Downtown Boone Development Association
March Board Meeting – March 18, 2025
8:30 am – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Stephanie Boozer, Suzanne Livesay, Kendra Sink, Sarah Long, Megan Kevorkian and Mike Forrester (virtually)

Ex-Officio's Present: Edie Tugman

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

MSD Member's Present: Alyssa Hasty (Lost Province), Julia Moretz (Betty's Biscuits), and Bob Flanigan (King Street Lofts)

Call to Order
At 8:45, Kendra called the meeting to order.

Lane was excited to report that the DBDA has regained its Main Street accreditation. While Sherry Adams has confirmed the accreditation, the official announcement will be coordinated with a broader NC Main Street promotional campaign in April.

Lane informed the Board that the Main Street site visit is scheduled for next week, following the Jon Schallert Advanced Destination Workshop.

Lane reminded the Board of the upcoming headshot session on Thursday. Suzanne and Megan inquired about availability, and Lane confirmed that they should be able to participate.

Lane reminded members of the Jon Schallert training next week. She also noted that the Economic Vitality Committee will meet on April 8 to discuss updates to the façade grant applications, with a focus on providing more opportunities for businesses affected by the Howard Street construction.

Request for Approval of February Agenda
Kendra suggested that the Board move up the discussion regarding the Doc Watson appraisal to make sure that there was quorum. Megan made a motion to amend the agenda as suggested. The motion was seconded by Stephanie and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of March Minutes
Stephanie made a motion to approve the February minutes. Kendra seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements
Suzanne made a motion to approve the financial statements. Stephanie seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Discussion of Doc Watson Sculpture Appraisal
Lane opened by noting that during the process of renewing our insurance policy, the insurance company requested an updated appraisal of the Doc Watson statue. She continued, explaining that she did not have any art appraisers in her contact list, so she reached out to the staff at the Turchin Center for

guidance. They recommended Christina Whitson, and Lane has since contacted her for more information.

Lane also noted that the turnaround time was tight, as the insurance renewal deadline is in mid-April. Edie suggested reaching out to the family of the artist, Alex Hallmark, to see if the cast moldings still exist and offered to follow up for confirmation. Lane thanked Edie, and after a brief discussion, Kendra made a motion to pay Christina Whitson $1,000 for the appraisal of the Doc Watson statue, contingent on Ms. Whitson's appraisal meeting the insurance company's requirements. Mike seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

### Review of Main Street Conference Highlights

Lane shared highlights from the conference, including discussions on small bronze statues, the importance of flower pots, and unique projection lighting to transform overlooked spaces. She also summarized Dr. Katherine Loflin's presentation on the science of loving where you live, strategies for fostering community attachment among young professionals, and the importance of using local history to celebrate a community.

Suzanne expressed enthusiasm for historically based productions planned for downtown, noting their potential to build on past ghost tours.

Lane reported that Jon Schallert announced the first 12 businesses in the state to be designated as NC Destination Businesses and looked forward to the business promotion opportunities associated with the program.

Lane noted that she was unable to attend the "Civic Pride, Civic Apathy" session and asked Suzanne and Kendra for their insights. Suzanne shared that the speaker emphasized the importance of downtowns in fostering civic pride and warned that prioritizing a "convenience economy" over a locally based economy could lead to a decline in community pride. The speaker also discussed the need for communities to be more compelling than passive entertainment options like Netflix, highlighting the platform's influence on social patterns.

Kendra added that the discussion also noted a shift among the next generation toward supporting local economies and a growing desire to live in increasingly walkable communities.

A brief discussion followed regarding vacant and/or deteriorating buildings in downtown, leading into a quick review of upcoming public art opportunities.

Megan inquired about the desire to still hold a fall festival and a short discussion about event timing ensued.

### Discussion of Training Opportunities in April

Lane reviewed recent training opportunities she has hosted, noting that while attendance has been low, the sessions have led to valuable connections. She stated that since these events require minimal effort to organize, she will continue to host them to see if participation increases.

For April, Lane is considering an on-demand AI session as well as a follow-up to the Canva training held last week.

Lane added that if a restaurant association forms in the community, there may be opportunities for training collaboration between the DBDA and the association.

### Discussion of Board Resignations

Lane directed Board members to the agenda packet, which included Austin Northern's resignation letter. She also reported that Michelle Novacek had announced her retirement and is expected to submit her resignation soon.

Lane emphasized the need for assistance in identifying potential new Board members, working on representatives from the professional services businesses that are underrepresented.

### Discussion of Earth First Friday

Lane opened by stating that Deputy Planning and Inspections Director Brandon Wise is organizing the Earth First Friday event on the Jones House lawn for Friday, April 4, noting that this year's theme will focus on recovery. She added that conservation groups typically table at the event, distributing sustainability-focused items, including trees and small shrubs.

