

**TOWN OF MAGGIE VALLEY  
SPECIAL CALLED BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETING  
MAY 18, 2009  
MINUTES**

Members Present: Mayor Roger McElroy, Aldermen: Saralyn Price, Colin Edwards, Mark DeMeola, and Phil Aldridge  
Staff Present: Attorney Chuck Dickson, Manager Tim Barth, Chief Scott Sutton, Administrative Assistant Karen Batick, Planning Director Nathan Clark, and Town Clerk Vickie Best  
Others Present: Eighty people

**Meeting Called to Order**

Mayor McElroy opened the special called meeting at 5:40 p.m. in the community center, stating that this was the time and place, as advertised, for Council to receive public comment regarding the Town of Maggie Valley lending Ghost Town Theme Park \$200,000.

Richard Burrell: Mr. Burrell, owner of the Spring House Bar and Dance Club, addressed Council stating that if the Town lends Ghost Town the money it would be a good deal for everyone involved. "Ghost Town needs help the same as many other organizations in our country." Mr. Burrell stated that he would like to see all of the businesses in Maggie Valley do well. Mr. Burrell thanked Mr. Shiver for his efforts.

Becky Long: Ms. Long, a residential taxpayer, agreed with Mr. Burrell. "We need something to bring people to Maggie Valley, to support the business community, and provide jobs for the residents." Ms. Long asked that Council support the opening of Ghost Town.

Candace Way: Ms. Way, a residential taxpayer and a Haywood County employee, opposed the Town lending Ghost Town the money. Ms. Way questioned if the Town was prepared to lend money to the next business that gets into financial trouble. Haywood County is laying people off, requiring employees to take 40-hours off without pay, and is cutting services. A town the size of Maggie Valley should have a 61% fund balance. The town currently has a 51% fund balance. "Those funds are to be used for emergencies, not for loans. BB& T will be paid first. Why are the other vendors at the end of the list? How does Mr. Shiver know that he will be able to pay the Town back in six months with the uncertain cash flow in this uncertain economy?"

Dean Bartley: Mr. Bartley lives one lot outside Maggie Valley's corporate limits. Mr. Bartley wanted to remind Council that amusement parks are going broke all over the nation. "Maggie Valley has more to offer than Ghost Town. The recession will last three to four more years."

Dan Massey: Mr. Massey was in favor of loaning Ghost Town the money. Mr. Massey provided figures on the money Ghost Town brings to Maggie Valley each season in

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009  
MINUTES

motel rooms. Mr. Massey asked that Council consider the amount of money Ghost Town spends in advertising Maggie Valley. "If the motel rooms were not rented, the occupancy tax the town receives would also drop." Mr. Massey asked if anyone had tried to stop Dale Walksler [owner of Wheels Through Time Motorcycle Museum] from leaving. "Would not Orlando Florida help Disney World, if need be? Ghost Town is the anchor for Maggie Valley. If you don't use this money, taxpayers will ask that the money be returned to residents." In Mr. Massey's calculations, the cost to each taxpayer would be \$39. "This is a small amount to pay to help the Town's anchor tourist attraction." Mr. Massey also encouraged Council to create the EDC board as previously discussed.

Joann Martin: Ms. Martin owns a motel and restaurant just outside the corporate limits. Ms. Martin had previously attended a seminar conducted by the Haywood County TDA where the speaker discussed branding. "A resort town needs a brand, and Ghost Town has branded Maggie Valley. Ghost Town defines Maggie Valley." Ms. Martin felt that Maggie Valley is a motorcycle destination and a Ghost Town destination. Ms. Martin found it mind-boggling that the Town is considering not helping Ghost Town. "Keep the few things here that are thriving."

Ron Blackwood: Mr. Blackwood has a home in the Maggie Valley community. He is a member of the Blackwood Quartet. Mr. Blackwood has played with renowned artist such as Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. Mr. Blackwood informed Council that Ghost Town was a gold mine for Maggie Valley. "Ghost Town is located in most beautiful place that I have ever seen. Only reason people go to Pigeon Forge is to go to Dollywood theme park. They will come to Maggie Valley for Ghost Town." Mr. Blackwood warned Council that they could work together or stand-alone. "If Maggie Valley does not get behind Ghost Town, then Maggie Valley will become a big black hole"

James Carver: Mr. Carver, owner of Maggie Valley Restaurant and life-long resident was in favor of the Town helping Ghost Town. Over the last sixty years, Mr. Carver has seen many changes take place in Maggie Valley. He told a story of a family wanting to move to Maggie Valley from Texas and open a zoo. There was a lot of pressure from local people not wanting a zoo. People said there would be snakes in our beds and dangerous animals would roam the valley. That man was Jim Miller that later served as the Maggie Valley Mayor for many years. Soco Zoo became a very popular attraction in Maggie Valley. Mr. Carver also told the story of how people came out against the Town exercising the one-mile extra territorial jurisdiction. The council members stood their ground, enacted the ETJ, and prevented Waynesville from coming across Gaddis Branch into Maggie Valley. After giving several more examples, Mr. Carver asked that the Town support Ghost Town and lend them the money. The City of Charlotte provided incentives for the 1500-acre water park to locate there. Haywood County gave Blue Ridge Inc. \$500,000 to remain in Canton. Mr. Carver asked that Council support the local businesses and to support Ghost Town.

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009

MINUTES

Ron DeSimone: Mr. DeSimone, a residential taxpayer opposed lending Ghost Town money. "It is beyond the Town's scope to evaluate the management team at Ghost Town. As with any business, the owner must make sound decision, if need be, reinvent the business or find a solution when business goes down. Other for-profit businesses do not expect the local government to get them out of a financial mess. There is more to Maggie Valley than just Ghost Town."

Jennifer Leopard: Ms. Leopard and her immediate family are employees at Ghost Town. Ms. Leopard asked that Council agree to help Ghost Town because of the job opportunities that are provided. It would be financially devastating to her family if Ghost Town were to close. "The employees on the mountain depend on their pay, and have a strong will to see that they keep their jobs."

Robert Bradley: Mr. Bradley, a lifelong resident, and actor at Ghost Town [Apache Kid] for many years supported Ghost Town and their request for financial assistance. Mr. Bradley felt that everyone is associated with tourism in one way or another. "Maggie Valley can become a retirement community. There is nothing wrong with that. Retirees do not stay in the motels and eat in the restaurants. Ghost Town is going to be here regardless; rather it is on the mountain or down here in the valley." Mr. Bradley felt that anyone against lending Ghost Town the funds are being selfish. "Vote for what you think is best for this valley. People will take note of your vote and remember it at election time."

Jack Ryan: Mr. Ryan, a resident in Maggie Valley's ETJ area that moved here from Wisconsin had conflicting feelings about the loan. Mr. Ryan stated that he was opposed the town lending the money until today. He felt that Ghost Town is outdated and half the rides do not work. Mr. Ryan still felt that Maggie Valley would not be repaid but it is a relatively small amount to keep a park up and running for another season.

Gabby Edwards: Ms. Edwards owns and operates A Holiday Motel and supports Ghost Town. Ms. Edwards informed Council that her guests love Ghost Town. All of the business owners are in favor of the loan because of the impact on tourism. "Business is up 40% since Ghost Town reopened. It is time to give back to the community and help the park. Many people are misinformed and get their information from unreliable sources." Ms. Edwards asked that the town use part of the reserves to help Ghost Town.

Tammy Wight: Ms. Wight owns and operates the Clarketon Motel. Ms. Wight stated that Maggie Valley is risking a lot more than \$200,000 if Ghost Town closes. "Maggie Valley does not have 130,000 visitors come and then notice Ghost Town, it is the opposite."

Brenda O'Keefe: Ms. O'Keefe is a residential taxpayer as well as the owner of Joey's Pancake House. Ms. O'Keefe stated that she understands both sides of the issue. "The Town Council has a hard job. Unless some of you want to run [for election] next time, then show respect for each other. The Town is not responsible for Ghost Town. Mr.

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009  
MINUTES

Shiver has the right to come and ask for the money, but Council has the right to give it or not. Treat local citizens with respect. No one will benefit if Maggie Valley becomes businesses vs. residents. Do not be angry. Have respect for everyone.”

Denny Lynch: Mr. Lynch is a family member of the owners of J. Arthurs Restaurant and proud to be of Irish descent. Mr. Lynch applauded the democracy shown here tonight. He too felt that all should approve what affects all. “If the Town does not fund the business, then think outside the box i.e. sell five year tickets, sell shares, etc.” Mr. Lynch stated that he would become more engaged in Maggie Valley’s local government.

Linda Bennett: Ms. Bennett is a business owner and a taxpayer in Maggie Valley. Ms. Bennett felt that if the Town loans the theme park funds it should be a short-term loan. “It is easier to repay someone in August than in November. Mr. Shiver has done a lot of advertising, but TDA funds are for advertising.” Ms. Bennett’s goal was for the town not to have discretionary funds. “Send us [taxpayer] a rebate check and lower the property taxes next year.”

Brea Justice: Ms. Justice and her immediate family work at Ghost Town and her father is a gun fighter. Ms. Justice stated that she has a lot of pride saying that she works at Ghost Town. “Ghost Town employees have become one big family. Ghost Town will reopen and the employees will fight to be here.”

Steve Shiver: Mr. Shiver is the CEO and an investor in Ghost Town Theme Park. Mr. Shiver thanked everyone, adding that he knows it is not an easy thing for Council to make these type decisions. “Some people will hang you and some people will hug you.” Mr. Shiver agreed that it was wonderful to see the democratic process. Mr. Shiver stressed that he did not make light of what is going on here today and the decisions that must be made.

Mr. Shiver provided the parallels of Ghost Town and Maggie Valley as written by Hattie Davis.

Ghost Town provides jobs for young people, as well as the elderly. “There are three generations of folks that work at Ghost Town.”

Mr. Shiver stated that there had been good comments made on both the plus and the negative side. Ghost Town is not going to be neither DollyWood nor Maggie Valley a Pigeon Forge. “The investors invested in the beauty of Maggie Valley and her people. Maggie Valley needs all of it’s attractions to make this a successful tourist town.”

Mr. Shiver assured Council that he has not solicited people to come and speak on Ghost Town’s behalf or to attack Council.

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009  
MINUTES

Management has a five-year plan in place. The park is going to change and be modified as time goes on. "No one would have expected gas to rise to \$4 a gallon and western North Carolina to have a shortage of fuel." Mr. Shiver admitted that there have been mistakes made. "Learn from those mistakes and move forward." Again, Mr. Shiver invited anyone desiring to come to Ghost Town and he would personally show them the changes that are already in place i.e. the fort for parents and kids to play together.

Mr. Shiver agreed that larger parks are seeing a financial crunch and some have had to close. "People are searching for lower price destinations. People will drive for two and a half hours to spend two or three nights. Ghost Town is a jewel that cannot be recreated. Environmental laws would not allow that to happen."

Mr. Shiver asked that Council take action tonight. "Ghost Town is open to any terms right now. Ghost Town is requesting a bridge loan of \$200,000 to be opened for the season." It will take 60 to 90 days for other funding to materialize.

"The rollercoaster will be running this season." People travel to just ride roller coasters." Ghost Town's rollercoaster is unusual because it hangs off a cliff.

As for local vendors not being paid, it was very difficult for the investors to file a Chapter 11. Many of the vendors understand and want to continue to work with Ghost Town after the restructuring. "The investors did not take this lightly. We are going to remain here despite the challenges. The Town has the money to lend." Mr. Shiver suggested that when Maggie Valley is repaid, those funds could go into revolving fund to help other businesses.

There are plans in place to expand beyond the western theme i.e. better musicians, better restaurants, capitalize on the environment, installing a zip line through the trees, etc.

Mr. Shiver stated that the people of the community have humbled him by all of their support. "We are asking for three months [to repay the money]. Three months for this kind of investment is small."

Joann Littrell: Ms. Littrell a long time employee of Ghost Town stated that Council does not understand how committed the employees are in keeping Ghost Town open. Ms. Littrell went on to say she has put her life-savings into Ghost Town. "Ghost Town benefits the entire community."

Council took a short break from 7:03 p.m. until 7:20 p.m.

**ALDERMAN PRICE MADE A MOTION TO VOTE ON THE ISSUE TONIGHT.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor McElroy stated that he supports lending Ghost Town the money.

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009  
MINUTES

**ALDERMAN DEMEOLA MADE A MOTION TO EXCUSE ALDERMAN  
EDWARDS FROM THE VOTE.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Alderman Price stated that everyone wants Ghost Town to make it and to be profitable. "The park looks good. Ghost Town does affect the Town, County, and surrounding counties. However, the current economy concerns everyone. I am not willing to risk taxpayer's money. I understand that we all need to work together. The Town will do whatever it can to help Ghost Town, if we can help apply for a stimulus package, we certainly will. We do want Ghost Town to make it."

Alderman DeMeola stated that his feelings echo Alderman Price's remarks. "As a community we are behind you. Ghost Town will succeed. The business community will assist, but we cannot use taxpayer's dollars at this time.

Alderman Aldridge stated that he was amazed and impressed when he toured the park. "The park is immaculate. Some are making the board [of Aldermen] out to be a three-headed monster. Council is trying to look out for everyone, as a whole. The future is unclear; this could come back and bite us. There is more than one way to skin a cat, but I feel safer knowing that money is in the bank, because of the uncertainty of the times."

Mr. Shiver stated that during the break someone willing to step up and help Ghost Town approached him. Again, Mr. Shiver stated that he was humbled by the support of the community.

Alaska Pressley: Ms. Pressley a long-time resident and business owner stated that she loves Maggie Valley and that her family was one of the first pioneers in Maggie Valley. Over the years, her family has had 14 to 15 businesses in the valley. "Everyone knows I do not get along with Town Hall. You [the Council] act like you own the taxpayer's money. This is a disgrace to Maggie Valley. Ghost Town is going to make it."

**WITH NO FURTHER ACTION NEEDED, ALDERMAN EDWARDS MADE A  
MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 7:34 P.M.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

---

Mayor Roger McElroy

---

Vickie Best, CMC, Town Clerk

Town of Maggie Valley  
Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen  
May 18, 2009  
MINUTES