

**TOWN OF BOONE
COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2022, 5:30 P.M.**

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Barrett Conner, Kendell Holshouser, and Elliot Sheehan

TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON MEMBERS PRESENT: Dalton George

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner; Brandon Wise, Environmental Planner and Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner and Staff Liaison to the commission called to order the Boone Community Appearance Commission meeting held via WebEx, a video conferencing software, on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 5:38 p.m.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, noted that there was not a quorum for this meeting, and the information that would be presented did not require a quorum.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the approval of minutes for the November 22, 2022 meeting would be at a later date when there was quorum.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Shook directed Ms. Mitchell to give an update on the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Ms. Mitchell reminded the CAC that at their last meeting on November 22, 2022, they had finished up the Planning and Inspections primer. At that time, she had explained to the CAC that they could be looking at existing Town plans to broadly consider the appearance standards from those plans.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the Planning Staff had started stakeholder meetings regarding the comprehensive plan. She stated that at these meetings Staff had invited engineers, architects, and developers to attend. She said they also discussed small businesses and housing-related topics. She said they had stakeholder meetings in November, March, and April 2023.

Ms. Mitchell informed the CAC that in January 2023, there was the annual Planning Retreat with Town Council. She said at the retreat, the Town Council directed the CAC to begin to meet quarterly. She noted that she had emailed the CAC about this meeting change. She said that she would continue to update the CAC as information becomes available.

Ms. Mitchell explained to the CAC that the Town Council is in the beginning stages of working on its vision for the Comprehensive Plan. She said the Town Council wants to do more research and have more stakeholder meetings to help them create their vision for the Comprehensive Plan. She said the Town Council would like to do more research on less car-orientated development, 15-minute city model. She also stated that Town Council is considering small area plans to look at some of the corridors like Blowing Rock Road and Highway 421 on the East side of Boone to try to see what those areas would possibly look like in 15 to 20 years. She expressed that housing is still very much a concern to Town Council.

Ms. Mitchell said there is still information and assessments that are continuing to be worked on such as the tree canopy assessment and Community Climate Action Plan. She said these topics would be worked into the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the work of the CAC, such as the appearance standards, would be dependent on the Town Council's vision for the Comprehensive Plan. She explained that because the Town Council vision is not set, there is not a specific project for the CAC to work towards at this time.

Ms. Mitchell said the next steps would be to have a stakeholder meeting that would include all of the boards, such as the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Historic Preservation Commission, and the Community Appearance Commission, to get their input on the Comprehensive Plan. She said that no date had been set for this stakeholder meeting, but she would let each board member know when it is scheduled.

Member Sheehan voiced his excitement that the Town Council is considering the 15-minute city as part of their vision. Ms. Mitchell asked Member Sheehan to give feedback on why he thought the 15-minute city was a good concept. Member Sheehan supported less car-oriented development because of information he recently had seen, and he was recently almost involved in an accident in a crosswalk.

Ms. Shook asked Ms. Mitchell to inform the CAC of the Town of Boone's Comprehensive Plan Progress and Update webpage. Ms. Mitchell shared her screen and pointed out where this information could be viewed by going to www.townofboone.net and then navigating to the "Your Government" option, then to the "Planning and Inspections" page, and finally selecting the "Comprehensive Plan Progress and Update" button. She explained that this webpage includes some background information, meeting minutes, and dates of the stakeholder meetings. She said that she would send the CAC the link to this webpage.

Ms. Shook explained that in preparation for the future stakeholder meeting with the Town Council, she encouraged the CAC, as CAC members and as residents of the Town of Boone, to make a list of concerns that they may have and prepare to share their visions for the Comprehensive Plan as part of their role as CAC members.

Ms. Shook asked Council Liaison George to voice his thoughts on the progress of the comprehensive plan. He also encouraged the CAC members to come to the stakeholder meeting prepared to share their visions. He said that in the past stakeholder meetings, whether they were discussing housing or small businesses, they also talked about the role that the CAC would play in this process. He was glad to hear that one of the CAC members liked the 15-minute city model because this topic had been discussed a lot. He thought the CAC had great perspectives to bring to the board stakeholder meeting.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the stakeholder meetings are held in the Town Council Chambers, but they are held in a different setting where the people can be candid with the Town Council when giving their feedback.

NC FOREST SERVICE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

Mr. Brandon Wise, Environmental Planner, stated that the Community Appearance Commission acts as the Tree Board for the Town of Boone. He said he and Mr. George Santucci, Sustainability Director, learned of this grant opportunity from the Town of Boone Landscape Specialist, Mr. Tom Bolick. He explained this project would also involve the Town's grant writer, Michelle Brown. He said part of the application for the grant is to inform the Tree Board that the Town is applying for it. He added that this grant is only available to non-profit or government entities. The grant awards up to \$15,000.00, and is a 50 percent match grant. He said Mr. Santucci will work with the Public Works Department on the grant finances. He explained that the Town would use the grant to begin re-building the tree inventory. He said the result would be an inventory of all of the publicly owned and maintained trees, which would include street trees and trees in maintained

areas, with a focus on trees in small parks. He said the grant could also be used for assessing the tree canopy. He explained this would be used as the Urban Forestry Master Management Plan and be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan update.

Ms. Shook asked Mr. Wise to explain to the CAC the benefit of having a tree inventory. Mr. Wise said the tree inventory allows the Town to know where they have trees, the quality of those trees, and which trees might need future replacement. He suggested creating a standard to attach a value to each tree. He said by placing a value on the trees would help Mr. Bolick and the Public Works Department know where to plan on replacing a tree when needed.

Council Liaison George asked Mr. Wise if he thought the tree inventory would help the Town remove non-native trees from Town property and slowly replace them. He asked if this is part of this grant request. Mr. Wise responded that he had discussed with Mr. Bolick how to incorporate that with this project, and how to balance it with the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). He said the Town Staff has to figure out the replacement of trees with the UDO because the Town has certain protection limits on the trees. He said that normally, the invasive trees tend to be unhealthy. He added if the location of these kinds of trees can be identified, it will help in the future when the Town adopts an ordinance for the removal of invasive trees. Council Liaison George said that maybe the CAC or the Town Council could look at streamlining the removal of invasive trees.

Ms. Shook asked if there was a difference between invasive and non-native trees. Mr. Wise responded that the difference between invasive and non-native trees is that non-native trees are problematic. He said you could have a non-native tree that can live in the mountainous region, for example, Japanese Maples can live in this area, and they will not spread and detrimentally damage our native species. He added that invasive trees will actually harm native species. He noted that Bradford Pear trees impact other pear trees and cause issues when they cross-pollinate.

Ms. Shook agreed with Council Liaison George regarding the ordinance not prioritizing native plants, or including the rights for the property owner to remove non-native plant material to replace it with native material. She added that the ordinance defines native and salt tolerant in the appendices. Ms. Shook said this is a very interesting aspect that has not been addressed. Mr. Wise said the ordinance had been amended for the Historic District for native plants. Council Liaison George told Mr. Wise that he is partial to redbuds and requested to get some of them placed on town property. Mr. Wise noted that redbuds are one that New River Light and Power likes to see planted because they are easy to prune and do not grow very tall.

OTHER DISCUSSION

In summary, Ms. Mitchell informed the CAC that their next meeting would be held on Tuesday, June 27, 2023. She also informed the CAC that the board stakeholder meeting would most likely be scheduled before their June meeting. She said that the Planning Staff would continue to communicate with the CAC on upcoming meetings or anything that the Planning Staff might need their participation in.

Mr. Wise encouraged the CAC members to attend the combination Town of Boone Earth Day/Arbor Day/Sustainability event to be held at the Jones House on Friday, April 21, 2023. He said there would be representatives from local non-profits attending, such as from the Watauga County Agricultural Center and the Watauga County Food Hub. He said it would also be a tree and sustainability-related event where there will be forestry individuals able to answer questions, along with the Town Arborist, Mr. Tom Bolick, and himself. He added there will be people from Environmental and Sustainability fields, as well as, the Town of Boone Utilities and Sewer Plant. He said that food and drink would be provided to the Town through the Food Hub and the Extension office.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to discuss, Ms. Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

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

Jessica Mitchell, CAC Staff Liaison

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary