

Downtown Boone Development Association
January Board Meeting – January 28, 2025
8:30 am – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Fulton Lovin, Renee Boughman, Stephanie Boozer, Sarah Long, Megan Kevorkian, Mike Forrester, Michelle Novacek, Vanessa White and Kendra Sink.

Ex-Officio's Present: Eric Plaag and Edie Tugman.

MSD Members/Guests present: Bob Flannigan (King Street Lofts), Hope Thingelstad (Explore Boone), Bob Snead (Dancing Moon), Julia Moretz (Betty's Biscuits)

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Mark Freed, Laney Wise, Geoff Hayes and Brad Farthing.

Call to Order

At 8:34 Kendra called the meeting to order.

Request for Approval of January Agenda

Lane noted that John Cooper has requested to speak briefly regarding the High Country Jazz Festival. Renee then made a motion to amend the agenda to allow for comment from John Cooper. The motion was seconded by Stephanie and had a unanimous vote.

Lane noted the addition of a new Board member and facilitated a brief round of introductions.

Request for Approval of November Meeting Minutes

Sarah made a motion to approve the November minutes. The motion was seconded by Mike and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements

Renee made a motion to approve the financial statements. The motion was seconded by Sarah and had a unanimous vote.

Requested Appearance: John Cooper with High Country Jazz Festival

John opened by thanking the Board and reviewing the events associated with the High Country Jazz Festival. He noted that this was the fourth year of the downtown Boone-centric event and encouraged the Board to consider sponsoring it. He emphasized that the festival attracts a unique audience to downtown Boone and suggested that DBDA's support would further strengthen the event. He concluded by stating that he would follow up with a formal proposal.

Requested Appearance: Laney Wise, Town of Boone Grant and Communication Coordinator

Laney opened by reporting to the Board that the Town in partnership Blue Ridge Conservancy was awarded the Recreational Trails Grant and she hope that construction will start later in the year. She thanked the Board for pledging part of the match funds to make that trail become a reality. She ended by noting her excitement to have trails in downtown Boone.

Eric Plaag took a moment to thank Laney for her work on a variety of grants for the Town.

Approval of Letter of Support for Howard Street Grant Opportunity

Lane opened by asking if Laney would also speak about this grant opportunity. Laney explained that it is an NC Department of Commerce grant specifically for Main Street Communities, with the potential to provide up to \$800,000 in funding for the Howard Street Revitalization Project. She reviewed some of the grant logistics and emphasized the importance of letters of support in advocating for the project. After a brief discussion, Michelle made a motion to approve the proposal. Fulton seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Discussion of ARC Ready Nonprofits Training Program

Lane opened by noting that she learned about this opportunity through the NC Main Street listserv and thought it would be a beneficial opportunity. She reviewed the time commitment required for the training program and explained that there are eight course options, of which two must be selected for the application. The course options include Board Development, Financial Management, Fundraising, Marketing/Communications, Programs and Operations, Human Capital, Grant Writing and Management, and Strategic Planning. While acknowledging the value of all the courses, Lane suggested that Board Development and Marketing/Communications could be the most beneficial selections and was open to discuss further if needed. She asked if the Board supported her application for the program and approved the proposed course selections. Megan made a motion for Lane to apply with the chosen courses. Michelle seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Confirmation of Budget Retreat Dates

Lane opened by reminding everyone of the upcoming budget retreat scheduled for Tuesday, February 11, but noted that she did not have a listed time. Sarah mentioned that she had it scheduled from 9:00 to 11:00 AM on her calendar. Kendra emphasized the importance of the meeting and polled the Board, with all members present indicating that the date and time worked for them.

Discussion of Upcoming Main Street Conference

Lane updated the Board on the Main Street Program assessment, noting that she submitted it on Friday, January 10. She reviewed the different standards and highlighted that additional details were required this year. She also mentioned that she had a copy of the assessment available for anyone interested in reviewing it.

Lane then provided details about the upcoming Main Street Conference, scheduled for March 11-13 in Mooresville, NC. She encouraged the Board to review the agenda for the three-day event, emphasizing the valuable educational opportunities offered in the toolkit sessions. She finished up the Conference discussion by asking Board members to inform her as soon as possible if they planned to attend so she could handle their registration and hotel accommodations.

Lane informed the Board that NC Main Street had reached out regarding the possibility of Boone hosting the Director's Conference in August. There was a brief discussion about venue space in downtown and then Lane reiterated that it not yet been confirmed, discussions are ongoing, and she will keep the Board updated.

Discussion of Headshot Session

Lane opened by stating that per the last discussion she reached out to Steve Hopper, who the Board has been working with on event photography, to see if he would be interested in providing the photography for the business owner headshot session. Lane stated that he could \$250 to cover the 2-hour event with the goal of accommodating 10-15 business owners. There was a brief discussion, and then Kendra made

a motion to approve having Steve Hopper do the photography. The motion was seconded by Sarah and had a unanimous vote.

Recap and Discussion of Destination Development Training

Lane began by reviewing the various opportunities that have taken place and reviewed the 15 businesses and organizations that are currently eligible for the second round of training. She mentioned that although Main Street initially advertised that the first round of training needed to be completed by January 13, participants can still sign up and finish the sessions. Lane added that, based on her discussions with Jon Schallert, he has been quite flexible, so she plans to continue encouraging participants to complete the training and work toward certification. With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Discussion of Howard Street Updates on DBDA Website

Lane shared insights from her discussion with Downtown Concord regarding their recent streetscape project, noting that their website effectively presents project information. She suggested that it might be beneficial to replicate their approach on the DBDA website.

Lane added that while the Town does not have mock-ups for the project, historical information and a project timeline could be included. She also proposed creating a space for construction updates and incorporating QR codes on downtown signage to help inform the public.

A discussion followed regarding the lack of mock-ups and whether any materials were available to serve as visual aids for the project. Lane expressed concerns that the Town's existing materials were either outdated or overly complex to interpret. After further discussion, the Board indicated its support for adding project updates to the website.

Discussion of Hosting Destination Development Advanced Training on Feb 17

Lane opened by reminding the Board that the Advanced Destination Development Workshop is scheduled for February 17 and will be held at the Appalachian Theatre. She noted that there had been discussions on the Main Street listserv about the first few workshops, mentioning that, according to emails, Sanford had set a high standard for hospitality.

A brief discussion followed on how Boone could exceed that standard, with consensus around creating goody bags, having logoed cupcakes possibly featuring Jon Schallert's face and highlighting Boone's unique products.

Lane concluded by informing the Board that she planned to send an email to downtown businesses offering three ways to participate on the day of the workshop: contributing an item for the goody bags, providing a discount or coupon for the day, or donating an item for a raffle. The Board then took a moment to brainstorm other opportunities to make downtown Boone the most hospitable in the state.

With no further discussion, the Board moved on.

Discussion of 2025 First Friday Art Crawl

Lane opened by noting that she had met last year with Elizabeth Auer and Lindsay Miller of the Turchin Center, who highlighted that February was one of their busiest months for arts crawls. She continued that while the DBDA typically didn't do much in February, she would be working with the Watauga Arts Council this year to change that. She planned to reach out to gather information about upcoming events

and promote them on DBDA's social media. Lane also noted that in April, the event would return to Earth First Friday, and in July, due to the 4th of July falling on a Friday, the Art Crawl would be moved to Thursday, July 3. She added that she was still working on procuring insurance for the Art Crawl events. A brief conversation followed, and Lane mentioned that she would be reaching out to HighStreet and Greystone for coverage.

Discussion of Potential Public Art Spaces

Lane noted that she had included three potential art spaces in the agenda packet, each of which had been discussed for some time. She explained that due to other projects, the Design Committee had not been as active, and she sought input from the Board in the absence of committee guidance.

She briefly reviewed the opportunities at Melanie's, the area on N. Depot Street, and the alley at 681 W. King Street. Lane mentioned that she had prioritized the projects in order of completion but recently learned that upcoming work might take place on N. Depot Street. Given this, she suggested it might be wise to wait and see what those plans entail.

After a brief discussion, there was general consensus among the Board to move forward with updates to Melanie's while simultaneously working to clean up the brick in the alleyway. Lane added that the alley project would likely require coordination with the Watauga Arts Council, and once the wall was cleaned up, art would need to be installed quickly to prevent graffiti.

She concluded by noting that she would provide progress reports to the Board as updates became available and that she had not forgotten about the Queen Street stairs project.

Mark informed the Board that a large burley tobacco scale is currently housed on the Rivers Property. Thanks to a grant written by Laney, the space where it is currently located will be converted into public restrooms. He added that this transition presents a unique opportunity to incorporate the scale into the downtown area as a distinctive feature.

Fulton added that he would like to see a 3D mural on the side of Mast General Store and encouraged the Board to think creatively about how to utilize the space. Kendra noted that approvals would be needed from Mast General Store to use the wall and suggested that incorporating town history would likely make the proposal more palatable to the owners.

The Board discussed public art opportunities for a few minutes.

Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project

Lane stated that she did not have any updates to offer other than she hoped to have more information after the pre-construction meeting in February.

Call for Adjournment

With no other items to discuss, Michelle made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Sarah and had a unanimous vote.