

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 9, 2020
3:00 PM**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chairperson Eric Plaag, Vice-Chairperson Phoebe Pollitt, Teresa Pearman, Bettie Bond, Chuck Watkins, Rennie Brantz and Loretta Clawson

Town Staff in Attendance: Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Christy Turner-Senior Planner and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present: John Ward-Boone Town Manager and Anna Twigg-Boone Town Manager Intern, Junaluska Heritage Association Members: Roberta Jackson, Dr. Susan Keefe and Dr. Kristen Death-Ridge

Call to Order

Chairperson Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software to order at 3:00 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Chairperson Plaag suggested two changes to the meeting agenda. The first change was to move the Public Comment agenda item to after the Approval of Minutes. The second change was to add the informational topic of the Café Portofino Restaurant and Bar located on Rivers Street to after the Burrell Monument agenda item.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to approve the agenda as amended.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to approve the March 10, 2020 meeting minutes as written.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Public Comment

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment during this time. Chairperson Plaag closed the floor for public comment.

Junaluska Marker Application

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for feedback on the draft Junaluska Marker Application. Dr. Kristen Baldwin-Deathridge, a member of the Junaluska Heritage Association began discussion on this topic. She noted her personal appreciation for all of the efforts that went forth on the draft marker application by the Historic Preservation Commission. She said the Historic Preservation Commission made sure the draft marker application represented the Junaluska Community accurately; because it is their story. She said to the best of her knowledge there are no other proposed changes to the draft. Ms. Roberta Jackson a member of the JHA, said that she supports the approval of the proposed draft marker application as written. She also expressed her personal appreciation to the HPC for all of the efforts that went forth on the draft marker application. Dr. Susan Keefe noted her appreciation for all of the work that has been done by the HPC on the draft marker application and, she said that she felt that the draft marker application reads very well.

Chairperson Plaag said he felt the draft marker application is an excellent collaboration between the JHA and the HPC of which everyone is comfortable with and it is well documented historically. He also added that the completion of the draft marker application accomplishes what they set out to do from the beginning which was to recognize the historical significance of the Junaluska Community. He also noted that he felt the Junaluska Community has been severely under-represented in past histories in the Town of Boone.

Motion and Vote:

Chairperson Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Clawson to recommend to Council to approve the draft Junaluska Marker Application and it be funded using the existing Historic Preservation Commission funds that are already approved in the Town budget.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. John Ward, Boone Town Manager about the placement of the recommendation on the Council agenda for the approval of the draft Junaluska Marker Application. Mr. Ward said there is time for this agenda item to be placed on the July 2020 Council agenda.

Chairperson Plaag asked Mr. Ward about the process for getting an estimate on historic markers. Mr. Ward said once the message is approved the Town Staff will check on the estimate.

Chairperson Plaag asked if it would be helpful for a HPC member to attend the July 2020 virtual Council meeting. Mr. Ward said he felt it would be helpful for an HPC member to attend said meeting.

Mr. Ward said based on the recommendation made today by the HPC, the Town Staff could move forward with getting a proof of the message which could be helpful as well at the said Council meeting.

Chairperson Plaag explained that in the past he has attended the Council meetings to represent the HPC and unless another member of the HPC wanted to attend the meeting, he would attend it based on the authorization of the HPC. He asked for a motion and vote from the HPC for him to attend the said virtual Council meeting.

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to authorize Chairperson Eric Plaag to attend the July 2020 virtual Council meeting to present the draft Junaluska Marker Application and answer questions on it.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Dr. Kristen Baldwin-Deathridge asked if it would be helpful for a JHA member to also attend the July 2020 virtual Council meeting. Mr. Ward encouraged both JHA members, Dr. Kristen Baldwin-Deathridge and Ms. Roberta Jackson to attend said meeting. He also encouraged the Council to approve the recommendation of the draft Junaluska Marker Application because he felt it would be well represented by the Community in a positive way.

Chairperson Plaag said in the past the turn-around time for a historical marker was about two to three months in normal times from the time it was ordered until it arrives along with the pole.

Chairperson Plaag explained that if the draft Junaluska Marker Application is approved by Council in July 2020, it could possibly be around September or October of 2020 for the marker to arrive and be installed. He also said that during the time that we are waiting on the historical marker to arrive, it would be a good time for the JHA to give their feedback on the scheduling of the unveiling ceremony for the historical marker. He noted that by September or October of 2020, it might be possible to have a community event for the unveiling. Ms. Jackson said she would discuss this topic with the other JHA members.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the specific location to install the historical marker. He said that three locations have been previously discussed for the installation of the historical marker.

