

TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 13, 2021, 3:00 p.m.

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chair Eric Plaag and Bettie Bond

Council Liaisons:

Rennie Brantz and Virginia Roseman

Town Staff in Attendance:

Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present:

Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources

Call to Order

Chair Eric Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software, to order on Tuesday, July 13, 2021, at 3:02 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Bond, to adopt the agenda as written.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Bond, to approve the May 11, 2021 meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Chair Plaag, to approve the June 8, 2021 meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections notified the HPC that administrative staff will be given approximately five business days to complete the meeting minutes. She explained that the draft meeting minutes would be forwarded to a staff member who has attended the meeting to review them, the administrative staff will email the draft meeting minutes to the HPC for their review. The HPC will email their changes to the administrative staff who will make the corrections, and the corrections would be taken care of before the actual packet is published. She said the Council does a similar process with their minutes. She noted that this process would apply to all meeting minutes that are produced out of the Planning and Inspections Department. She added that administrative staff will highlight any substantive changes for discussion at the next meeting.

Chair Plaag asked that the administrative staff email the draft meeting minutes to the HPC and include the reminder for the board members not to reply to each other regarding this email. He explained that we want to prevent any open meeting law issues with the possible exchange of emails. He did confirm that it is alright for the board members to email the administrative staff regarding any proposed changes to the draft meeting minutes.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Junaluska Marker Event Recap

Chair Plaag asked for feedback on the event. He said he felt the event went well, especially with the addition of the Junaluska Choir.

Ms. Shook said she felt that having a specific group that was personally invited to the event was one of the reasons for the excellent turnout. Another reason for the superb turnout was that the event was advertised on social media. She noted that there were passersby that stopped to see what was happening at the event.

Mr. Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources, said that this event brought out community members that do not usually come out to events. He said there is an excellent view of the marker as you come down North Street to Depot Street and as you come up and down Queen Street. He said the blue color of the marker is visible, and it is a wonderful addition to the Downtown area.

Discussion ensued on the video of the Junaluska Marker event. Mr. Freed explained that his department videoed the event, and he has it as an unlisted link on YouTube. Chair Plaag suggested embedding the hyperlink of the video on the Boone HPC website. Ms. Shook agreed and indicated that the hyperlink would be put on the page dedicated to landmarks. Mr. Freed said he would email the active public link to the HPC so it can be used on their website. Member Bond suggested that the active public link be added to the Digital Watauga website under the Junaluska Heritage Association Collection page. Chair Plaag agreed to this suggestion.

Discussion ensued on the HPC Chair and Junaluska Heritage Association remarks from the event. Member Bond requested that a link be added to the Junaluska Heritage Association page on the Digital Watauga website to add the transcripts of the remarks from the HPC Chair and the Junaluska Heritage Association. Chair Plaag noted that right after the event, he posted on the Digital Watauga Facebook page several links to photographs, newspaper coverage, and video clips of the Junaluska choir performing at the event. He noted that the Digital Watauga Facebook page has approximately 3,500 followers that have access to this information. He said that the historical remarks made at the event were added as a blog post on the Watauga County Historical Society's page, and it was linked to the Digital Watauga Facebook page.

Chair Plaag said he understands that the historical remarks are important as far as context. He said he wanted the focus to be about the event and the community members who were participating in the event and not about the remarks. Therefore, he suggested that the embedded video of the whole event be placed on the Boone HPC website and include a single line that says a transcript of the HPC Chair's remarks can be found on that website. Member Bond agreed with Chair Plaag's suggestion to modestly reference the HPC Chair's remarks on the Boone HPC website.

Ms. Shook said that Ms. Roberta Jackson had talked about the importance of what the Junaluska Community has done. Ms. Shook said that she does not want that message to be lost. Chair Plaag said he also would like to request that a transcript be made from the notes that Ms. Jackson presented at the event or ask her for a copy of her notes. He confirmed that there was consensus from the HPC for him to request Ms. Jackson's notes.

Hayes Bryan Greene Cemetery Update

Chair Plaag explained that he has not met with Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, to discuss the cemetery. He said he has a scheduled appointment to meet with her on Friday, July 16, 2021. He said he would give a full report at the August HPC meeting.

