Downtown Boone Development Association

March Board Meeting – March 31, 2026
8:30 a.m. – Jones House

Board Members Present: Suzanne Livesay, Joe Lynch, Renee Boughman, Jordan Humler, Stephanie Boozer, Kendra Sink, Mike Forrester, Julia Moretz and Megan Kevorkian

Ex-Officio Members Present: Dalton George and Anne Pruitt

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Geoff Hayes and Mark Freed

MSD Members Present: RaeAnn Burns (Horton Hotel), Carolyn Ward (Lost Province), Annie Jones (Turchin Center) and Arron McCall (ECRS)

Announcements
While waiting to get a quorum, Lane opened the meeting with a few announcements. First, welcoming new Board member Anne Pruitt, Ex-Officio Town Council representative, and asked attendees to go around the room for introductions.

She noted that the Explore Boone Tourism Summit was scheduled for that afternoon and invited anyone interested in carpooling to let her know.

Lane reminded the Board that the Economic Vitality Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 2 at 10:00 a.m.

She shared that the Parking Appeals Committee is in need of additional members and encouraged Board participation. Julia inquired about the meeting frequency, and Lane noted that it is currently held bi-monthly but may need to shift to a monthly schedule. Kendra suggested meeting on the last Thursday of each month.

Lane also shared that she is in the process of renewing the "Live It Up" trademark.

She noted that, during the NC Main Street Conference, there was extensive discussion about the Board's role in downtown economic development. To build on that momentum, she expressed interest in participating in the Rural Economic Development Institute through the NC Rural Center and plans to bring a formal request to the Board at the April meeting.

Lane reminded the Board that, due to Spring Break scheduling, April's First Friday event has been shifted to "Earth Third Friday" on April 17. She also noted that the ribbon cutting for the Northern Peaks State Trail will take place that afternoon.

At this time, Megan and Mike arrived, completing quorum. Kendra asked if it was time to call the meeting to order, and Lane requested to finish with one final announcement.

Lane shared that there have been multiple conversations regarding an increase in graffiti downtown. She met with the Police Chief, the Downtown Officer, and ECRS staff to begin developing a plan to address the issue, including a potential cleanup event. Geoff Hayes, Downtown Officer, noted that the Chief is working to secure an intern to assist with mapping graffiti and identifying trends. He also referenced the potential to bring back a community cleanup effort similar to those held in past years, which engaged local high school and university clubs.

Arron with ECRS emphasized the importance of reporting graffiti quickly to help prevent individuals from gaining notoriety. Lane added that, similar to past efforts, the DBDA could purchase cleanup supplies and distribute them to downtown businesses. Kendra noted that she has found a successful wipe for removing graffiti indoors and offered to share that information. Renee shared that F.A.R.M. Cafe has a strong volunteer group that could potentially be engaged to support cleanup efforts.

Lane noted that she plans to distribute a survey to downtown businesses to gather information and support a coordinated response.

Call to Order

At 8:40 Kendra called the meeting to order.

Request for Approval of March Agenda

Kendra requested an amendment to the agenda to add a discussion on graffiti removal as the first item under the Design section. Jordan made a motion to approve the amendment. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of February Minutes

Renee made a motion to approve the February minutes. Megan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements

After a brief discussion clarifying the SPA Properties expenditure, confirming it was a façade grant for the Horton Hotel, Stephanie made a motion to approve the financial statements. The motion was seconded by Jordan and passed unanimously.

Organizational

Update on ARC Non-Profit Board Development Grant

Lane shared that she received an update from the Appalachian Regional Commission indicating that a Grant Coordinator will be assigned in mid-April to assist in moving the grant toward completion. She noted that grant funds cannot be expended prior to August 1, 2026, so there is no immediate urgency. With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next item.

Review of NC Main Street Conference Attendance

Lane opened by sharing how successful this year's conference was. She added that, for next year, she plans to begin recruiting attendees in January, and that the 2027 conference will be held in Morganton, which she hopes will encourage greater participation due to its proximity.

Lane shared that she was particularly impressed with the quality of the speakers, highlighting one presentation that demonstrated the economic impact of downtowns through their tax contributions to the community. She emphasized that a key theme of the conference was reinforcing that Main Street programs are a form of economic development, often carried out in a way that is more nimble and tailored to individual communities.

She also shared that the conference fosters camaraderie, as many of the challenges facing communities are common across the state.

Kendra added that the toolkit sessions were especially beneficial for the work of the Board and often have practical applications for local businesses as well.

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

Discussion of Potential Partnerships on Mural Cameras
Lane opened by explaining that she added this item to the agenda to gauge the Board's interest. She shared that she has had initial conversations with Joe at Speckled Trout and Amber Bateman with the Watauga Arts Council regarding potential partnerships to install cameras to help monitor and protect public art downtown.

Lane asked for feedback from the Board and whether there were any concerns before continuing those discussions. She concluded by stating that, if the Board was comfortable moving forward, she would bring additional details back for review prior to any final decisions.

There was general consensus from the Board to continue exploring these partnership opportunities and a brief conversation about graffiti prevention.

Request For Approval on Multiple Purchase Orders (250th Anniversary Banners, Howard Street Pole Decorations, Flower Basket Infrastructure, Downtown Boone 101 Promotional Items)
Lane shared that she had a series of purchase orders for Board approval and provided a brief overview of each. She explained that, for certain items related to the Howard Street pole decorations, three quotes were not obtained due to the need to match existing materials. She added that a memo would be submitted with the purchase orders to explain this limited deviation from the Town's purchasing policy to Finance staff.

During the review, Suzanne joined the meeting.

Following a brief discussion, Renee made a motion to approve all purchase orders. The motion was seconded by Suzanne and passed unanimously.

Discussion of Downtown Restaurant Week Planning Lane opened by stating that at the February
Lane shared that, at the time of the previous Board meeting, she was a day out from meeting with representatives from the Watauga Education Foundation (WEF) to discuss a potential partnership to expand Restaurant Week. She reported that she has since met with WEF and believes there is a strong opportunity for collaboration. She noted that details are still being finalized, as WEF is working through internal approvals with both its Board and the School Board.

Lane raised a key consideration regarding whether restaurants located outside of downtown should be included. She explained that, in discussions with WEF staff, there was a shared interest in building the event intentionally and sustainably over time. While she emphasized that the goal is not to appear exclusionary toward restaurants outside of the downtown/MSD, she recommended focusing the 2026 event within downtown to allow for a more manageable rollout, with the opportunity to expand in future years. She added that this phased approach could align well with the anticipated formation of the High Country Independent Restaurant Group in 2027.

Lane also shared that a more intentional approach could allow for more strategic use of free parking passes, particularly by targeting nonprofit organizations throughout the county.

During discussion, Lane noted that additional volunteer support or increased presence on the street could help strengthen the event and community engagement.

Carolyne Ward, speaking from the gallery, shared that many restaurants are still facing challenges and encouraged clear communication, particularly around any donation requests.

Lane added that WEF is utilizing a model from Catawba County to help guide planning efforts and expressed hope that insights from that model will be beneficial as the event develops locally. The Board engaged in additional brainstorming regarding what donation requests could look like, as well as having representation from all county schools, before moving on to the next item.

Discussion of 250th Celebration Ideas
Lane asked the Board for input on potential ideas for the 250th celebration. Kendra suggested leaning into a “Freedom First Friday” theme, including a holiday window decorating contest. Renee proposed distributing pocket Constitutions, and Dalton suggested purchasing tri-corner hats for children. Kendra added the idea of handing out flags and incorporating additional kid-friendly programming.

Dalton also suggested exploring partnerships with local history-focused community groups to help support and enhance the celebration. The Board concluded the discussion by noting that it may be worthwhile to inquire about incorporating living statues into the event before moving on to the next item.

Discussion of Boonerang Planning
Lane opened by reviewing a recent conversation she had with Mark Freed and representatives from the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce regarding ways to support downtown businesses during the upcoming event weekend. She shared that they discussed developing a business guide to help businesses navigate and make the most of increased foot traffic downtown. The guide could include event basics, visitor data from past years, and key insights to help inform business strategies.

Lane added that there was also discussion of hosting a Lunch and Learn–style event to further brainstorm opportunities and support business engagement. She noted a potential partnership for a joint promotional koozie involving Boonerang and Explore Boone.

During discussion, Board members reflected on past experiences, and Mark shared that he is working to improve communication around ABC regulations and welcomed feedback.

Lane stated that she will begin drafting the business guide, with the goal of having it finalized by the end of April. She added that, when distributing the guide, she will gauge interest in holding an in-person brainstorming session for those who would like to further discuss ideas.

Design

Discussion of Graffiti Clean Up Event
Lane opened by sharing that, as plans for the graffiti cleanup event continue to take shape, she proposed that the DBDA provide supplies to support the effort. She asked whether the Board would be interested in committing funding toward this initiative.

Kendra suggested that it may be helpful to provide cleaning wipes to downtown businesses as part of the effort.

Following a brief discussion, Kendra made a motion to approve up to $2,000 for cleaning wipes and cleanup event supplies. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.

Update on Alleyway Public Art
Lane shared that the Design Committee continues to make progress on the alleyway mural project and has selected a final artist. She explained that, following further discussion, the artist expressed a preference to paint the mural on panels to be installed in the alleyway.

Lane noted that, based on the previous "Live It Up" logo mural, the installation may require engineering review, though she could not recall the exact process. As a result, she reached out to an engineer, who will review the artist's proposal and provide guidance on next steps.

Lane added that she has shared this information with Amber at the Watauga Arts Council and is awaiting feedback.

Kendra inquired whether the property owner is supportive of the project. Lane confirmed that the property owner has been supportive to date but that she is waiting for additional details from the artist before reconnecting.

Kendra also asked whether a rendering could be shared. Lane noted that the rendering is currently being updated and that, once received, along with additional details from the WEF Board, she will provide an update to the Board on the progress of both projects.

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

Update on Howard Street Revitilization Project
Lane shared that the project has transitioned into the duct bank phase, noting that this portion of the work is slower due to the complexity of the section between Appalachian Street and Depot Street. She acknowledged the challenges associated with this phase and thanked everyone for their patience, adding that the work is both detailed and fascinating to observe.

The Board discussed ongoing conversations about the Howard Street "squiggle" and opportunities to incorporate it into future marketing efforts.

Lane concluded by noting that crews have placed approximately 3,200 tons of gravel to date and recognized the contractor's efforts to maintain the roadway throughout construction.

Kendra then made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Renee and had a unanimous vote.