He said one location was on the grassy corner on the Watauga Library side of the NE corner of Queen Street and North Depot Street. He said another location is at the end of the sidewalk or median at Queen Street where there is a lot of pedestrian traffic. He said the third location is in the mulched area beside the parking lot across from Lost Province Brewing Company which gets a lot of pedestrian traffic.

Chairperson Plaag asked the JHA members, if they had a preference on the installation of the historical marker. Dr. Keefe said that she did not remember a previous discussion on the location of the installation of the historical marker. She said that any of the locations on Depot Street would be good. She also heard another suggestion down by Water Street and she felt that would not be a good location for the historical marker. Member Bond noted that Water Street is not in the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic like the area of Queen Street and Depot Street. Member Bond said that she preferred the location of the historical marker be at the NE corner of Queen Street and Depot Street on the Watauga Library side. Dr. Keefe pointed out that Depot Street is more near the entrance of the Junaluska Community than Water Street. Ms. Jackson agreed with the location of the NE corner of Queen Street and Depot Street. Chairperson Plaag confirmed that there was consensus of both the HPC and JHA for the historical marker to be placed on any of the three locations previously discussed. He asked that the JHA's preference for the location of historical marker be included in the Council action request. He pointed out that it is his understanding that permission will need to be granted from the County to use this location. Mr. Ward confirmed that the County does own this property.

Ms. Roberta Jackson, Dr. Susan Keefe, Dr. Kristen Baldwin-Deathridge left the virtual meeting.

District Designation Report

In review, Chairperson Plaag explained the District Designation Report process where he converts property descriptions from longer entries into shorter entries for the purposes of said report. He further explained the pattern of information that is contained in the 120 entries which includes the reason a building is historically significant to the district, the businesses that were originally in a building, the architecture of the building and ways that a property has changed over time. He noted that this is a time consuming process and he hopes to have all of the entries completed in the next two to three weeks for the HPC to review. He said that he would like for the HPC to be able to vote on the said report at the next HPC meeting which is currently scheduled for July of 2020. Member Brantz asked Chairperson Plaag if he is giving himself enough time to complete the said report. Chairperson Plaag confirmed that he would have enough time to convert the entries before the next meeting. He said that he would send the completed draft report to the Planning Staff to email out to the HPC members for their review. He said the Planning Staff can provide a paper copy for the Commission members, if needed.

Survey Report Review by SHPO and Survey Documentation

Chairperson Plaag explained that Ms. Annie McDonald from the State Historic Preservation Office has completed her review of the draft Survey Report. She told Chairperson Plaag that

this draft report is the best written report, they have seen in their office in the last ten years. He said that Ms. McDonald is sending her recommended changes to Chairperson Plaag to make those revisions. He said if he gets the draft report in time to make the revisions, he will present it to the HPC at their next HPC meeting. The HPC showed their appreciation for Chairperson Plaag for all of his work on the draft Survey Report. Chairperson Plaag noted that he was glad to do it for the Town of Boone.

Chairperson Plaag said that after the Council has approved the final draft Survey Report and it is formally submitted to SHPO the next step is to apply for the certified local government designation. He said that Ms. McDonald is checking to see if the old application for this certification can be used or if a new application needs to be submitted. He said this makes the Town eligible for grant funding from the State on other future preservation initiatives.

Chairperson Plaag said he is working with Mr. Chris Miller, GIS Specialist for the Town of Boone to create a map that plots the properties in the draft Survey Report. He noted that this map has to be submitted to SHPO with the draft Survey Report. He said he hopes that by the end of the summer, he hopes to have all of the information on the properties entered into the shell data base. He said there are a number of images that need to be printed for the survey packet. He said that he can save these images into PDF files and requested that the Planning Staff print out the images. He added that there might be some historical documents that might need to be photocopied. He said he is waiting on Ms. McDonald to let him know if the historical photos need to be printed on photo-type paper or on regular paper. Mr. Ward confirmed that the Planning Staff can take care of the printing of these items.

Turner House

Chairperson Plaag said that in March of 2020 the Town and Watauga County were working together on some site evaluation at the Queen Street parking lot as a potential location for a Downtown parking deck which would facilitate some swapping between the Town of Boone and Watauga County that might lead to the preservation of the Turner House located on North Water Street.

Mr. Ward said the Town and the County have both agreed to hire an engineering firm and split the cost fifty-fifty. He said the firm is two months into their evaluation of the site. He said he expects to hear something back from them within the next month regarding the geo-technical results that the area could support a multi-level parking deck. He said he also expects the engineering firm to provide a layout of how many spaces can be allowed on that site. He explained that the purpose of the parking deck would be to provide parking to the Downtown area for visitors, employees, the judicial complex and additional spaces for a possible expansion of the Watauga Library. He said that the demolition permit that the County applied for was re-issued on May 1, 2020 by the County's request and it will expire on October 31, 2020 for the Turner House structure. He said just because it has an expiration date, it doesn't mean that the demolition permit could not be issued again.

Chairperson Plaag explained that he has previously tried to make arrangements with Mr. Turner to make photos of the interior of the Turner House on behalf of the Watauga County Historical Society. He said that both Mr. Turner and Mr. Deron Geouque, Watauga County Manager agreed to Chairperson Plaag making the photos. Chairperson Plaag said that Mr. Turner emailed him to say that Mr. Turner has moved out of the building and the photos can now be made. Chairperson Plaag confirmed with Mr. Ward that he would need to contact Mr. Geouque to gain access to the Turner House to make the photos.

Discussion ensued on the different uses of the Turner House. Chairperson Plaag noted that in March of 2020, Mr. Ward had asked the HPC to provide a list of possible uses for the Turner House. Chairperson Plaag said that he had submitted an email containing a list of possible uses. He asked Mr. Ward if there had been any changes where the HPC would need to revisit the list of possible uses. Mr. Ward said no because the County has not talked about moving forward with any kind of uses and they have been waiting on the parking study. Mr. Ward said he is concerned about the ability of the Town and County level to fund a parking deck as a result of the current significant drop in revenue. He said he was also concerned with how it could be budgeted, if the Town was given the Turner House. He talked about the possible revenue that he might have and would it be enough to offset the repair and maintenance of the Turner House. He said the use would be discussed more after he knows more about the result of the parking study. Mr. Ward noted that the Tourism Development Authority has been asked to vacate their building and the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce has their condo for sale.

Burrell Monument

Chairperson Plaag pointed out that the HPC has previously discussed working on a historical marker and not a monument for Burrell. The HPC was in consensus on working on a historical marker. Chairperson Plaag said that in the past someone suggested a possible bench for Burrell and he said the HPC decided that was not the best way to address this historical topic.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the information in the meeting packet on this topic. He showed concern for the documentation that was provided by Ms. Mary Moretz. He said her information has come from secondary sources rather than primary sources. He said one way to address her information is for an HPC member to travel to the North Carolina State Archives to search for information, travel to one or more historical societies such as Wilkes County and Yadkinville County and possible to other depositories to find information on Burrell. He said another option is to request from Council the use of some of the HPC's existing budget to hire a graduate student on an internship basis to do the research.

Discussion ensued on who will do the Burrell Historical Marker information research. Member Watkins asked Chairperson Plaag if the HPC could do the research on Burrell. Chairperson Plaag pointed out that the Town does not currently have a marker program with rules and regulations to follow. Ms. Turner explained that the Council directed the HPC to research the information on Burrell. Member Bond and Vice-Chairperson Pollitt supported locating a student who might want to work on the Burrell topic for their thesis. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt said she was reluctant to pay for the services for the research on the Burrell topic. Vice-Chairperson

Pollitt suggested contacting the faculty of the University to see if any of their students would be interested in writing a paper on the topic of Burrell. Chairperson Plaag said that might be a difficult task to find someone already wanting to work on the Burrell topic. Chairperson Plaag said he is hearing the HPC say there is a reluctance to spend Town money on paying someone else to prepare the information, when the resources that would be necessary to prepare the draft historical marker application correctly are not located locally. He said there is a fair amount of research time involved and expense for travel with no certainty that the required sources will be found to make it a viable marker. The HPC was in consensus of what Chairperson Plaag explained regarding the research of the historical marker. Ms. Turner suggested that the HPC ask Council for their plan of action on the research of the historical marker. Ms. Shook suggested that the HPC also identify their concerns to Council with moving forward with the research on the Burrell topic in the form of a comprehensive report. Chairperson Plaag offered to prepare the comprehensive report. He said he would prepare it to be reviewed at the next HPC meeting. The HPC were in consensus for Chairperson Plaag to prepare the comprehensive report.

Chairperson Plaag showed concern given the current social and political climate on declining to explore the possibility of a historical marker and how it might be perceived by the Community at large. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt said she does not think it is a good expenditure of Town funds to spend time on researching information on Burrell, when there might not be enough information found to support a historical marker. Member Brantz said if the HPC tries to research a topic that is somewhat vague and try to make it something substantial, we will undercut our own authority or credibility. Member Brantz said we should pick topics that have value to provide research on. Member Bond asked if the HPC could ask Ms. Moretz if she had done any research in Wilkes County or Yadkin County on the Burrell topic.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt suggested alternatively working on a plaque for early explorers including Dan'l Boone, Reverend Howard and Burrell. Ms. Shook suggested including in your report to Council the lack of known resources.

Discussion ensued on working on future historical markers. Chairperson Plaag suggested that the HPC have a directive from Council to put all of the HPC's energy toward finishing the draft Survey Report and District Designation Report. He said that he feels that it is alright to begin discussions on future markers. He said he has the list of future markers, he said that he prefers that the HPC focuses on the draft reports until they are completed. Ms. Turner said the Planning Staff has a copy of the future historical marker list and she would email it to Chairperson Plaag.

Discussion ensued on the joint meeting with the State Historic Preservation Office, Community Appearance Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. Chairperson Plaag referred to Council Member Sam Furgiuele's response at a previous Council meeting where he asked why does the CAC and HPC need to meet with the State on a local Town decision which refers specifically to the CAC and Historic District overlap. Chairperson Plaag said he thought that Council Member Furgiuele's concerns had been addressed. Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Shook

for an update on the joint meeting. Ms. Shook said the joint meeting has been approved and she is waiting on some information and some dates and once she gets the dates, she will send out a doodle poll to schedule the meeting. Chairperson Plaag said that Ms. McDonald suggested that Ms. Ramona Bartos also be a part of this joint meeting because of her legal training. Ms. Turner noted that Ms. Bartos is a lawyer that specializes in Historic Preservation. Ms. Shook said she would invite Ms. Bartos to the joint meeting.

Café Portofino Restaurant and Bar

Chairperson Plaag noted that he wanted to add the Café Portofino Restaurant and Bar to the meeting agenda for informational purposes.

Chairperson Plaag informed the HPC of an email that he had received over the past weekend. He said this was a personal email that was sent to him and he was asked to not reveal the identity of the sender. He confirmed that the content of the email is what is relevant and not the person who wrote the email to him. The information in the email was about the Winkler Organization surveying the property at the Café Portofino Restaurant and Bar located at 970 Rivers Street. The person who wrote the email asked the people why they were surveying the property and he was told because the building was going to be torn down. The person contacted Chairperson Plaag hoping that he would be able to help preserve this structure since he owns the Carolina Historical Consulting, LLC, he felt he would be a great source to ask about preserving the history in Boone. He said that he did more research on the tearing down of the building and found out the Winkler Organization is proposing to build another student housing building with retail on the bottom floor. Chairperson Plaag asked the Planning Staff, if any permits have been submitted for this site. Ms. Shook said that no applications have been submitted. She also noted that there is a department policy preventing the Planning Staff from discussing any proposed project where no application has been submitted.

Discussion ensued on a moratorium on mixed-use projects. Chairperson Plaag talked about a time in the past that the Council put a moratorium on mixed-use projects in the immediate Downtown area. Ms. Shook said there are no moratoriums in place.

Discussion ensued on the Café Portofino Restaurant and Bar site being in a special flood hazard area. Chairperson Plaag asked if new construction is built on this site, how the special flood hazard area will affect the new construction. Ms. Shook said the new construction will have to meet today's ordinance standards. She said if the structure is put in the floodway a lot of extra work has to be done. She said a structure can be built in the floodplain, if it meets the basic flood requirements. He asked Ms. Shook what process the applicant would have to go through to build a structure there. Ms. Shook said it would depend on the use and because there is no application, she is not able to explain what the actual process would be. Chairperson Plaag said that he is concerned about the structure being torn down. He explained that the structure is a contributing source to the proposed district, it is the only surviving resource in the Downtown area that is related to the tobacco industry which was a huge part of Boone's history for a long time. He said the building was originally the Austin Tobacco Company prize room and it was built in 1939. He said since an application has not been submitted at this time for this site,

there is no action that the HPC can take on it. Member Brantz suggested keeping an eye on the property in case any action is taken on it.

Informal Discussion/Other Matters

Chairperson Plaag suggested including the following items on the next meeting agenda: District Designation Report, Survey Report, Burrell Historical Marker Application, Bryan, Hayes and Greene Cemetery and the Next Historical Marker.

Discussion ensued on the Bryan, Hayes and Greene Cemetery. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt asked if more work needed to be done on the ownership of the cemetery. Chairperson Plaag confirmed that the Watauga County Courthouse building is back open and that someone needs to do deed research on the property. Ms. Turner said once the owners have been found that Council directed the HPC members to work with the Town Attorney on writing regulations for cemeteries in the Town limits.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner if the Planning Staff can look up cemetery regulations from similar Towns for the HPC to review before the HPC prepares proposed regulations for Boone.

Adjournment

With no other topics to discuss, Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to adjourn the meeting at 4:36 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary