

**TOWN OF BOONE
COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022, 5:30 P.M.**

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Caroline Knight, Vice-Chair Paige Smith, Barrett Conner, Elliot Sheehan, and Evan Warren

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

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Caroline Knight called to order the Boone Community Appearance Commission meeting held in the Planning and Inspections Upstairs Conference Room at 680 W. King Street on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 5:41 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Member Sheehan made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Smith, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Sheehan made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Smith, to approve September 27, 2022, meeting minutes as presented.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Discussion on Virtual or In-Person CAC Meetings

Ms. Mitchell explained that she told each new CAC member during their orientation that they would need to decide if they wanted to hold future meetings in person or virtually. She said all the members indicated at that time that they wanted to hold the meetings in-person. She pointed out that a question had come up regarding the format of the CAC meetings. She asked which format the CAC might want to hold their future meetings. She reminded the CAC that the meeting format needs to be consistent because the Planning Staff has to manage meeting calendars and meeting notices each month. Chair Knight and Member Sheehan said they liked in-person meetings. Member Warren said he liked in person meetings, but he wanted an option for other members or staff to join virtually in the case of sickness or other extenuating circumstances. Ms. Mitchell said the meetings could be held virtually for a CAC member in case of an extenuating circumstance. She told the CAC that if they wanted to have their future meetings in the hybrid format, there would need to be consensus from all of the members. Ms. Shook clarified that the CAC would need to limit the times they change the meeting format because the Planning Staff has to advertise the meeting times a certain number of days before the meeting date. She pointed out that the Planning Staff would need notice from the CAC to set up the recording system for a hybrid or virtual meeting.

Discussion ensued on the CAC meeting schedule during the holidays. Ms. Shook asked the CAC if they knew their holiday schedule and if they could attend the CAC meetings in November and December. Some of the CAC said they could attend the November meeting in person. Ms. Shook stated that the CAC in years past had canceled their November and December meetings due to the holidays. Chair Knight suggested that the November CAC meeting be held virtually. It was the consensus of the CAC to hold the November CAC meeting in a virtual format. Ms. Shook suggested that the Planning Staff poll the CAC in January to see if they wanted future meetings to be held virtually or not.

PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS PRIMER

Ms. Mitchell reviewed pages 26 through 44 of the presentation (permanently on file). In the presentation, she covered the following topics: Article 25 Community Appearance Standards, specifically sections Article 25 Section 2 (25.02) Building Design, Article 25.03 Parking Structures, Article 25.04 Site Walls, Article 25.05 Lighting, Article 25.06 & Article 25.07 Flexibility in Administration and Alternatives. She reviewed with the CAC that within Article 25, it pertains to publicly visible portions of building elements. Ms. Mitchell noted that while working on the Comprehensive Plan update, Article 25 might be amended. She said the Planning Staff would update the CAC with each step of the process of the updating of the plan.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out in Article 25 that the CAC could be looking for features, referencing Article 25.02, that will help develop the character of a commercial building. Ms. Shook pointed out that the CAC and the Planning Staff will look at this section to see how the standards apply to new development and how they trigger certain improvements. Ms. Mitchell, continuing to reference Article 25.02, noted that the Planning Staff often sees proposed plans where the roof pitches are too low, which can cause issues, and examples are given in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to show developers the types of roof pitches that are allowed in the Downtown area.

Council Liaison Tugman asked if the Town does allow vinyl siding only in wood. Ms. Shook replied that the Town does allow it as the type of vinyl siding that has a wood grain texture to it. She also stated that it is not allowed in the Downtown area. Vice-Chair Smith asked about the standard in Article 25.02 that discussed vinyl siding, and if there would be restrictions for insulated vinyl siding. Ms. Shook replied that it would require special approval and would not be within the Downtown area.

Discussion ensued on Article 25.02 and the Light Reflection Value (LRV). Ms. Mitchell pointed out that the example used in the meeting packet for the color chart was specifically for the Wellness District. She explained that the Senior Planners evaluate the proposed color values submitted for a particular percentage. Council Liaison Tugman asked Ms. Mitchell to explain the Light Reflection Value (LRV) of less than 60 percent. Ms. Mitchell explained that if you have a proposed color palette from black to white and black is zero percent and white is 100 percent, 60 percent would be almost a grayish color. She said the Planning Staff is looking for a percentage less than 60 for paint colors that would have the light reflection value in the lower range.

Discussion ensued on incentivizing to get the look we want for commercial buildings. Ms. Mitchell said the Planning Staff is seeing features proposed on their development plans that are not as creative. She talked about finding ways to help incentivize with the current standards, revising the standards, or looking at other jurisdictions to see how they regulate such standards. She continued that something such as a point system could be used, and to see if other jurisdictions use that in standards. Mr. Brandon Wise, Environmental Planner, added that the Planning Staff wants to encourage a developer to be creative and, at the same time, support the look that we want to see on our commercial buildings. Council Liaison George added to the discussion that a point system would add architectural diversity.

