

Valle Crucis Community Council

Meeting minutes – Thursday, January 26, 2023

Attendees: Walter Browning, Scott Jensen, Alyson Browett, Julie Gates, JD Dooley, Tracey Heiss, Jennifer Storie – Watauga County Planning & Inspections, Larry Turnbow – Watauga County Commissioner, Jason Walker – Director of Watauga County Planning and Inspections, Lisa Cooper

Not Present: Howell Cook, John LaCapra, Erin Welsh

- Valle Crucis Community Council chairperson Walter Browning began the meeting with an overview of the VCCC and its accomplishments over the years for the benefit of the numerous visitors in the meeting.
 - Larry Turnbow, Watauga County Commissioner of District 4, shared his history as county commissioner that included three focus areas: the building and opening of the Watauga Community Recreation Center, affordable housing, and the Valle Crucis School project.
 - Both Commissioner Turnbow and members of the VCCC committed to open communication and good partnership going forward.
 - VCCC members shared its three current focus areas with Commissioner Turnbow: revising the Community Council’s existing strategic plan for Valle Crucis, preserving the historic New Deal/Works Progress Administration rock portion of the current Valle Crucis School and a focus on infrastructure within Valle Crucis including issues with speeding/speed limits, road maintenance, water quality, etc.
- Commissioner Turnbow stated that the county and state are in the process of evaluating issues related to the current Valle Crucis School. He advised that the Corps of Engineers and state environmental regulators will exercise jurisdiction over certain aspects of the current school site once it is vacated. While the commissioners consider demolition as the first option, the county is open to other ideas pending conclusions reached in the evaluations and the regulators’ decisions. Among the items to be evaluated are the water and sewer systems, environmental conditions in the buildings themselves, and challenges with separating the historic rock section (if viable) of the school from the rest of the school. Once the school vacates the current property, new regulations and permitting would apply to any new entity taking its place. Lisa Cooper expressed concern that the old school might be demolished and reiterated the Council’s and community’s desire that everything possible be done to preserve the historic rock section of the old school, at a minimum, for community use. Commissioner Turnbow committed to working with the Council and keeping it informed on developments pertaining to the school.
- VCCC members approved the minutes from the 12/22/22 meeting.
 - The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

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