Lane then invited George Santucci to speak about the Boone Earth Film Fest, which will take place that evening at the Appalachian Theatre. George stated that the event will feature the following films:

- *The Science of Hurricane Helene* – Examines the impacts of climate change on storms.
- *Welcome Home* – While not recovery-themed, it explores the reintroduction of the wolf in the western U.S.
- *Seeds of Change, Seeds of Hope* – Highlights how North Carolinians are responding to climate change in inspiring ways.
- *Twin Rivers* – Provides an in-depth look at the region's river systems.

The goal of the Boone Earth Film Fest is to encourage High Country residents to take action against climate change.

George also provided an update on upcoming changes at the Leola Street Gardens, noting that the space will be renamed the Elizabeth Young Community Garden.

Lane concluded by stating that she will continue working with the Watauga Arts Council to gather information on the evening's events and coordinate cross-promotion.

### Discussion of Restaurant Week Planning

Lane opened the discussion by informing the Board that, despite some exciting conversations around the event, few restaurants had indicated their interest through the circulated survey. Stephanie and Megan suggested visiting restaurants in person to gauge interest and to communicate that participation levels could be flexible.

Lane noted that she had heard about the formation of a restaurant association, which was also planning a similar event. She highlighted potential future opportunities for collaboration.

The Board discussed creating a restaurant guide similar to the one developed for the NC Main Street Conference in Mooresville. Kendra suggested securing radio spots to promote the event, and Lane mentioned her strong working relationship with Mark Norris, stating she would explore radio promotion options.

Suzanne shared plans to screen three "foodie" movies during the week and sought input from the Board regarding scheduling. Two of the films are family-friendly, and there was consensus to schedule two early screenings during the week and a later showing on Friday.

The discussion returned to the restaurant guide, with the Board agreeing that it could serve a dual purpose—both for Restaurant Week and as a resource for upcoming conferences in town.

With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

### Update on Rotating Public Art

Lane noted that during the last Design/Promotions Committee meeting, the Board discussed the need to rotate public art installations. She expressed interest in updating the call for submissions to encourage artwork that is colorful and evokes joy.

After a brief discussion, Lane confirmed that the Design Committee would be responsible for reviewing submissions and bringing a recommendation back to the Board. The Board also discussed potential new public art locations in downtown, as well as possible upgrades to the EV charging station.

The conversation then shifted to EV charging spaces that are not currently reserved exclusively for electric vehicles. There was general consensus to revisit the discussion of EV chargers in downtown at a future Board meeting. George provided a quick overview of the available EV charging spaces in the area. Additionally, the Board requested that information on EV charging locations be added to the DBDA website.

With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

### Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project

Lane opened by informing the Board that a groundbreaking ceremony has been scheduled for Monday, April 14, at 1:00 PM. She added that construction is expected to begin shortly thereafter. Edie noted that the Town of Boone will be making a significant upfront investment to ensure the project can proceed this spring.

Lane mentioned plans to hold an informational meeting for businesses the week prior, featuring Resident Project Representative Mike Linthicum. She acknowledged that it may take some time to establish a consistent communication flow regarding construction updates. Kendra emphasized the importance of acknowledging the challenges of construction from the outset to encourage patience among stakeholders.

Megan suggested appointing a project liaison for downtown businesses, and Lane confirmed that she would serve in that role. The Board briefly discussed the necessity of prompt communication when issues arise. Kendra inquired about the starting point of the project, and Lane stated that she was unsure but would share that information as soon as it was confirmed.

Kendra also asked whether visual displays of the completed project would be available during the groundbreaking ceremony. Edie responded that while renderings had been considered, they were prohibitively expensive. Instead, a project map would be used to illustrate the planned changes. Suzanne inquired about the accuracy of the map, and Edie noted that it was a few years old but remained the best available visual resource. She reiterated that full-scale renderings were cost-prohibitive.

The Board discussed the project plans, their level of detail, and whether any visual materials had been included in the bid process. Megan suggested that the DBDA might consider contributing funds to help cover the cost of renderings. Stephanie noted that technical plans can be difficult for the public to interpret and could lead to confusion. Kendra pointed out that as construction progresses, having a clear vision of the finished project would help maintain public support and patience.

Edie provided an overview of additional costs the Town has incurred as part of the project. The Board discussed various ways renderings could be utilized throughout the construction period to build community support, recognizing that the project is expected to take 1.5 to 2 years. There was also a brainstorming session on potential partners who could assist with renderings, including the University.

After further discussion, Edie stated that she would bring this topic to Town Council and potentially the TDA for consideration.

With no other discussion the Board moved on.

### Call for Adjournment

Kendra then made a motion to adjourn.  The motion was seconded by Mike and was unanimously approved.