Council Liaison Tugman said that several years ago, a lot of construction was done with a chalet design. She asked if this type of design is what the Town was trying to prevent from happening because in twenty years, the look could significantly not be what they wanted. Ms. Mitchell explained that Planning Staff has seen proposed commercial building designs with heavier building material on the bottom of the building, which creates almost a block pattern for the building. She said that developers are finding it more cost-effective to put these heavier materials on the bottom of the building, rather than throughout the building design. She said Staff would like to see measures to encourage designs where you can add more features onto a building. Member Warren pointed out that from a building contractor perspective, you have to put heavier materials below lighter materials on the building. Ms. Mitchell added to the discussion that discussions among Planning Staff has been to try to see more materials used throughout a design.

Council Liaison Tugman said it would be great, if we had photos of the Watauga Savings and Loan building prior to the recent exterior renovation that shows the fenestration work. She pointed out that now it is a solid brick building, and before the exterior renovation, that building had several big picture windows, flat vinyl, highly reflective panels that were of a turquoise and cream color, and a glass entrance with an aluminum curved stair case. Council Liaison Tugman talked about an affordable housing residential development that she saw in San Antonio, Texas. She noted that the developer of these homes used different kinds of roof lines. She said that she believed these are the types of things the CAC could be looking for when they travel to different areas.

Vice-Chair Smith asked how the Town would incentivize and not be subjective; she further asked how the Town goes about getting the look they want in the Downtown area, which is not subject to what only the CAC thinks the Town should be. Ms. Shook responded that we begin, based on receiving community input, during the Comprehensive Plan process, on what the community wants their built environment to be. She said the Planning Staff and the CAC would be the stewards that help to create that vision. She said discussion is needed on how to create the tools to best get us to that vision through each project or modification of a project. She stated that is a matter of evaluating the relationship to the community rather than what someone personally wants to see. She said the past direction had been to take elements from the Downtown to the other parts of the Town to try to create a cohesive look. She explained how evaluating another method to the standards, such as the point system, would incentivize materials and features the community selects. She said we would use these standards to develop a sense of place and purpose for the community. She encouraged the CAC to look at buildings around Town, such as the newer vet clinic on Hwy 105, to see how the architect used the building materials to make a more contemporary look for the building. Council Liaison George pointed out that getting the private developers to be more willing to make a greater effort to do more than the minimum features on a building is the most challenging. He mentioned the Blue Ridge Tourist Court property on Old U.S. Highway 421 that is applying these standards.

Chair Knight asked about comparative measures and what has been done. Ms. Shook replied that mass and scale has been compared, particularly in the Downtown area, where it is important to match mass and scale. She mentioned that there are goals, such as affordable housing, that might require a higher density. Council Liaison George added that there has to be harmony in the area.

Member Conner asked about how perforated brick would be allowed, and Ms. Shook replied that Article 25 has standards that allow flexibility in administration where these types of situations can be reviewed. She mentioned that in an ordinance not every material will be covered, so it would be reviewed how the material is being used and in-line with the other approved materials of a plan.

Ms. Mitchell discussed the requirements for parking structures, and Council Liaison Tugman asked about the requirement of windows being 42 inches above the finished floor. Ms. Shook replied that is correct.

Ms. Mitchell discussed site wall requirements within Article 25, and Mr. Wise added that retaining over four or five feet to be engineered and engineered certified. He added that site walls are used frequently as a screening method.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that the Lighting Standards are currently being amended, and these revised standards will go to the January public hearing. She said all new commercial development uses these lighting standards. She said that currently, up lighting is allowed in Boone, but down lighting is preferred. Ms. Shook pointed out that it is a requirement for the developer to provide certifications for lighting at the end of a project.

Ms. Mitchell discussed Articles 25.06 and 25.07 in which Ms. Shook added that it is not often that the CAC is needed for recommendation on proposed alternative materials. In the past experiences of using the CAC in this capacity, Ms. Shook said that it happened for one particular project.

Ms. Mitchell continued the primer by discussing the next UDO article; in this portion of the presentation the following topics were discussed:

- Article 31 Landscape Standards as applicable to all commercially developed land and all land within multiple zoning districts listed on packet page 37;
- Article 31.02 regarding landscape sight triangle;
- Article 31.05 including requirements for screening by land use classifications, screening type, and required bufferyard width;
- Article 31.06 utilizing existing vegetation to count towards the requirements, required minimum heights of planting, bufferyard limitations, and visual impacts of certain facilities;
- Article 31.09 including street yard requirements, and B-1 zoning district requirements
- Article 31.10 as standards for including landscaping in large expanses of pavement, in areas such as parking lots;
- Article 31.11 regarding how flexibility in administration is required in certain circumstances where not all standards can be met to the same mathematical calculations described;
- Article 31.12 including standards for landscaping certification, plant material must be installed by a landscape contractor licensed before final certification, pruning should be followed by industry standards listed within the Article and Appendix C; and
- Article 31.13 additional requirements for historic and significant trees, defining the Tree Protection Area (TPA);

Further, Appendix C, Details and Specifications Manual, was discussed as it is the CI Landscape Guide for landscaping, stormwater control for certain residential development. It was also discussed how Appendix C also includes tree preservation, the approved Plant List, and tree pruning in connection with the Urban Forestry Master Management Plan.

In Article 31.06.04, Landscape Standards, Mr. Wise and Ms. Shook pointed out that a “Type C” Bufferyard can be reduced to a “Type B” with the use of a fence or a wall, and a “Type B” Bufferyard can be reduced to a “Type A” with the use of a fence or a wall. They clarified that a developer cannot reduce a “Type A” Bufferyard with the use of a fence or a wall.

Discussion ensued on Article 31, Landscape Standards. Council Liaison Tugman asked if there were standards for landscaping requirements to maintain overgrown or dead landscaping. Ms. Shook said that the Planning Staff would enforce the ordinance if a shrub or tree blocked the site distance because it grew beyond its average size. She noted that Mr. Wise has to look at the power lines on a property to ensure that the proper species are planted under the power lines. She said trees under power lines might have to be replaced occasionally if they grow more than the average size. Mr. Wise added that the most common thing he looks

at on a property is where the owner has not maintained the site triangles. He said usually it just takes contacting the property owner and asking them to trim their shrubs or bushes to handle this type of issue.

Ms. Shook pointed out that many developments are not built to the current Landscape Standards, and the Town does not have the retroactive-ability to go back and enforce the current standards.

Mr. Wise pointed out that the current Landscape Standards do not regulate residential landscaping in the R-1 zoning district. He said that the Town cannot force residential property owners to cut down dead trees, but the property owner could be told that they might want to cut a dead tree down. Ms. Shook pointed out that there are two exceptions. She explained that the exceptions are if a tree is located in the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) right-of-way (ROW) or the tree is located in the Viewshed; she said the Town could limit tree removal in these areas.

Ms. Shook pointed out that landscape projects over \$30,000 require a landscape contractor. She also pointed out that any property line not facing a street is an interior property line requiring some type of buffer or landscaping. She noted that parking spaces must be located within 60 feet of the trunk of an over-story tree.

Council Liaison Tugman left the meeting at approximately 7:05 p.m.

Ms. Shook pointed out in Article 31.13 that a historic tree is 24 inches in diameter, and it can be removed if it falls into the building footprint, and if it can be demonstrated that there is no alternative available where you cannot get the same density.

Ms. Shook pointed out in Article 31.13 that a significant tree which is eight inches, can be removed if it falls within the building footprint or the vehicular surface area. Mr. Wise added that a significant tree could be removed if it is in the drip line.

Mr. Wise encouraged the CAC to think about the best way to preserve trees and, more specifically, how to preserve the tree canopies. He said the Town currently preserves individual trees and he encouraged the CAC to think about ways to save a percentage of trees on a development. Ms. Shook added that from an Urban Forestry perspective, there had been a shift in the best management practices. She said Mr. Wise would talk with the CAC to see if they think we should be utilizing some of those changes in practices for tree canopy preservation.

Ms. Mitchell continued with the primer with Article 34 on page 42 of the meeting packet, which mentions that definitions of key terms and phrases used throughout the UDO can be found within this article.

Ms. Mitchell talked about the Downtown Appearance Standards, and she summarized the guiding documents used for the Downtown area. She explained that the Downtown area is part of the B-1 Zoning District, which is divided into the B-1 Downtown Interface (B1DI) and the B-1 Downtown Core (B1DC). She said that Article 14.19 details the specifications for both B-1 Downtown Districts. She said that UDO Appendix D, also titled the "Downtown Boone Design Guidelines and Handbook," guides the B1DC, as this is the location for the Town's local historic district (Downtown Boone Local Historic District). She said that Article 8 also sets standards for historic districts, landmarks, and landmark properties within the Town of Boone limits and the historic district. She also explained that Article 8 guides routine maintenance, Statement of Conformity, or Certificate of Appropriateness projects. She noted that work within the Downtown Districts must follow the standards set in Article 14.19 and then if within the B1DC, must follow Appendix D and Article 8, Article 8 if it is also a landmark property.

Ms. Mitchell said that since she did not finish presenting the Planning and Inspections Primer at this meeting, she said at the next CAC meeting in November, she would begin the presentation on page 45 of the meeting packet and conclude the presentation. She said it might be helpful to hold only one meeting before the end of the year, and the Planning Staff would discuss the next steps with the Comprehensive Plan updates. She said the discussion would likely involve the Google Document where the previous CAC started evaluating commercial and multi-family construction.

Discussion resumed on the meeting format for the next CAC meeting. Chair Knight confirmed that the November CAC meeting will be held virtually. Ms. Mitchell said in November the Planning Staff would send out WebEx invitations for the CAC to accept to join the virtual meeting.

OTHER DISCUSSION

There was no other discussion at this meeting

ADJOURNMENT

Member Sheehan made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Caroline Knight, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary