

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 11, 2021
3:00 p.m.**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chairperson Eric Plaag, Vice-Chairperson Phoebe Pollitt, Bettie Bond, and Chuck Watkins

Council Liaisons: Rennie Brantz and Virginia Roseman

Town Staff in Attendance:

Jane Shook-Director of Planning and Inspections, Christy Turner-Senior Planner, and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present: John Ward-Town Manager and Laney Pilkington-Administrative Support Specialist/Communications, Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources, and Brian Williams, Applicant

Call to Order

Chairperson Eric Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software, to order on Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 3:04 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Vice- Chairperson Pollitt, to adopt the agenda as written.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag polled the members: Member Bond, Member Watkins, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt, and Chairperson Plaag.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Blue Ridge Tourist Court and Motel/Local Landmark Designation Report

Chairperson Plaag explained that he would need to recuse himself from the discussion on this agenda item. He said that Mr. Brian Williams hired him to be the historical consultant for the Local Landmark Designation Report. Chairperson Plaag recommended approval from the Historic Preservation Commission to recuse himself from any input, discussion, or voting on said project. Chairperson Plaag noted that he would be available to answer any historical questions on said project.

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion seconded by Member Bond to approve Chairperson Plaag to recuse himself from the discussion on the Blue Ridge Tourist Motor Court and Motel agenda topic. The recusal is because Chairperson Plaag was hired as the historical consultant by the property owner, Mr. Brian Williams, to work on the Local Landmark Designation Report.

Vote:

Aye – (Bond, Pollitt and Watkins)

Nay- None

Recused – (Plaag)

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag polled the members: Member Bond, Member Watkins, and Vice-Chairperson Pollitt.

Chairperson Plaag turned the meeting over to Vice-Chairperson Pollitt. She asked Mr. Brian Williams, property owner of the Blue Ridge Tourist Motor Court and Motel, to present his information.

Mr. Williams began presenting his proposed project. Mr. Williams gave a brief overview of the Blue Ridge Tourist Court and Motel, Local Landmark Designation Report prepared by Dr. Plaag (permanently on file).

Mr. Williams presented a seven-page PowerPoint (permanently on file) that explained the building names and general site layout of the buildings and their locations on the site. He explained the dates of construction of the buildings and their historical significance from 1950 to 1970. He pointed out that one of the previous owners was Mr. Estel G. Wagner, and he was a local builder-developer. He said that Mr. Wagner had built the tourist court and motel and other motels in the Town of Boone.

Mr. Williams gave a virtual tour of the buildings on the property. He said that since the mid to early 1990s, the property had been used as an apartment complex.

Mr. Williams gave a brief architectural summary of the properties that included photos from the Digital Watauga Project. He said the office was built in 1950 with stone and a flat roof. He said the office building had a considerable roof overhang on all four sides, and the outside consisted of natural granite in a random ashlar pattern. He said that inside the office, there was a large fireplace located on the west side that had a polished granite mantel.

Mr. Williams explained that the tourist court motel was built in 1950. He outlined the following architectural features: on the north and west elevations, they used concrete block coated with Shotcrete in a brick masonry pattern, a concrete slab walkway was covered by a half-gabled roof, the north end features had a stepped parapet wall, a concrete stairwell on the west leading to a boiler in the basement, a boiler stack was visible in photos no longer present, and the original steel case windows remain. He said an above-ground pool was added in the 1970s. He said later the pool was removed, and that area was landscaped.

Mr. Williams described the annex building. He noted that it was built in 1951 to accommodate longer stays. He said the building has a Shotcrete brick pattern, and the originally featured steel case windows have been replaced.

Mr. Williams described the garage apartment. He said the apartment was built in the late 1951 to 1952-time period to provide long-term stay options. He explained that there is a Shotcrete brick masonry on the south and west elevations of the apartment.

Mr. Williams described the second parcel. He said this parcel was acquired in July of 1951. He explained that the present motel building was erected sometime before 1955, most likely late in 1953 or early 1954. He said this building has ten rooms, and it currently has modern plywood siding and original lap siding underneath the plywood.

Mr. Williams opened the floor for questions on the presentation. Member Bond asked Mr. Williams about his plans for the said properties and how long it would take to achieve the renovation. He said the properties are currently zoned B-2 neighborhood business. Mr. Williams said he intends to operate the main tourist court building, office, and the annex as an Air B & B style motel. He said the garage apartment behind the motel is also zoned B-2, and he wants to keep it and make it a long-term rental. He pointed out that he intends to request to rezone the property to R-3. He said that he also wants to convert the old motel into condos or townhomes and sell them.

Mr. Williams explained that he is pursuing a National Register of Historic Places and a local landmark designation for the properties. He explained that he has already submitted his conditional district zoning application to the Planning Commission and Town Council. He also explained that his requests are on the Council's June meeting agenda for final consideration of the conditional district rezoning.

Member Bond asked Mr. Williams if there were any significant obstacles in his way of moving forward with his proposed plans for his property. Mr. Williams said he had a couple of issues around the motel with a boundary and driveway easement. He said he is working on these issues with the Town Attorney and the Boone Public Works Department.

Member Watkins asked Dr. Plaag, except for the tourist court building in Blowing Rock, is the Blue Ridge Tourist Court and Motel the oldest surviving post-World War II tourist court type building in the Town of Boone. Dr. Plaag said yes, that is located in the Town Limits.

Member Bond asked how do developers finance projects like this? She wondered if the financial institutions were willing to loan money for these types of projects. Dr. Plaag said that he did not look into financial institutions specifically when writing his report. He added that in the case of Mr. Estel Wagner, he laid the concrete block himself.

Mr. Williams said that meeting the landscaping requirements will be another obstacle that he will have to work out. He said that he has been able to accommodate the current landscaping requirements for the motel parcel. He said it would be more challenging to meet the landscaping requirements on the upper portion of the property.

Motion and Vote:

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to recommend that both parcels at the Blue Ridge Tourist Court and Motel be designated as a single local landmark.

Vote:

Aye – (Bond, Pollitt, Watkins)

Nay – None

Recused – Plaag

The motion passed.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt polled the members: Member Bond, Member Watkins, and Vice-Chairperson Pollitt.

Chairperson Plaag rejoined the meeting and his position as the HPC Chairperson.

Mr. Williams left the virtual meeting at approximately 3:39 p.m.

Junaluska Local Historical Marker Dedication – Road Closure & Invitations

Chairperson Plaag pointed out that the HPC in a previous meeting had dealt with the road closure for the marker dedication event. He asked Mr. John Ward, Town Manager if the Council had any concerns about the road closure for the event. Mr. Ward said Council voiced no concerns.

Discussion ensued on the invitation process for the Junaluska Local Historical Marker Dedication. Mr. Ward introduced Ms. Laney Pilkington, the Town Hall Administrative Assistant, and Communications person. Mr. Ward explained that Ms. Pilkington would be assisting the Planning Staff with the invitation process for the dedication. Mr. Ward said that after reviewing the CDC guidelines, he thought up to 200 people could attend the outdoor event in the month of June.

Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner, noted that she had received the Junaluska Heritage Association names and addresses to add to the invitation list. Mr. Ward asked if the HPC would be using an invitation process rather than a public notice process for the event. Ms. Turner said the HPC would use an invitation process.

Chairperson Plaag asked about adding more people to the invitation list if it looked like the prepared area for the event would hold more people. Mr. Ward said yes and also suggested that the HPC invite some people from the Appalachian State University, Diversity office to the invitation list. Chairperson Plaag agreed with Mr. Ward.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt suggested asking the Junaluska Choir to sing at the event. Ms. Turner said she would discuss it with the Junaluska Choir Director. Member Bond suggested that the choir choose a song for everyone to sing together at the event.

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources, if his department could live stream the event. Mr. Freed said he might not live stream it, but he felt that the event could be recorded and uploaded to a YouTube Channel on the same day. Mr. Freed said he has some tents, a podium, and a speaker system available if needed.

Town Cemeteries Standards and Inventory of Town of Boone Cemeteries

Chairperson Plaag combined these two agenda items because they were combined for discussion at the Council meeting. He said the HPC had approved him to present to Council a memo requesting direction for the HPC about the Town Cemeteries located within Town limits. He said the Council clarified what they were looking for in terms of cemetery standards. He said the Council had requested screening guidelines to use when considering whether to take over an existing private cemetery. He said the historically minded policies should be in the Town's best interest when taking responsibility for its long-term preservation. He

said the guidelines would also need to include a type of interpretive action when exploring a local landmark status.

Chairperson Plaag said the Council authorized the Town Attorney to confer with the HPC on other strategies to secure permission to install a historical marker at the Hayes, Bryan, Greene cemetery. He said the Council directed the HPC to set aside \$2,500.00 for the cost of that marker. He said the Council also directed the HPC to secure permission through whatever strategies the HPC and the Town Attorney create. He said, then, the HPC would work on a marker application for that location to interpret that cemetery. He said the Council also asked the HPC to complete an inventory of cemeteries either wholly or partially within the Town of Boone limits, preferably by December 31, 2021. He suggested including in the inventory list every above-ground stone that is eligible. He said that he thinks it is expected that the HPC would figure out the issues specifically with the Hayes, Bryan, Greene cemetery in time to have the erection of the historical marker by the Boone 150 event. He noted since it involves the first mayor of Boone's gravesite.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt pointed out that the Hayes, Bryan, Greene Cemetery area does not have much visibility for such an expensive marker at that location. She suggested maybe installing a proposed educational panel at the said cemetery. Chairperson Plaag pointed out that an educational panel also costs about \$2,500.00. He agreed with Vice-Chairperson Pollitt about the marker placement at the Hayes, Bryan, and Greene cemetery. He said he thought the marker would be better located at Straight Street and King Street or on the corner of Gladys Street. He said he thought the neighborhood might prefer a marker be placed on Straight Street. He said it could explain that there is a historical marker at the cemetery. Mr. Ward pointed out that the Town does not control property other than Queen Street in that area. Mr. Ward noted that there might be an easement issue that would need to be worked out for an off-site marker placement.

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. Ward to voice his concern about taking over cemeteries. Mr. Ward said his concern for taking on more properties came from the additional maintenance standpoint. Mr. Ward said the Town is now having to contract out some of the mowing. Mr. Ward talked about needing some prioritization on adding more historical markers in the Downtown area. Mr. Ward talked about the increased costs of moving into a historic district. Mr. Ward said some of those costs include a quasi-judicial process that requires the Town Attorney and having staff available for night meetings.

Mr. Ward suggested asking Mr. Chris Miller, Town of Boone GIS Specialist, to check on mapping out cemeteries to present to the Council on behalf of the HPC.

Chairperson Plaag reminded the HPC that Council has already directed the HPC to work on the Council Store historical marker in 2022.

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. Ward if the HPC should ask Ms. Meade to attend an HPC meeting or should a member of the HPC meet with Ms. Meade. Chairperson Plaag said the discussion with Ms. Meade would include historical marker strategies. Mr. Ward suggested that an HPC member meets with Ms. Meade at a time based on her schedule.

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to recommend that Chairperson Plaag meet with Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, to discuss the historical marker strategies within the next month and report back to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag polled the members: Member Bond, Member Watkins, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt, and Chairperson Plaag.

Mr. Ward left the meeting at approximately 4:13 p.m.

Chairperson Plaag asked some of the HPC members to create a set of guidelines to evaluate a cemetery for historical significance. Member Bond and Council Liaison Brantz volunteered to work on this assignment and provide a draft to the HPC at their next meeting.

Member Watkins asked Chairperson Plaag about advertising in the newspaper for the public to come forward if they have a family member buried on their property.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, if a press release could help the Town identify all graveyards or cemeteries located in the Town limits. He said that he could post a copy of the press release on the Digital Watauga website once it is released. He noted that there are 3,500 followers on the Digital Watauga website, and it would be a great way to help publicize it. Ms. Shook said she could coordinate with Town Hall to place a press release on the Town website. Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Shook or Ms. Turner to let him know when the press release has been processed.

Update on Boone Cemetery Footstone Information for Markers

Member Bond explained that she had identified a vendor and a cost for the Boone Cemetery footstones (permanently on file). She further explained that the more she thought about the footstones, the more she realized that the footstones would be an issue for the mowers. She also said that she did not think it was a good idea to commemorate the fence and the division of the cemetery.

Chairperson Plaag explained that when he previously attended the March or April 2021 Council meeting, he relayed this concern for the permanent line in the ground marking the divided fence line. He said that he explained that the permanent marker could be positioned on the imaginary line. He said this marker could mark the spot where the division between the two cemeteries once existed. He noted that there was some discussion by some Council members about asking the Junaluska Community members their thoughts on commemorating the marker.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the current plan that was presented to Council was a marker at the front of the Boone Cemetery. He said the marker would include a basic overview of the cemetery via a QR code for the public to read on their smartphones. He further explained there would be a Civil War Trails interpretative panel for the Union Soldiers. He said there would be another panel in the cemetery, describing the division in the cemetery.

Chairperson Plaag asked Member Bond to continue to explain the information that she found on the cost and placement of the granite footstones. Member Bond said the footstones are 6" x 6" x 4" in size. Chairperson Plaag said the division line in the cemetery is 177 feet long, which would require 354-foot stones. She said If the footstones are placed in the cemetery, the estimated cost would be \$45.00 each for a total of \$16,000.00, not including the maintenance costs. She also noted that the estimated cost is \$35.00 each if we pick up the footstones. She also pointed out that the footstones will cause a maintenance issue in the cemetery. She described the footstone color as blue-gray, and the name of the stone is Blue Ridge. Chairperson Plaag said that he could report this calculated amount to Council.

Ms. Turner asked Mr. Freed if he still had money available in his department budget for the proposed interpretative panels. Mr. Freed said not at this time because it is too close to the end of the budget year. He asked the HPC to keep him informed on future projects, and he would see if he could help them at that time.

Chairperson Plaag said that he emailed Mr. Drew Gruber, Executive Director of the Civil War Trails program to alert him about the untimely death of Ms. Michelle Ligon. Chairperson Plaag noted that Ms. Ligon was his Boone, North Carolina contact. Chairperson Plaag said he included in his email to Mr. Gruber a request for an update on the potential Civil War Trails marker.

Town Website

Chairperson Plaag explained that the Town has two new websites that are now live. The first website is www.boonehpc.com. He said this website has subpages and links to the Local Historic Landmarks, Historical Markers, Certificate of Appropriateness process, and the Design Standards. He noted that the Planning Staff is still working on the Design Standards.

Chairperson Plaag said the other website is: www.townofboonedowntownplanningprojects.com. He said this website has subpages and links to the B-1 Downtown Expansion and work products, Zoning Map Amendment, the UDO Text Amendment, Downtown Boone Local Historic District, the Architectural Survey, Frequently Asked Questions, What's Your View/Feedback and Virtual Town Hall Public Input Calendar. He also pointed out that this website includes a Historic Preservation Testimonial with Mr. John Cooper, owner of Mast General Store, and Historic Preservation Commission Member Bettie Bond. He encouraged the HPC to watch these videos.

Ms. Shook stated that the Planning Staff had made two appointments with the public to discuss the Downtown Planning Projects. She said that she might read those at the virtual May 11, 2021 at 6 p.m. Public Input Session. Member Bond volunteered to attend this meeting and help with the Frequently Asked Questions segment of the said meeting.

Town Streets Projects

Chairperson Plaag noted that he had received draft street reports on the following streets: Linney Street, Grand Boulevard, North Street, Church Street, Appalachian Street, College Avenue, Junaluska Road, and Depot Street.

Chairperson Plaag said the outstanding draft reports are on the following streets: Howard Street, River Street, Queen Street, King Street and Water Street. He noted that he has partially completed the King Street and Water Street reports.

Discussion ensued on the length of the reports on Town Streets. Chairperson Plaag asked the HPC if they wanted to limit the entry on streets with a complex history to just a couple of paragraphs. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt suggested including the street name, when the street was founded, and any interesting facts and adding a hyperlink to more information. Chairperson Plaag noted that hyperlinking can be done on the website.

Discussion ensued on possibly editing all of the draft Town Street Project reports. Chairperson Plaag talked about possibly editing the draft reports to make them all be uniform. He said if so, who would want to volunteer to do it. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt and Member Bond nominated Member Watkins to work on the draft reports. Member Watkins accepted the nomination. Chairperson Plaag said he would upload the draft Town Street Project reports to Google Drive for easy access.

Boone 150 Committee

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. Freed, Chairperson of the Boone 150 Committee, to give a brief update on the progress that has been made with the committee. Mr. Freed said that various community members and organizations had met through Zoom meetings. Mr. Freed said they had secured the website called [www. Boone150.com](http://www.Boone150.com), and they have created a logo. He said they are trying to encourage groups and interested individuals to take on some aspect of the celebration. He said the groups and individuals would work with the Cultural Resources office.

Mr. Freed explained that the groups and individuals have worked on the following topics: HPC Member Bettie Bond has provided a special Centennial insert from the Watauga Democrat that has been digitized, the Downtown Boone Development Association is working on some public art projects, and the Watauga Arts Council is talking about doing public art panels for the Downtown area to tell Boone's history, having live events along with recorded stories of people talking about Boone, having guided tours that tell Boone's history and having some of the schools participate in them, the high school students might do a time capsule project and document the future of Boone in 2022, have actors play a role and do a re-enactment of people buried in a cemetery, researching sports from 150 years ago in Boone, and it was suggested to invite gospel choirs from different churches around Boone to give performances at the Horn in the West.

Informal Discussion

Chairperson Plaag suggested the following agenda items for the next meeting: Junaluska Local Historical Marker Dedication Event, Inventory of Town of Boone Cemeteries, Cemetery Guidelines, Hardin House, Downtown Projects Update, Certificate of Appropriateness, Quasi-Judicial Training, Town Streets Project, and Boone 150 Committee.

Adjournment

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to adjourn the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag polled the members: Member Bond, Member Watkins, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt, and Chairperson Plaag.

Eric Plaag, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary