

**TOWN OF BOONE
COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2022, 5:30 P.M.**

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sarah-Davis Cagle, Vice-Chair Michael Bugge, and Christy Cook

TOWN COUNCIL LIASION MEMBERS PRESENT: Dalton George and Edie Tugman-Mayor Pro-Tem

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, Christy Turner, Senior Planner, Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner and Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Sarah-Davis Cagle called to order the meeting of the Boone Community Appearance Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software, on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 5:37 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chair Cagle made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bugge, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Cagle made a motion, seconded by Member Cook, to approve the January 25, 2022 meeting minutes as amended.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner, explained that based on the discussion at the last CAC meeting, the Planning Staff presented to Council the topic of updating the tree canopy. She noted that part of the Action Request included adding the tree canopy topic to the Planning Department work plan. She said the Planning Staff would research the time and cost it would take to do it. The action request also included the Planning Staff to update the Urban Forestry Master Management Plan as part of the comprehensive plan update. She continued by stating the Action Request for the CAC activities would be for the CAC to look at the appearance standards.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, explained that the Planning Staff evaluated all Planning Department priorities after the last CAC meeting. As a result, it would be better to have the tree canopy information available before moving forward with the regular tree removal and tree cutting permits. As discussed by the CAC, she said the tree cutting permits would not just apply to residential properties but would also impact commercial properties. Based on that discussion, the Planning Staff recommended tabling the tree permit work for now and updating the Urban Forest Master Management Plan.

Ms. Shook explained that initially, the CAC first started reviewing the appearance standards town-wide. Then, the focus of the review of the said standards was moved to the Downtown area. She said the CAC had still

planned to look at appearance standards overall. She pointed out that the lighting review is part of the appearance standards review.

Ms. Shook explained that the town has entered into a contract to have higher resolution photography flyovers every four years and 2022 is the next flyover year. She said the higher resolution photography would allow the Planning Staff to do planimetrics, which allows certain stormwater to be mapped and will help measure the tree canopy.

Ms. Shook pointed out that we need to look for a contract for the planimetrics. She explained that the Town Sustainability Manager is working on a grant that will cover the cost of the planimetrics with an overall stormwater project. She said the Planning Staff would keep the CAC updated on this topic. She noted that the Council members should see this information possibly sometime during the budget process.

Vice-Chair Bugge explained that while researching how a tree canopy is measured, he came across some information through Google called the Environmental Insights Explorer. He explained that it is a set of ongoing programs to analyze unique data from all of their platforms to help determine things like tree canopy coverage and emissions. He mentioned that he could not look at the data specifically for the Town of Boone because he is not a Town employee; he said that Town employees could request access to it. He said he was not sure of the amount of data that could be received from it, but it is a free program that significantly helped some larger cities. Ms. Shook said the Planning Staff would take note of this information.

Ms. Shook explained that the Planning Staff plans to present to Council thoughts on the updating process of comprehensive plan in the next few months. She said part of the research is locating tools and finding the most economical way to spend our money. She said there are several platforms out there to investigate.

Chair Cagle agreed with tabling the tree removal topic until the Planning Staff can provide more data for the CAC to discuss on the tree canopy. Ms. Shook said that Council approved the Planning Staff to move forward with this plan. Ms. Shook said this would also be the time to ensure that we are using more up-to-date urban forestry canopy methods.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the Planning Staff had discussed having the CAC review Article 25 of the Unified Development Ordinance and sections of the Comprehensive Plan, beginning with Section 2.3. She further said that the CAC would be looking at the community appearance standards and determining what they like or do not like about the Town's appearance overall. She said that she had created and emailed a Google Drive folder for the CAC to put their photos or information into so all members could see it. She said the information in the folder would be discussed at the next CAC meeting.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that Article 25 is based on design elements. She stated this Article lists what is explicitly required for any development. She told the CAC that incentives or a point system could be offered if they wanted to change how we regulate the design. She said other jurisdictions have this type of system. She said the Planning Staff wanted to suggest that the CAC research other communities' design policies and regulations, and view the policies or incentives they might include. She also asked the CAC to note some proposed design standards that apply to what they would like to see in Boone.

Ms. Mitchell said that the Planning Staff had discussed the possibility of including innovative standards in Article 25 to include developing technologies for a green product or design. She said the CAC could also look for a way to include either incentives or other ways to promote green products into the design language.

Ms. Mitchell said the Planning Staff would work on the lighting design standards. She said this is a large part of Article 25, and it will be a considerable amount of work to draft language. Due to the amount of time this

work will take, the Planning Staff suggested that the CAC hold off on their March meeting. She said this would allow the Planning Staff time to work on the proposed language for said standards. She added that the CAC could also work on the design standards during this time. At the April meeting, both the proposed lighting and design standards could be discussed.

Ms. Shook added that part of the comprehensive planning process would include an Urban Design Element. She said that the Planning Staff would be asking the community what they want their community to look like. She noted that the Planning Staff is requesting the CAC to review Article 25, and consider how we can achieve the things we would like to see and not necessarily come up with specific standards.

Ms. Shook explained that when considering the minimum standards, for example, 25 percent of a property is required to be brick, rock, or wood. She said generally only the minimum standards are met, and the applicant is not adding any additional features to their property.

Ms. Shook said she thought part of the question is what does our community want. She said there had been conversations that included that we wanted a cohesive look for the town. One of the complaints that the Planning Staff frequently hears from architects is that it is challenging to meet the feature and elevation requirements. She suggested that the CAC propose things they might want to see from an architect's perspective. She added that once we decide what we want our community to look like, we need to discuss how we regulate it. She said that Staff recognizes that this process could take ten to 15 years to achieve.

Ms. Shook said that the Planning Staff has talked about ways to encourage participation during the comprehensive planning process. She said if we are in person, there can be a board set up where people can put notes beside what they like or do not like. She said there are many opportunities to take feedback, put it in the comprehensive plan, and then create regulation.

Discussion ensued on community outreach during the comprehensive planning process. Council Liaison George asked Ms. Shook if the community outreach would be similar to the public hearing process for the historic district. Ms. Shook said that each project Staff undertakes allows us to think outside the box from what we usually have done to get public participation. She noted that she believed the Town had more involvement with the Downtown Planning Project than before because of the Planning Staff's efforts. She thought the process for participation could have been better. She said she would like to explore ways to have better outreach into the different areas of the town. She said she would prefer having community meetings set up in different parts of the town, depending on what we decide for the overall process. She said she would be interested in hearing any suggestions on this particular process. Council Liaison Tugman noted that she had attended a public session a few years ago, and she was impressed with the amount of discussion regarding that proposed plan. She asked Ms. Shook if it was appropriate to submit good photographic examples of what other cities have done. Ms. Shook said in the past that she has called and got permission to use examples from other jurisdictions in our ordinance.

Member Cook noted that she had not seen a reference to ADA accessibility in Article 25. Ms. Shook explained that the information on the ADA accessibility is located in the building code and regulated by the state.

Council Liaison George suggested some ways to get better community participation. He suggested sending high school students or volunteers into the community's neighborhoods to inform them that we were working on a proposed plan. He said the buy-in from the community members was great. He said he felt that this concept could be applied to both the comprehensive plan and the community appearance standards. Ms. Shook said she liked that idea if we could think of a way to package it all together when presenting it to Council. She also stated that as long as we have the understanding that we are always going to wait until we have the large community vision before we move forward.

Ms. Shook said that some design professionals in the community have already approached the Planning Staff regarding updating the lighting standards. Ms. Shook said the current lighting standards do not have LED information. She confirmed that the Planning Staff would do its academic research for best practices, draft the proposed lighting standards, and present them at the April CAC meeting.

Chair Cagle suggested setting up a polling type system where people could vote on pictures on social media regarding the look or description of a building to receive public feedback. Ms. Shook pointed out that photos must be sourced and suggested narrowing the list down to an architect's perspective. Ms. Shook said the Boone Chamber used to have a program where they recognized a business that had been constructed in that year and would recognize its appearance or its landscaping.

Ms. Shook talked about photographing all of the buildings built in the last few years. She said she would make a list of buildings constructed since the appearance standards were adopted. She said the building inspectors could take photos of those buildings while they are in the field doing inspections. She noted that everything looks worse in winter, but it would be helpful to make the photos in the same timeframe so there are no opposing seasons.

Vice-Chair Bugge said he supported the idea of sending someone into the neighborhoods to talk with the community and explain what we are doing. He thought this was a potentially effective method.

Ms. Shook said in her opinion; she would prefer to involve the public when the Planning Staff and the CAC have the comprehensive planning process worked out. She noted that she would like to merge community participation into one process. She said that she would work with Council on what degree they want the Planning Staff and the CAC to handle community participation. She said she would like to complete some other items that the Planning Staff are working on before focusing on the comprehensive planning process. She said that it would be time-consuming, and she felt it should be because she thinks the community deserves that kind of attention on said plan.

Council Liaison Tugman asked Ms. Shook how the comprehensive plan's revising gets done. Ms. Shook explained that this was the first one she had been involved in. She said the plan was updated in 2006 by the Planning Commission. She explained that in that update they divided into assigned groups and worked on each portion of the plan. There were a couple of public hearings. Ms. Shook said the 2030 Plan is the only model, and some consultants managed and led it through multiple Charrettes where stakeholders were identified.

Ms. Shook disclosed the Planning Staff's recommendations for updating the comprehensive plan. She said the process would probably be a hybrid model with the Planning Staff and some consultants. She said she feels that this is what is best for our community. She noted that she is not qualified to do certain analyses on transportation and some other things. She said that the Planning Staff would need guidance on a layout for the next 20 years of transportation improvements that coincide with other adopted plans the town has participated in, such as the county transportation plan. She said that as soon as the Planning Staff gets an outline that will work best for this process the Planning Staff will present it to Council for their review.

Chair Cagle confirmed with Ms. Shook that the comprehensive plan was last updated in 2006. She asked Ms. Shook when reviewing the design standards if the CAC should be including the downtown historic district. Ms. Shook said yes, and the Planning Staff can include a map of that area in the Google folder that shows the downtown areas and the area outside of it. Chair Cagle said this would be helpful because the CAC would better understand the land sizes.

Ms. Shook explained the process for researching properties using the Watauga County GIS system and gave everyone their website: www.wataugacounty.org. She stated that from the County's website, the navigation includes selecting Departments, then Tax Administration, next type in the property owner's name, address or parcel identification number, and lastly click on the search button. She told the CAC members that if they cannot find the data on the property to email the Planning Staff and they will research the property and email the data back to them.

Chair Cagle asked Ms. Shook if we needed to set a timeline. Ms. Mitchell said she believed the April CAC meeting could be the deadline for the CAC to have their research completed.

Ms. Shook said she would communicate to the Boone Police Department that groups of citizens would take photos of buildings. Chair Cagle suggested setting some perimeters for the taking of photographs. She suggested it needs to be daylight or dusk hours and nothing after 8 p.m. Ms. Shook agreed with Chair Cagle.

Vice-Chair Bugge suggested that since there will not be a CAC meeting, perhaps the CAC might collaborate somehow; if not, WebEx maybe use an email thread. Ms. Shook informed Vice-Chair Bugge that his suggestion would violate the open meetings law. She asked the CAC to upload their information to the Google folder, and it could all be discussed at the next CAC meeting.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

OTHER MATTERS BY BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF

Chair Cagle confirmed that it was the consensus of the CAC members not to hold the March 22, 2022, CAC meeting and to have the April 26, 2022, CAC meeting.

Ms. Shook said that the Planning Staff would email the CAC and keep them updated on certain things as we go along.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cagle made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair, to adjourn the meeting at 6: 38 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None
The motion passed.

Sarah-Davis Cagle, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary