

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 5, 2022, 3:00 p.m.
WebEx Video Conferencing**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chair Eric Plaag, Vice-Chair Bettie Bond, and Chuck Watkins

Council Liaisons: Virginia Roseman

Town Staff in Attendance:

Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Jessica Mitchell-Long-Range/Special Projects Planner, Christy Turner-Senior Planner, and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others in Attendance: Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources, Paige Henderson-Downtown Boone Development Coordinator, Amber Bateman-Director of Watauga Arts Council, Dr. Alice Wright-Appalachian State University, and Junaluska Heritage Association Members: Dr. Susan Keefe and Ms. Roberta Jackson

Call to Order

Chair Eric Plaag called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting, held via WebEx, to order at 3:00 pm.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to add the “Downtown Boone Walking Tour Update” topic before agenda item eight.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to approve the June 7 and June 14, 2022 meeting minutes as written.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Junaluska Heritage Association – Request for Historic Black Cemetery in the Town of Boone

Chair Plaag suggested that the request be reworded to “a request related to the Historic Black Cemetery.”

Ms. Jessica Mitchell explained that in the meeting packet on page 16, the Planning Staff received a memo dated June 10, 2022, from the Junaluska Heritage Association (JHA). In the memo, the JHA requested permission from the Historic Preservation Commission to place fieldstones on the unmarked graves in Boone’s Historic Black Cemetery. Ms. Roberta Jackson from the JHA explained that Dr. John Callahan,

Appalachian State University Geology Professor Emeritus, helped the JHA pick out the Midnight Blue stones.

Ms. Jackson said that Dr. Alice Wright, ASU Archaeology Professor, and her students have volunteered to do another ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey at the cemetery so that each unmarked grave can be flagged. Ms. Jackson said Dr. Wright would consult with Dr. Keith Seramur, ASU Geology Department, before the survey, which should be done after mowing is finished for the year. Ms. Jackson noted that the work would best be scheduled in October.

Ms. Jackson said that once permission is obtained for the proposed project, the JHA will do fundraising for the project, which is estimated to cost \$800.00 for materials that can be purchased at Wood's Masonry in Boone. She noted that the ASU Anthropology Department has the necessary tools to complete the work.

Discussion ensued on the fieldstones. Dr. Keefe said the community is interested in replacing the field stones removed from the cemetery. She confirmed that, as noted in the memo, the JHA had researched what is involved in replacing the fieldstones. Dr. Wright said that she and her students would be excited for the opportunity to remark the unmarked graves if approved.

Chair Plaag asked Ms. Jackson about some dislodged stones in the cemetery. Ms. Jackson said she believed the stones Chair Plaag was talking about were for Adams and Jackson. As part of this project, Chair Plaag noted another stone that was out of placement beside Coy Williams stone that could also be addressed.

Ms. Amber Bateman joined the meeting at approximately 3:15 pm.

Dr. Wright showed a schematic that she had drawn that explained how the fieldstones would be placed on the ground as close to the unmarked graves as possible based on the new survey. Chair Plaag confirmed that the process for replacing the field stones would be that they would be flat to the ground, not sticking up, and would be set with sand below them to avoid them from being uplifted. Dr. Wright agreed and added that the field stones would not be in the way of any mowing at the cemetery. She explained that the stones would be approximately one to two inches in the ground with two inches of sand beneath them, involving about four inches of digging to install the fieldstones.

Discussion ensued on the approval process for the replacement of the field stones. Chair Plaag said that when the Boone Cemetery was acquired by the Town of Boone, including the historically black portion of the cemetery, the HPC suggested a set of guidelines and procedures. He explained that the Town Manager approves any request for new internment. He said he thought replacing the proposed field stones would fall under this category. He said the guidelines allowed the Town Manager to refer to the HPC or Council for comment. Ms. Mitchell confirmed that because the cemetery is on Town property, it would go to Council first for their approval before the project could begin. Chair Plaag noted that he thought the guidelines stated that only the Austin and Barnes Funeral Home and the Hampton Funeral Home are approved to do the setting of stones automatically. He said other options could be suggested to the Town Manager, who would look at the qualifications of the person setting the stones.

Member Watkins pointed out that what is being proposed should not be confused with internment. He suggested crushed gravel might be a better medium than sand under the field stones.

Chair Plaag said that Ms. Mitchell could provide Ms. Jackson with a copy of the cemetery procedures for what happens in a town cemetery.

Motion and Vote:

Chair Plaag made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend approval by the Town Council and Town Manager on the general concept and plan described in the memo dated June 10, 2022, and discussion at this meeting from the Junaluska Heritage Association with the understanding that there are some details to be worked out on exactly how the fieldstones will be installed.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Historic District/Landmark Design Standards

Chair Plaag explained that two different draft text amendments are before the HPC for their consideration. Ms. Mitchell explained that the proposed changes from the previous HPC meeting were included in the drafted text.

Public Art Standards in the Historic District – Draft Text Amendment

Ms. Mitchell asked the HPC if they had any proposed changes to the draft text amendment. She noted that the Planning Staff had arranged the text amendment in a staff report format since they are preparing to present the proposed text amendment to a joint Public Hearing and Planning Commission meeting at the end of this month. She explained that Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, has not yet reviewed this proposed text amendment. She noted that she might make proposed changes in her review of it.

Chair Plaag pointed out the following minor corrections:

- On packet page 28, bullet point item beginning with “Artwork should have,” add “be” before “scaled”
- On packet page 28, bullet item beginning with “Historic signs,” change “painted of side walls” to “painted on side walls”

Discussion ensued on the proposed Planning Staff changes to the Public Art Standards in the Historic District. Ms. Mitchell pointed out that the proposed text change in the first bullet point, at the top of packet page 28, was language from Appendix D, 11.3 in the section for Historic Streetscapes, Landscapes, Monuments, and Other Resources in the district. She explained that at the last HPC meeting, she stated some other items related to public art that might need to be addressed and merged while working on the public art text amendment. Ms. Mitchell suggested merging different sections, such as on packet page 29; the first bullet point item was language from Appendix D, Section 11.4. She pointed out that the proposed Section 12.5 has existing language from Section 9 that relates to Monuments.

Ms. Mitchell explained that on packet page 30, the words shown in red strikethrough were originally the Monuments section's narrative introduction. She said this language did not seem to fit the revised text's context. She asked the HPC their thoughts on this section and about merging that portion of the text.

Chair Plaag said he had no objection to merging the material from Section 9 regarding Monuments into the proposed section. He suggested revising the redlined text to read: “For existing monuments in the Historic District, determination of ownership should be pursued by the Town to resolve open questions

regarding responsibility for maintenance and upkeep.” He further explained that it would be helpful for the Town to know who is responsible for and who owns things, even when they are in a public way.

Chair Plaag noticed that Ms. Amber Bateman, Director of the Watauga Arts Council, was in attendance. He asked her if she had any questions about public art. Ms. Bateman wondered if a certain person or entity in the Town could identify who the owner or responsible party is for existing Downtown monuments. He thought it was within the purview of the Planning and Inspections Department to determine when features exist in the streetscape or on private or public property; further, he believed Planning and Inspections would be responsible for those things to be able to enforce compliance with the zoning requirements. Ms. Shook explained that this situation would need to be reviewed case-by-case to see if there is a budget to hire a surveyor or do other research. She said the Planning and Inspections would probably not be the final decision maker on said topic, and possibly the Public Works Department would be involved.

Ms. Shook explained that a formal decision does not need to be made on the public art text amendment by the HPC. However, she said the HPC could recommend that the Council and the Planning Commission approve the amended text amendment. She further explained that this was the last time the HPC would have a chance to review this proposed text amendment before the hearing.

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, that the Council and Planning Commission adopt the amended Public Art Standards in the Historic District UDO Text Amendment

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Demolition Standards in the Historic District – Draft Text Amendment

Ms. Mitchell referred to the proposed changes on packet page 43. She said that Ms. Meade did review a portion of the proposed text, and it was her opinion to not duplicate the demolition section in Appendix D since it is already in Article 8 of the UDO. Ms. Mitchell said that Article 8 covers the historic district and historical landmarks.

Discussion ensued on Article 8.08.01(A)(3). Ms. Mitchell said that when the Planning Staff read this section, it seemed like the documentation would only be required if it was waived or reduced. She said they wondered if it’s not waived or reduced for demolition, how would we rewrite it so that the documentation is required each time. She asked the HPC if there was a consensus that the documentation would be warranted each time. Chair Plaag explained the process of the one-year waiting period for demolition, which is to work with the applicant on meeting the requirements. He confirmed with Ms. Shook that after one year, an applicant could apply for a permit to demo if they meet all other requirements and there is nothing to prohibit the demolition; Ms. Shook agreed. Chair Plaag said he did not think we could have a blanket requirement for an applicant to complete documentation. He said this could be used as a condition for a reduced timeline for demolition, and it could speed up the process by six months, then the applicant might be happy to document the building. He also said he did not think it would be either enforceable or good practice to require documentation as a blanket policy.

Discussion ensued on a possible blanket policy. Chair Plaag suggested asking Ms. Meade about the possible blanket policy, independent of the standards for the district. He explained that it could be a separate policy and required as part of the overarching demolition ordinance. He said if this is a possibility,

then he would support it. He said the Town might be able to do it through its enforcement mechanisms. Ms. Shook said since this is the final review of this proposed text amendment, she will consult with Ms. Meade on it.

Chair Plaag suggested the following proposed changes to this draft text amendment:

- On packet page 38, Article 8.08.01(3) in the second line change, “document” to “documents”
- On packet page 42, in the 1#(B) in the first line, add a comma after “undertaken.”
- On packet page 42, with the item beginning with “In the circumstance, a structure,” change “relocated to the historic district” to “relocated building is congruous with the historic district.”
- On packet page 42, the factors to be considered could be listed in this section. For instance, including “the considerations will include, but not limited to architectural styles, scale, orientation, buildings, spacing, setbacks, height, massing, and distance from other buildings.”

Ms. Mitchell compared Article 8.08.01(3) to the proposed text in the Relocation section (beginning with “The owner is to record”) regarding documentation. She stated that Staff is considering how to make the language in both sections the same. She asked the HPC if it would be more preferred to have the language including the HABS guidelines, the list of features (as in the Relocation section), or a combination of the two concerning documentation. Chair Plaag suggested having the HABS in both places, merging the list of other features to be included, and getting the broadest level of documentation you can get. He said the standard should apply equally to demolition and relocation. Ms. Mitchell clarified that the suggestion was for relocation, to revise the language to include HABS on packet page 41 and for demolition to incorporate a list on packet page 38.

Ms. Mitchell also explained that Staff was considering adding language regarding when such documentation is requested, to include within these standards a procedure for the applicant on how the documentation will be presented to the HPC. She asked the HPC if the documentation should be brought to the advisory or quasi-judicial session based on the case and how the HPC would like the documentation to be presented to them.

Chair Plaag talked about a possible 90-day period as a condition upon the applicant to complete the documentation and have them provide the report. He said the HPC would determine if they could approve the reduced time. He said he thought this would occur at the quasi-judicial session, and he stated that there needs to be a way that they don’t incur a new fee. He said it might be that the hearing is continued until documentation is completed.

Motion and Vote:

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend adopting the proposed changes to the draft Demolition Standards – Historic District – UDO Text Amendment.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Ms. Shook noted that the next HPC Quasi-Judicial hearing date after July 12, 2022, previously discussed by the HPC, will need to be July 26, 2022, because Ms. Meade is not available on July 19, 2022.

Chair Plaag urged the HPC members to review the cases in the meeting packet to prepare for the July 12, 2022, Quasi-Judicial Hearing.

Discussion of Existing Café Portofino Building – Town Council Request for Consensus by the HPC on Historic Value/Additional Facts of Building

Chair Plaag reminded members to keep in mind that they should not discuss the report that appears in the meeting packet submitted by the applicant or the anticipated future use of the site. He said the HPC's conversation on this topic should focus solely on what Staff is about to present.

Ms. Shook and Ms. Mitchell explained that at the last Council meeting, the applicant submitted a written request to offer the building to the Town of Boone. Ms. Shook said that during their discussion, the Council wondered if certain parts of the building were historical and which parts were those that are historical or non-historical before they even considered the possibility of hiring someone to move the building. She said the Council discussed when and where they could use it. The Council decided that they needed some basic information before moving the building.

Chair Plaag said the property had been designated as significant to the district's history, not architecturally. He said it is a contributing building to the historic district, and it is Boone's only surviving vestige of what was once a robust tobacco trade that was essential to Boone's economy. He said it is historically significant because it is the last thing that speaks to a rather important part of Boone's economic history. He said this is an opportunity for the Town, if it wanted, to negotiate with the applicant on relocating the building somewhere and salvaging elements of the building.

Ms. Shook responded that the report the HPC now has provided by the applicant could be forwarded to Council for further consideration.

Council Liaison Roseman said the Council first discussed that the building is worthy of salvaging and moving and if there were funds to move it. Additionally, she explained that Council considered if the Farmer's Market wanted the building. She further stated that those considerations still have to be made. She said Council decided to ask the HPC to give them feedback on it before they make a financial commitment to it.

Chair Plaag pointed out that it would be the Council's decision if they wanted to hire an engineer to look at the building who is experienced in moving historic buildings, to tell them if the building is worthy of salvaging or not. Council Liaison Roseman stated that Council wants information gathered that would help to determine if it is worth entertaining the idea of considering the next steps.

Chair Plaag said that before the HPC makes a formal recommendation, he suggested that between the discussion of this case on next Tuesday's agenda, the HPC would have an opportunity to evaluate the report and either approve it or not approve the report that the applicant submits. He suggested that if the HPC approves the report that they immediately make a recommendation to Council to approve it. There was consensus from the HPC members on Chair Plaag's suggestion.

Downtown Boone Walking Tours Brochure

Vice-Chair Bond began discussing the Downtown Boone Walking Tour Brochure created by Mr. Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources, and his team, who created the brochures. Council Liaison Roseman asked about the QR code on the Walking Tour brochure. Mr. Freed said the QR code came from the original walking tour that was put together from an application called Pocket Sites.

Vice-Chair Bond suggested that the Watauga County Historical Society work with Mr. Freed on revising the brochure and prepare it for the next printing. She said that sponsors would be needed for the re-printing of it. She pointed out that the HPC would not be concerned with it this way.

Council Liaison Roseman suggested that Mr. Freed check with the Marketing Department students at Appalachian State University to help with the brochure possibly. She said their service is free and gives the students class credit.

Vice-Chair Bond left the meeting at approximately 4:30 pm.

Project Updates by Planning Staff

Minor/Major Work – COA Revision – UDO Text Amendment

Ms. Mitchell noted that the Council approved this text amendment, and it is in the UDO and on the Town website.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Application Status Update

Ms. Mitchell said she had contacted Ms. Kristi Brantley at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). She explained that Ms. Brantley had reviewed the draft application and suggested some minor revisions. She will contact Ms. Brantley on the timeline for final submission. She explained that the minor revisions were to include Comprehensive Plan Policies that are related to Historic Preservation. She said she needs to finalize the member resumes based on the current board members; she further stated that with no longer having a student member, she would edit those resumes if another one was to apply. She confirmed that Council Liaison Roseman could submit a resume as a Council Liaison to the board, but she is not required to submit a resume. Council Liaison Roseman said that she would submit her resume to Ms. Mitchell.

Status of Digital Watauga Project and Proposed Local Landmark Designation Reports

Discussion ensued on the Digital Watauga photography project and the proposed Landmark Designation Reports. Ms. Shook explained that the decision had been made that the project and the reports would be done. She said she has the approval to bring in an intern without going through the application process. She said a part of the administration's intern money would be used for the reports and the rest for the digital photography project. She said the funds for these topics have already been approved; she said she would use the internship funding, and the rest of the funding will come from the Planning and Inspections Department. She said she hopes to get started within the next couple of weeks on these projects. Ms. Shook agreed to contact Digital Watauga to discuss the setup of the intern and the projects.

Status of Historical Markers (Hayes-Bryan-Greene Cemetery, Council's Store)

Ms. Mitchell stated that she contacted Sewah Studios about one month ago to check the status of the markers. She requested proof of the markers, allowing Staff to check the marker text. However, she said she had not yet received the proof. She said she would contact them again as soon as possible to get an update.

Boone 150 Project Updates

Mr. Freed reviewed past Boone 150 events, including the Boonerang Festival, the kickoff of the summer concerts, Blue Ridge Community Theatre Happy Birthday Boone Production at the Appalachian Theatre, Independence Day Celebration with fireworks in collaboration with the Marty Stuart concert, Independence Day Parade, the gathering of Boone's Living Mayors, and various, ongoing events at the Watauga County Library. He stated that the Boone Reads programs would continue through the end of

the year. Additionally, he explained that the Boone 150 events would include a Boone Summit event and guided cemetery walking tours in the fall.

Project Updates by HPC Members

Watauga County Jail Local Landmark Designation Report

Ms. Mitchell informed the HPC that this was the revised report based on the changes discussed at the last meeting. She is preparing an action request to send the revised report to Council for their approval. She said that once Council approves the report, she will contact Ms. Brantley at SHPO so that they can begin their review. She explained that the review process by SHPO would be a 30-day review time.

Chair Plaag noted that the following interpretative panel topics are on the HPC's work plan for the Boone 150 related topics.

Boone Cemetery Interpretative Panels

Chair Plaag said he would begin to work on the draft language and thought he could have it for the HPC's review by the September 2022 HPC meeting.

Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panels

Chair Plaag said he would begin to work on the draft language and thought he could have it for the HPC's review by the October 2022 HPC meeting.

Chair Plaag noted that he would like to start positioning the HPC to work toward completing these tasks well before the end of the year. He said this doesn't mean that the actual panels will be installed by the end of the year. He said he would like to hopefully have the draft proposals to Council by December 2022 to request funding for those to be completed.

Chair Plaag noted that Ms. Shook had informed him that the HPC's fund that existed for many years is now empty. He explained that anything the HPC does would have to be funded by Council. Ms. Shook confirmed that everything that the HPC has planned is supported, including the two markers that Ms. Mitchell is working on, the two landmark reports of the town properties, and the work with Digital Watauga. She said the HPC would be in a position to request Council to add money back to that funding next year. Ms. Shook also noted that the former Town Manager, Mr. John Ward, had moved some of the HPC funding to the legal fees line item to cover the Town Attorney's participation in the Quasi-Judicial process.

Other Discussion

Member Watkins asked Chair Plaag about three murals he saw on buildings while driving down Howard Street. The murals were located on the ECRS building, the side of the Magic Cycles store (behind the Shoppes at Farmers building). Chair Plaag said these murals were there before the adoption of the Historic District. Member Watkins also noted some graffiti on a couple of buildings. Ms. Paige Henderson pointed out that the Downtown Boone Police Officer is working with the property owners on this issue.

Chair Plaag reminded Ms. Henderson to let the property owners know to coordinate with the Planning and Inspections Department so they can work with them on removing the graffiti.

Recess of HPC Advisory Session

Chair Plaag recessed the meeting at 4:56 pm until the Quasi-Judicial hearing on Tuesday, July 12, 2022.

Eric Plaag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary