

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES
March 4, 2025, 3:00 p.m.
Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Bettie Bond-Vice-Chair, and Ayden Basinger

Council Liaison: Virginia Roseman (via WebEx)

Town Staff in Attendance: Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Amy Snider-Commercial Zoning Administrator, Brandon Wise-Deputy Director, Laney Wise-Grants Coordinator/Communications, and Alyson Wuagneux-Board Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Smyth called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting held in the Planning & Inspections Conference Room at 680 West King Street and via WebEx to order at 3:00 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Commission Member Basinger made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, to adopt the agenda.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Mitchell shared the updated guidelines for public comment recently approved by Town Council and noted that the update would impact advisory boards. For HPC Advisory meetings, new guidelines require a sign-up sheet for anyone who wants to speak under public comment. She went on to explain that in-person attendees are guaranteed to speak while virtual attendees would be at the discretion of the board. Chair Smyth asked for clarification about whether participants are expected to sign up in advance or at the meeting. Ms. Mitchell explained that attendees will sign up at the meeting and referred to the Town of Boone Public Comment Guidelines.

There was no public comment.

150 Clay House Drive – R.L. Clay (Rivers) House – HPC Pre-Application Workshop

Ms. Mitchell explained that the intention of the workshop is to provide guidance and is a voluntary and informal process where comments made by the Commission are non-binding. She directed members to the signed waiver and explained this process is separate from the quasi-judicial meeting. Ms. Mitchell went on to explain that the task for HPC members is to review what is suggested and provide feedback on preliminary project ideas.

Ms. Laney Wise, Grants Coordinator/Communications, introduced herself and stated that the project is funded through the RTP (Recreational Trails Program) grant program with the purpose of bringing recreation to downtown Boone. She went on to recognize the efforts of Jordan Sellers, Northern Peaks State Trail Coordinator with Blue Ridge Conservancy, DBDA (Downtown Boone Development Association), and the Town Council. Ms. Wise then directed the conversation to Mr. Sellers for more details about the project.

Mr. Sellers recognized the community wide effort and offered a brief background of his work with Blue Ridge Conservancy and the Northern Peaks State Trail – a designated North Carolina state trail stretching from Boone to West Jefferson. He explained the proposal of two trail types at the property and directed members to page 66 of the packet, specifically explaining the green and grey marked trails. Mr. Sellers began with the grey trail, proposing the trailhead to begin on Rivers Street with an aggregate surface. He communicated the challenge of making an ADA-compliant trail on the property and offered the two surface types as a possible accessibility solution. Mr. Sellers mentioned the proposed trailhead as an item requesting guidance from HPC members. He then directed members to the burgundy line on the map as the switch in surface type from aggregate to natural surface constructed to modern day, sustainable trail construction standards. He explained that the trails would be designed to function as erosion control measures without the need of water bars or other water runoff diversion methods. Mr. Sellers went on to describe the qualities of the current trail and areas for improvement, namely, renovating the section of the trail from behind the house up to the North Carolina Champion maple tree, to make it sustainable and designating it as an official Northern Peaks State Trail. He also provided details of the proposed trail and proposed trailhead kiosk located at the intersection of the aggregate surface trail and natural surface trail. He went on to explain that the proposed kiosk would have a map of the trails and some interpretive signage about the park including its history as well as information about Northern Peaks State Trail. Mr. Sellers mentioned that this location – the intersection of the two surface types – would be the most appropriate location if trying to limit disturbance at the park, but vocalized his concern of its visibility from Rivers Street. Mr. Sellers welcomed questions and thoughts from Commission members.

Vice-Chair Bond asked for clarification on the trailhead location and size, specifically asking about parking a car there. Mr. Sellers responded no. Vice-Chair Bond asked for clarification on trailhead signage. Mr. Sellers communicated his willingness to comply to Town standards and welcomed any suggestions. He referenced the Blue Ridge Parkway and the MST (Mountains-to-Sea Trail) as examples of general trailheads. Ms. Wise mentioned potentially modeling it after historic, metal signage used in the past and welcomed any suggestions from Commission members. Vice-Chair Bond asked what the proposed signage would say. Mr. Sellers responded that the proposed trailhead sign would be for wayfinding only and would ideally have the Northern Peaks State Trail logo with a minimal description of the trails. He went on to explain that the proposed trailhead kiosk would provide a more detailed description and be constructed of timber frame. Commission Member Basinger asked for clarification on the design of the burgundy marked trail, specifically whether or not this proposed trail was the existing trail or new construction. Mr. Sellers answered that the burgundy marked trail would be new construction. Chair Smyth questioned the location of the proposed Rivers Street trailhead. Mr. Sellers stated that the location is not firm and is open for suggestions from Commission members.

Members discussed the challenge of installing a NCDOT approved crosswalk at that location. Mr. Sellers referred to public visibility and the attempt to decrease lawn disturbance as two factors of decision making. He reiterated his willingness to take suggestions from Commission members. Vice-Chair Bond voiced her concerns with the proposed trailhead location as presented in the packet. Ms. Wise made reference to the opinion of Town Council in prior meetings and asked Mr. Sellers to elaborate. He recalled Town Council Member Eric Plaag's preference of the Rivers Street trailhead being located near the monument. Mr. Sellers and Commission members discussed possible design options if the trail were shifted to the lawn and the importance of accessibility. Ms. Wise noted a future project at the R.L. Clay (Rivers) House location for public restroom funded through the Accessible Parks Grant Program and voiced the importance of ADA accessibility for a portion of the trail. Commission members voiced their desire to incorporate the monument into the design of the trail, and they did not see any conflicts with the historic district standards.

Ms. Wise asked for guidance on proposed trailhead signage. Chair Smyth directed the question to Mr. Wise for guidance. Mr. Wise noted that it would be a government sign based on UDO standards but didn't foresee

any issue with the proposed designs. Mr. Sellers communicated that he would like for the sign to maintain cohesion with the sign set in West Jefferson. Mr. Wise recommended Commission members take the proposed designs into consideration and offer suggestions upon review, paying attention to the trailhead sign that will be publicly visible. He discussed further that the sign should not exceed four square feet and could be temporary if needed. Ms. Wise asked if there would be any issues with placing the sign at the corner of River Street and Moretz Drive. Commission members did not see any issues with the proposed trailhead signage design or location.

Mr. Sellers raised concern about the stability of the fence enclosing the maple tree. He inquired about the feasibility of erecting a monument at that location to mark the Southern Terminus of the entire Northern Peaks State Trail. Mr. Wise and HPC Members did not recall or foresee any complications with a potential monument.

Ms. Wise communicated that the goal is to complete the project this year (2025) pending RTP approval and notice to proceed. Mr. Wise advised Ms. Wise and Mr. Sellers to finalize the signage and trail design before the April Quasi-Judicial Meeting. Ms. Wise asked if this project would need to go back to Town Council if the project is approved. Mr. Wise advised her to double-check with Town Manager Davis. Chair Smyth asked that Ms. Wise and Mr. Sellers draft and offer a few examples of the proposed signage. Mr. Wise directed Ms. Wise and Mr. Sellers to speak with Public Works Staff, Greg Hollars, for any signage that the Town would be responsible, and for guidance and suggestions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commission Member Basinger made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, to approve the February 11, 2025, advisory meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Discussion of HPC Tasks

Ms. Mitchell noted that the Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel with the Civil War Trails marker program (CWT) is paused for any work by HPC while waiting for CWT's review. She suggested two different tasks that are Town Council directed projects, and where there is potential for collaboration with an ASU History class. She began by describing the two Town Council directed projects, the first task being "Ice House Alley," as part of the Dana Folk Way discussion. She explained that Town Council previously considered the Commission's suggestion to include interpretive signage for acknowledging the alleyway as it was historically known as "Ice House Alley." She explained that it would be similar to the plan for the Dana Folk Way sign but would describe the history of the alleyway located on the Howard Street side. The second task was recently discussed at the February 12, 2025, Town Council meeting, for a historic marker of Kraut Creek (Boone Creek). The historic marker is to capture the history of the sauerkraut plant along Boone Creek as well as its relationship to nearby buildings. Ms. Mitchell went on to explain that the current food hub location was part of the operations, as a cabbage root cellar, but was not all of the operations as the plant also canned other items. She clarified that the focus would be about Boone/Kraut Creek and the sauerkraut plant.

Ms. Mitchell then described a proposed collaboration with Appalachian State University History Professor, Dr. Deathridge, in which students from her class might assist with an upcoming HPC project. Ms. Mitchell clarified that the Town would not be funding this project and that the scope of the project would need to be specific.

Council Member Liaison Roseman raised attention to the Hickory Ridge Homestead and the Daniel Boone Park amphitheater and asked for clarification on the role of HPC or potentially for collaboration with ASU. Mr. Wise stated that the Hickory Ridge Homestead and Daniel Boone Park amphitheater are not within the

purview of HPC at this time. He recalled that Town Council Member Eric Plaag is currently working on local landmark designation and it might come to HPC in the future.

Ms. Mitchell discussed the proposed collaboration with ASU, reiterating that the suggested project needs to be specific. Vice-Chair Bond noted that Dr. Deathridge has also requested to do a project with Digital Watauga and are doing a show at the Jones House later this year. Vice-Chair Bond mentioned that one class only meets every other Fall semester, and Ms. Mitchell stated that she believed Dr. Deathridge was referring to a class during the Spring 2025 semester. Commission Member Basinger stated the importance of knowing which class this project would be for in order to offer an appropriate scope of work. Vice-Chair Bond went on to suggest the possibility of presenting a specific project to see if it fits within the scope of any of her classes. Ms. Mitchell suggested presenting Dr. Deathridge with the Kraut Creek project. She added that since it would be for a historic marker, she could suggest the scope of this project and provide examples of previous historic markers and their accompanying reports. Ms. Mitchell stated that she would clarify timing and deliverables as a report, or something similar for Commission members to review. She welcomed suggestions from Commission members.

Chair Smyth suggested the possibility of the students researching the history of local buildings for potential interpretative signage for each building, aiming to keep a summary for each building to roughly one paragraph. Ms. Mitchell raised concern regarding the cost associated with producing signage. Chair Smyth and Vice-Chair Bond suggested having the students draft the documents for a potential future project. Commission Member Basinger suggested giving the students a single project with a broad scope and allow the students to focus on individual details that contribute to the final report. Chair Smyth recalled one of the broader goals to have a database of historical information and recommended using the additional resources, if possible. Ms. Mitchell proposed giving the students specific archival resources from Digital Watauga of Boone/Kraut Creek as a start. She then asked if there was a general consensus to move forward with the discussion with Dr. Deathridge based off of this discussion, to which all members agreed. Ms. Mitchell then inquired whether any Commission members would be interested in researching Ice House Alley. Chair Smyth and Commission Member Basinger volunteered to perform research to the best of their ability.

Staff Updates

Boone Cemetery Interpretative Panels

Ms. Mitchell updated Commission members that all of the required pieces have been received and are ready to be installed, weather dependent, for the Boone Cemetery Interpretive Panels. She asked for Commission members' thoughts of an unveiling ceremony. Commission members expressed a consensus to an unveiling ceremony. Ms. Mitchell noted that the promotion for the ceremony would include various outlets including, social media, a press release, and other communication. Commission members did not suggest a specific date as Ms. Mitchell stated the unveiling ceremony would need Town Council consideration. Commission members expressed flexibility with choosing a date, and Chair Smyth stated that he could prepare for a brief talk, if requested.

Statement of Conformity Report

Ms. Mitchell stated there were no new applications for Statements of Conformity within the last 30 days. Mr. Wise brought attention to the removal of the Mast General Store green awnings (located on King Street) and advised Commission members that this could come before them, depending on whether or not they will be replacing the awning.

Mr. Wise reminded Commission members of two Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) cases to be presented at the next quasi-judicial meeting: Come Back Shack and 713 W King Street. He also made note that the COA case for the Northern Peak State Trail would be coming in the following month's quasi-judicial hearing. Chair

Smyth asked for clarity on the Come Back Shack project and the role of HPC. Mr. Wise stated that even though the building is not historical, it is within the Historical District and must meet those standards.

HPC Member Updates

Vice-Chair Bond provided details of an upcoming event at the Watauga County Library in association with the Watauga County Historical Society on March 13, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

Other Discussion

Commission Member Basinger noted his observation that the sign for the restaurant, The Social, had been hung on the John W. Hodges Building.

Adjournment

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Basinger, to adjourn the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Vardell Smyth, Chair

Alyson Wuagneux, Board Clerk