

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

June 4, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Bettie Bond-Vice-Chair, Krystal Carter, and Jerry Williamson

Council Liaison: Virginia Roseman (via WebEx)

Town Staff in Attendance: Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Lane Moody-Downtown Development Coordinator, and Brenda Henson-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 3:01 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Commission Member Carter made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Williamson, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commission Member Carter made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, to approve the April 9, 2024, HPC advisory meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

HPC Advisory Art Review of the Hellbender Mural at 140 S. Depot Street

Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist, referred to Appendix D, Section 11.4 Public Art that stated if art were publicly owned or publicly funded, the Historic Preservation Commission would offer an advisory review. Ms. Mitchell noted that the DBDA would fund the Hellbender Mural. She stated that the HPC could consider the size, form, massing, material, placement, historical accuracy and appropriateness of the content, aesthetic considerations, and any other relevant factors to ensure the mural would be congruent with the rest of the district. Any recommendations or concerns by the HPC would be presented to the Town Council.

Lane Moody, Downtown Development Coordinator, introduced Josh Johnson, an artist who would paint the Hellbender Mural. She explained that the Hellbender was included in an international endangered species mural project through the Centers for Biological Diversity. Ms. Moody stated that it took a while to find a space that met the criteria of already being painted brick that was visible to everyone. When funding was cut, the DBDA was allowed to fund the project. Ms. Moody noted that the Centers for Biological Diversity indicated the mural would still be included in the international project.

Vice-Chair Bond asked about the placement of the mural. Ms. Moody stated that the mural would be on the far left of the building and wrap around the side. She added that the design would highlight the Hellbender and the natural environment. Vice-Chair Bond asked if the mural would stop or bleed into the building. Ms. Moody replied that there would be a smaller edging drawing of native leaves and vegetation to soften the transition from the mural to the building.

Ms. Moody stated they planned to include a QR code or a small sign attached to the building that gave more information about the Hellbender. She noted they would also have information on the DBDA website.

Commission Member Williamson felt that people going by the mural might not want to check out a website to figure out what the picture was. He suggested including the word “Hellbender” somewhere on the mural. Vice-Chair Bond disagreed, stating that visitors to Downtown Boone would be ready and willing to scan a code and go to a website.

Chair Smyth asked if the mural would extend to the door. Mr. Johnson replied that it would not. He stated that an electrical panel box could not be painted, but the wires and a pole would be painted into the mural. Chair Smyth noted that the alley side of the building had no piercings, so there were no windows or doors to be concerned with.

Ms. Mitchell referred to Section 11.3 Public Art Standards in the Downtown Boone Local Historic District that read *Murals may not be placed around or on windows, doors, pilasters, cornices, building trim, roof lines, and other recessed or projecting features. Murals are appropriate for expanses of wall surfaces otherwise without significant architectural detail. The top of the mural shall not be higher than the roofline of any building.*

Mr. Johnson stated that he planned to paint up to the soffit and soften the edges with vegetation. He noted that some of the blue background paint would be integrated into the mural.

Ms. Mitchell stated to the Commission, as an example of the previous mural project, that any informational sign or plaque attached to the building would need to be through the mortar joints and not through the brick.

Commission Member Williamson stated that he would like the artist to paint the name “Hellbender” on the building.

Chair Smyth stated that signage should be installed to meet the Secretary of Interior's standards for attaching plaques to historic buildings. Ms. Moody noted that she could check to see what kind of signage the Centers for Biological Diversity program used as part of the larger international project and do something similar.

The Historic Preservation Commission made the following list of recommendations:

1. Paint the word “Hellbender” on the mural.
2. Install an informational plaque that conforms to the Centers for Biological Diversity Endangered Species mural project or contains information about the Hellbender being an endangered species. The plaque should also provide a QR code and a website for more details.
3. If the plaque is to be attached to the building, it should be connected in the mortar joints per the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Carter, that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends approval by the Town Council of the proposed Hellbender Mural with the following recommendations:

1. Paint the word Hellbender on the mural.
2. Install an informational plaque that conforms to the Centers for Biological Diversity Endangered Species mural project or contains information about the Hellbender being an endangered species. The plaque should also provide a QR code and a website for more details.
3. If the plaque is to be attached to the building, it should be connected in the mortar joints per the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Jones House Local Historic Landmark Report

Riley Ziegler, a former HPC member, stated she had met with Dr. Eric Plaag to review the rough draft of her local historic landmark designation report. He suggested that more details be included about Dr. John Jones's importance to Boone, so she was doing additional research. Ms. Ziegler noted that she would be in Boone in July and part of August and would research a collection of Dr. Jones' diaries and medical documents while in Town. She stated that she also had some work to do on architectural descriptions, and the next draft should have the citations and images properly formatted. Ms. Ziegler hoped to have the final draft of the report completed by August, noting that she would be beginning grad school in August, which would take up most of her time. She stated that she could attend the July HPC meeting in person.

Ms. Mitchell noted that the next HPC meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, July 2, 2024. Commission Member Williamson stated he could not attend on July 2. Chair Smyth added that he would be in Switzerland.

Staff Updates

Certified Local Government Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Reporting

Ms. Mitchell referred to a letter from the NC State Historic Preservation Office on packet page 83 regarding the HPC's Certified Local Government (CLG) report. She stated that CLG reporting went by the federal year. Ms. Mitchell noted that she submitted the CLG reporting in December 2023 for the HPC's first year as a CLG, and she recently received the communication and confirmation of that report. She stated that the letter confirmed that the HPC met the requirements for the reporting year. One of the requirements of the CLG reporting was training. Ms. Mitchell suggested scheduling virtual training to help them meet the requirements for the next CLG reporting year. She stated that at least two members would need to attend three webinars. Ms. Mitchell offered to send members some dates to choose from, noting that she would like to have the training completed by September 13, 2024.

There was a discussion regarding the difficulty of recruiting Commission members. It was suggested that members of the public living outside the corporate limits should be allowed to serve on the Commission.

Statement of Conformity Report

Ms. Mitchell noted the report in the meeting packet showing the current applications for Statements of Conformity, which included cases received since September 2023. She stated that follow-up was needed on the request for Ram's Rack. The request for South End Brewing Company was complete and needed to be closed by staff, and the request for Espresso News was still pending and awaiting documents from the applicant.

Boone Cemetery Interpretative Panels

Ms. Mitchell stated that on May 22, 2024, the Town Council approved moving forward with the Boone Cemetery interpretative panels project, and she had notified Vacker Signs to begin production.

Rivers Property and H.W. Horton Local Historic Landmark Designations

Ms. Mitchell stated that both of these properties would be on the June 26, 2024, Town Council agenda for consideration of local historic landmark designations.

HPC Member Updates

There were no updates by HPC members.

Other Discussion

Chair Smyth reminded Commission members that he would be out of town from June 23 through July 3. Ms. Mitchell noted that there were no cases for the July 9 quasi-judicial meeting. Commission members agreed to move the July 2 advisory meeting to July 9, 2024.

Council Member Roseman stated that she would like to attend the CLG training sessions and asked that she be advised of the date(s) of the training.

ADJOURNMENT

Commission Member Carter made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Williamson, to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Vardell Smyth, Chair

Brenda Henson, Board Clerk