Downtown Boone Development Association
February Board Meeting – February 25, 2025
8:30 am – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Renee Boughman, Stephanie Boozer, Suzanne Livesay, Kendra Sink, Sarah Long, Fulton Lovin and Mike Forrester (virtually)

Ex-Officio's Present: Eric Plaag, Edie Tugman, and Lindsay Miller

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Mark Freed and Brad Farthing

MSD Member's Present: Alyssa Hasty (Lost Province), Hope Thingelstad (Explore Boone), Julia Moretz (Betty's Biscuits), Bob Flanigan (King Street Lofts) and Amber Bateman (Watauga Arts Council)

Call to Order

At 8:35, Kendra called the meeting to order.

Lane shared two quick updates. First, she provided an update on celebrating Robin Hodges, who recently retired from the Downtown Post Office. She mentioned that she had ordered a plaque and planned to reach out to Robin to see if she would be open to a small reception.

Second, Lane asked the Board for input on the best day and time to schedule the headshot session. The Board reached a consensus that Thursday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. would be the most suitable time.

Request for Approval of February Agenda

Eric asked if he could add an update on the parking recommendations at the end of the general business section. Renee made a motion to approve the February agenda as amended. Stephanie seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Request for Approval of January Minutes

Suzanne made a motion to approve the January minutes. Renee seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Request for Approval of February Budget Retreat Minutes

Eric requested that in the last paragraph under "Review of Promotion Actions," the word "trail" be replaced with "marker." Suzanne moved to approve the minutes with Eric's suggested change. Sarah seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Update on Recently Adopted Parking Recommendation

Eric opened by noting that the Town and County were currently in discussions regarding parking enforcement for the new County parking deck on Water Street. He said that the details were still being finalized but that he looked forward to the expanded parking options and partnership.

He went on to inform the Board that after a hiatus due to Hurricane Helene, the Parking Group had reconvened to review the public meetings on parking held in July and August. He continued by stating that the group had submitted their recommendations to Town Council for review at the February meeting, where Council approved the following changes: exploring new meters and technology, expanding metered parking for employees, designating permit spaces at the Rivers House, increasing meter rates to $1.50 effective in fiscal year 2026, advocating for expanded ridership opportunities with AppalCart, exploring revisions to the permit system, adopting a monthly bank draft payment option, seeking to recoup outstanding fines, tasking the Sustainability Committee with researching incentives for walking or using public transportation, prioritizing the completion of the Greenway, researching a tourist trolley which AppalCart has expressed excitement for, and developing a community-wide parking website.

Discussion of Hosting Jon Schallert Advanced Workshop on March 25

Lane opened by noting that the workshop had been rescheduled due to uncertainty around federal grant funds. She mentioned that she had included the rescheduling email in the agenda packet and that she still intended to move forward with the hospitality plan discussed previously, including the customized cupcakes. She added that she would like to send out a press release to build excitement around the event.

Wrapping up, she noted that she was still actively working to encourage additional businesses to complete the initial training in order to attend the advanced workshop. After a brief discussion about attendance numbers, the Board moved on.

Request for Approval of Updated NC Main Street Work Plan

Lane opened by noting that these were the final language changes discussed during the budget retreat and quickly reviewed them. Suzanne pointed out that it looked like the culinary festival language had not yet been updated. Kendra suggested changing “Culinary Festival” to “Restaurant Week” and replacing “festival” with “week” in the second sentence.
Fulton then made a motion to approve the amended plan. Sarah seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Request for Funding for Watauga County Public Library for Downtown Shred Event

Lane opened by noting that this was the fourth year the Board had received this request. She then turned the discussion over to Watauga County Librarian Monica Caruso.

Monica began by thanking the Board for considering the request and noted that during tax season, they frequently receive requests for shredding resources. She mentioned that costs had increased and that they were also seeking funding from the Friends of the Library group. She added that last year they doubled the amount of shredded material from the previous year, processing 8,000 pounds of paper in 2024.

After a brief discussion about the details of how much material could be brought, Kendra made a motion to approve the request to cover half of the shred event costs. Renee seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Discussion of Hosting The NC Main Street Director’s Meeting in August

Kendra opened by expressing her excitement that we would be hosting this year. Lane agreed and informed the Board that NC Main Street staff had been swamped and that she would be meeting with them on April 15 to finalize the details.

Lane went on to say that she has been working with Kristina Pugh in Camps and Conferences at App State, noting that Kristina has been delightful to work with. She added that, to her understanding, the dates have been reserved for the Parkway Ballroom, but it appears that the University is reviewing the rental to explore potential opportunities for sponsorship. Lane expressed her relief upon learning that there will be no classes held on campus during the conference dates of August 4-7 and reviewed some of the planning details related to parking and catering.

During her conversation with Kristina, Lane mentioned that the University will be hosting a variety of conferences and that they brainstormed ways to encourage event attendees to visit and support downtown. She also reviewed some of the upcoming groups that will be coming to campus over the next few months.

A longer discussion followed regarding event calendars and how to ensure that downtown businesses are aware of major events happening nearby. There was general consensus to use the DBDA Google Calendar to circulate events among the Board, and Lane will explore other calendar options, specifically Locable, with the goal of developing a community event calendar.

Discussion and Approval of Budget Recommendations

Lane began by noting that the proposed budget did not include any significant changes, aside from reallocating funds to strengthen the Community Appearance line in support of additional grant funding. She added that the budget also included a variety of previously approved projects. Edie asked about the status of the Joe Miller bench project, to which Amber responded that, due to various factors, the project was currently on hold but would still move forward. Lane then gave a brief overview of some of the budget items. Sarah made a motion to approve the budget recommendation, which was seconded by Kendra and passed unanimously.

Discussion of Training Opportunities in March for the Small Business Center Network

Lane began by informing the Board that we have a new Main Street representative, Joy Almond, who will serve as our liaison to the program. She then shared that Joy had provided information on several upcoming trainings, and Lane identified a few that she thought might be particularly useful, including sessions on managing cash flow, Canva, and Google training. Lane noted that she would include this information in the March newsletter. A brief discussion followed regarding the benefits and drawbacks of Canva, with a suggestion to seek input from a local printer to get their thoughts.

Update on Stoneman's Raid Marker

Lane noted that during the Budget Retreat Eric had covered most of this update but she had the memo in the agenda for the Board's review.

Discussion of Restaurant Week Brainstorming

Lane noted that this discussion was in response to the changes and feedback from the budget retreat. She shared some of her research and expressed a concern that these types of events are often organized by a restaurant association or marketing group. As a result, the DBDA may not have the same capacity to execute a larger event. She suggested that it might be best to start with a smaller event and gradually expand over time.

Lane then reviewed the proposed dates of May 12–23 and informed the Board that she would be sending out a survey to downtown restaurants to gauge interest. She noted that the feedback would help guide the development of the event's programming. Suzanne requested that when the dates are set they be communicated as quickly as possible. With no other discussion the Board moved on.

Discussion of Combined Promotional and Design Committee Meeting Agenda

Lane began by noting that she did not have much to report on this item aside from emphasizing the need to prioritize committee work. She added that this meeting did not require the full Board's attendance but welcomed anyone from downtown who was interested in participating.

Update on Public Art Opportunity at Space Adjacent to Melanie's

Lane began by noting that she is currently working with Public Works staff to get a quote and then requisition for two benches to go in this space. She continued that putting public art in this space has been discussed but she worries that due to it's openness she is concerned about a higher potential for vandalism. The Board discussed the desire to look for opportunities for interactive art downtown.

Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project

Lane began by noting that the pre-construction meeting took place after the last Town Council meeting, and she did not want to get ahead of their updates. However, she shared some details with the Board that they might find useful.

She continued by listing the attendees at the meeting, which included representatives from the Town of Boone, Davis Martin Powell (the project engineers), USDA Staff, M&M Construction, Division of Water Infrastructure, New River Light and Power, BREMCO, Frontier Natural Gas, Skyline, and AT&T.

Lane added that she spoke with Joshua Carzewell from the USDA, who was very friendly, and she looks forward to working with him. She also had a brief conversation with Bill Cook of M&M Construction, who mentioned that he has extensive experience working on or near college campuses.

The meeting also introduced Michael Linthicum, the main Resident Project Representative, and his backup, Ivan Canas. Lane noted that both are experienced construction professionals who will monitor the project's quality and progress daily.

The meeting covered the basics of the contract and the project inspection process. Lane shared that the contractor's schedule was reviewed, with daily work hours set from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. She also went over the specific events when construction would not be allowed.

Some concerns were raised regarding federal funding, but Edie reassured the Board that, to her understanding, since the project is already committed, those funds are secure.

The Board then discussed the importance of providing regular construction updates to help downtown businesses navigate the disruptions.

Call for Adjournment

Renee then made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Suzanne and was unanimously approved.