Black Mountain Board Retreat
March 01, 2025 | Meeting Summary

PREPARED BY: fountainworks

Background

On March 01, 2025, the Town of Black Mountain Town Council convened for their annual board retreat. The purpose of the retreat was to bring the Council and staff department heads together to discuss post-Helene recovery efforts, and strategies to move forward.

The meeting was professionally facilitated by Fountainworks, a North Carolina-based consulting firm specializing in public sector strategy and implementation. This document summarizes the meeting's key takeaways and outcomes. Comments were captured as the conversation flowed and do not reflect any priority unless otherwise noted.

Outcomes and Agenda

Mayor Michael Sobol convened the meeting, and Warren Miller, of Fountainworks, began by reviewing the intended outcomes and agenda items, as listed below.

Outcomes

- Define the vision for recovery.
- Determine the key priorities, projects, and policies we aim to work towards and/or complete in the 12 months.
- Understand revenue tool preferences.
- Review and update non-recovery related priorities.

Agenda:

- Welcome and Orientation
- Accomplishments
- Strategic Visioning
- Project Prioritization
- Assess Financial Tool Options
- Other 2025 Priorities
- Plan to Continue Progress

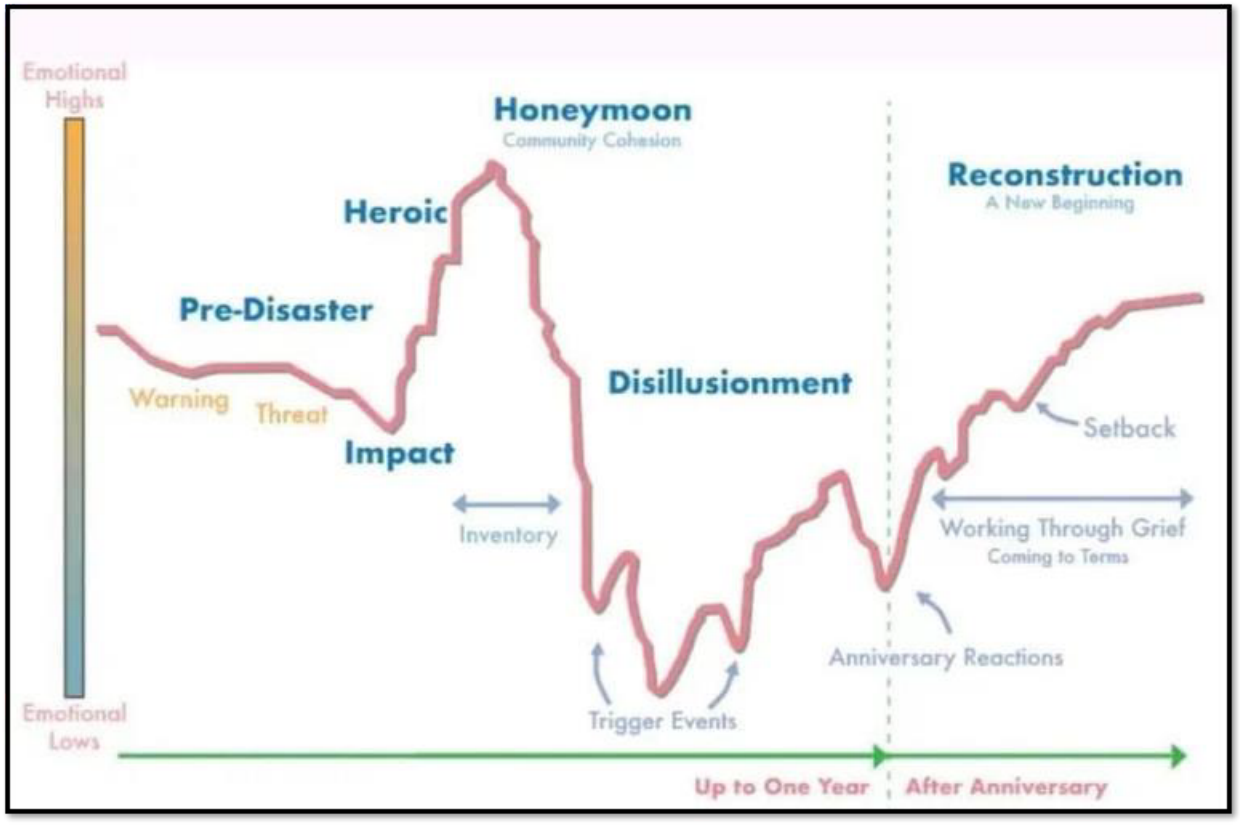
Accomplishments

Warren Miller then facilitated a conversation where Council and staff discussed the accomplishments they are most proud of since Hurricane Helene. Responses are captured below:

- Maintaining public safety
- Never feeling defeated
- Our quick response to restoring our water
- North Fork Rescue
- Our quick response to emergency situations
- Collaboration
- First to get water
- The way departments joined forces (Public Works, Fire, Police, etc.)
- Public/community partnerships
- Proactive and taking responsibility
- Swift, effective emergency response (EOC)
- Community partnerships were formed that will be lasting
- Communication creativity (i.e. town square meetings)
- Town staff showed such inspirational leadership
- Collaboration with community organizations
- County modeled training after what we did
- Early communication (public meetings, press releases, social posts)
- Citizens coming together
- Community coming together
- Miracles
- The way our community bonded together
- Community spirit and support was amazing
- Resourceful staff
    - Solar shower
- Prioritizing needs and communicating them as best we could
- Acting in the best interest of residents

- Creative problem-solving
- Clear and concise decision making
- Rising to the occasion
- Living without electricity
- Audit submitted on time
- Public engagement (community events)
- Accepting challenges without hesitation
- Ongoing staff commitment
- Staff's heroism and commitment
- Employee dedication, resilience, and compassion
    - Teamwork, self-sufficiency, resourcefulness
- Leveraging relationships (water company)
- Our emergency leaders knew what we needed
- Council leadership and support
- Our functioning downtown.

In light of the town's accomplishments, the Council discussed the following infographic showing the life cycle of recovery and its implications for the Town's focus over the next year.



Strategic Visioning

From there, participants discussed their vision for recovery, identifying what they would like recovery to look like in 5-10 years. The Council identified the following recovery vision statement as one that resonated:

- *A united Black Mountain - resilient, connected, thriving.*

The Council identified the following points of interest that will inform their recovery approach.

- Thoughtful and balanced
- Prioritize needs and find balance
- A community that comes together
- Better means:
    - Build back
    - Suits today's need
- Community connection
    - Involving and empower people to be involved
- Building back better for everyone
- Strong communications system
- Strong staff recruitment and retention
- More solar
- Back up plans
- Community collaboration regionally
- People aware of how hard we try
- A message of hope
- A broad and diverse community
- Participation regionally
- Affordable housing
    - Above flood risk
    - Mobile
- Regional approach

Review Principles

The Black Mountain Town Council then identified the principles of recovery that will guide priorities.

- Revenue generating
- "Spirit lifting"
- Put a more immediate focus on useable
    - Doesn't have to be 100% right away
    - Be sure to explain timeline to public
- Does it address a public safety need
- Do we have a work around option

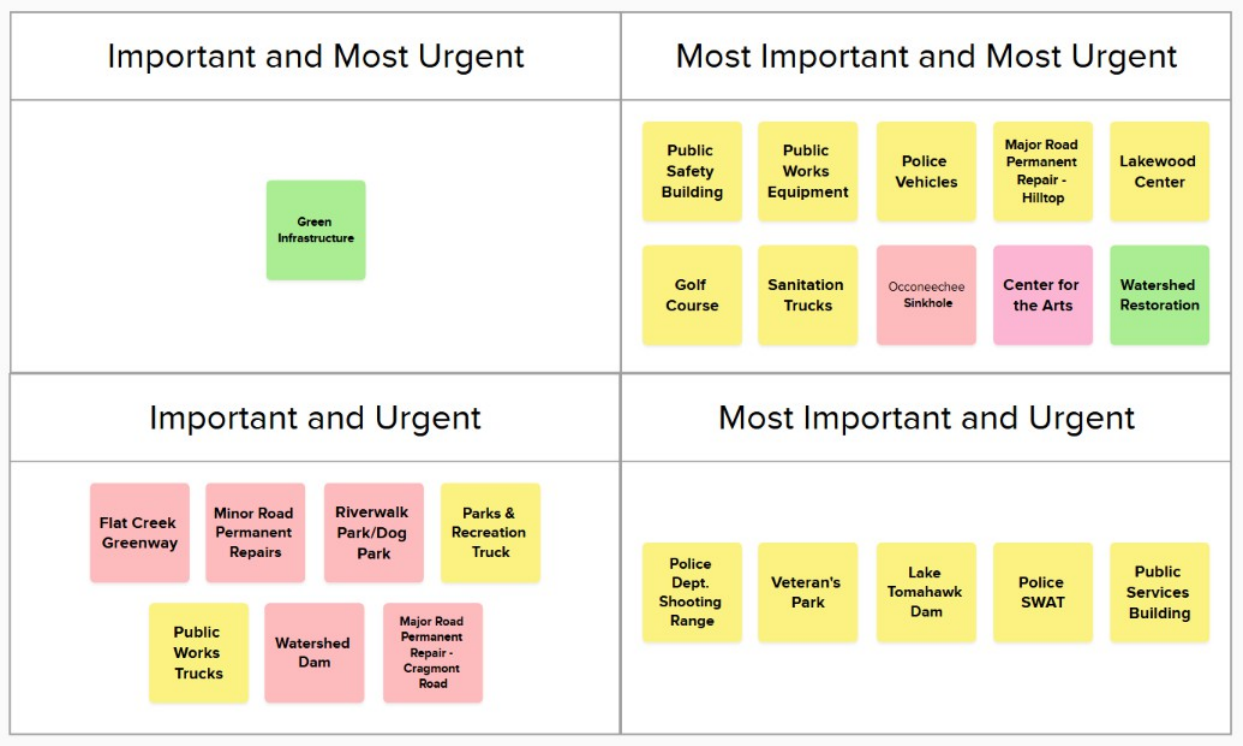
Project Prioritization

Next, Assistant Town Manager Jessica Trotman walked through the list of projects that are already paid and moving forward. The Council then went through a list of 23 upcoming projects to determine which projects were most important and most urgent.

The funding status for each project was also identified and differentiated by the following color code:

- Green - funding has been identified.
- Yellow - partial funding has been identified.
- Pink - no funding has currently been identified.

The results of the conversation are captured below:



Assess Financial Tool Options

After the project prioritization activity, Council members were asked to provide guidance on financial tool options. The Council expressed more interest in using the fund balance, grants, and loans to fund projects. The Council also had some interest in bonds and a food and beverages tax, but had less interest in raising other taxes.

Other 2025 Priorities

The Council also discussed the importance of continuing other capital projects alongside recovery efforts. Other 2025 priorities that were identified are listed below.

- PIO – Keeping public informed
- A lessons learned analysis of the storm response
    - Communications equipment investment
- Trash/water reduction strategy
    - Messaging

Plan to Continue Progress

To conclude the meeting, the Council discussed a timeline for next steps. The timeline is as follows:

- March
    - Identify funding sources in detail
        - How much money do we currently have?
    - Department budget meetings
    - Review next year operating expenses
    - Insurance company presentation
- April and May
    - Community survey and engagement
        - Hear communities input on recovery priorities
    - Budget workshops
- July through December
    - Conversations on public safety building operations