Mapping of Other Cemeteries Update and Press Release for Identification of Boone Cemeteries

Chair Plaag asked Ms. Shook for an update on the press release. Ms. Shook explained that she was not able to complete the press release. She further stated that Ms. Laney Pilkington, who is responsible for social media, is out of town. She said when Ms. Pilkington returns, she will coordinate with her on completing the press release. She noted before the press release was created that she would like to discuss the options for feedback on the HPC website and noted that she would like the Commission to provide her with the information that should be collected. Chair Plaag suggested including the name and contact information for the person reporting their information for follow up purposes, the parcel identification number to help identify the location of the property, the historical name of the cemetery, the church name associated with the cemetery and have a note section to list the names of people buried in the cemetery. He suggested directing the public to the Town of Boone GIS website to look up parcel numbers in the Town limits.

Discussion ensued as to the location of the project on the website. Staff and the Commission agreed to modify the projects page into subpages.

Cemetery Guidelines Project Update

Chair Plaag said that Council Liaison Brantz and Member Bond were asked to work on criteria to help the Council decide about possibly acquiring historic cemeteries in the town limits. Chair Plaag said the criteria would include historic designation or recognition or interpretation proposals.

Member Bond said she wanted to gather the feedback from the press release and see if it might help her and Council Liaison Brantz better understand what needs to be included in the criteria. She said she had reviewed the guidelines from other Towns and, she prefers a more generic type of criteria.

Chair Plaag said under the National Register of Historic Places; cemeteries are generally excluded from consideration for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. He said they fall under criteria consideration D. He explained how cemeteries fall under this category. He said he would forward the link to the criteria considerations to Member Bond and Council Liaison Brantz for their review. He further explained that this information could be helpful in identifying the criteria.

Discussion ensued as to using GIS to map cemeteries. Ms. Shook noted that she would coordinate with Chris Miller for this information.

Chair Plaag talked about cemeteries on church property that may not be labeled as a church cemetery. He suggested contacting the local churches and asking them if they have a cemetery or any burials on their property. Ms. Shook asked if the HPC included columbariums in the cemetery guidelines. Chair Plaag noted that Mr. John Ward, Town Manager, wanted the HPC to identify them and present them to Council.

Chair Plaag talked about Native American mounds or highly significant civil war fortresses. He said the National Register of Historic Places would obscure the location of these types of things as far as the public-facing elements. He asked Ms. Shook if the Town's protocol allows us to shield publicly identifiable information in the case of a public records request. Ms. Shook said she would research this with the department public records keeper. He said the federal government covers up the name and location for this type of public record.

Town Streets Projects Update

Chair Plaag explained that Member Watkins's board term expired the end of June. He said that Member Watkins has agreed to continue to serve on the HPC until his seat is filled. Chair Plaag said that Member Watkins will

continue to put together the Town Street reports for the HPC. Chair Plaag suggested tabling this agenda item to the August 2021 meeting. Chair Plaag confirmed that there was consensus from the HPC to table this agenda item.

Certificate of Appropriateness Application Status

Ms. Shook noted that she had prepared an application package for filing for a COA and a Statement of Conformity. She explained the difference between the two application processes. She pointed out that there is a difference in the supplemental checklists for the major and minor work. She said when the applicant meets with a Staff member, the Staff member will help the applicant determine what they need to submit with their application. Chair Plaag pointed out some proposed formatting changes to the COA application package that Ms. Shook completed during the meeting.

Discussion ensued on the changing of the HPC meeting date and time. Chair Plaag said he felt like we would have more people interested in applying for the HPC if the meetings were being held in the evening rather than during the day. He pointed out that evening meetings would be more convenient for COA applicants to attend the meetings. He also pointed out that it is easier for graduate students to attend evening meetings because they have classes during the day. He said that people in the general community that would like to be on the HPC can not justify to their employer to be out of work during the day for a town meeting.

Ms. Shook explained the additional costs of moving the HPC meeting to the evening. She talked about the staff accruing comp time and the requirement for the Town attorney to attend the meeting.

Ms. Shook recommended moving the HPC meeting to the first Tuesday of the month. Council Liaison Roseman asked if the meeting location would need to change. Ms. Shook said the quasi-judicial process would work better to meet in a large space like the Council Chambers. She also said it would be better to pick the same location for every meeting. Chair Plaag asked about the long-term plan for where the Council Chambers will be located since the current building where the Council Chambers is for sale. Ms. Shook said there are two options, one of which is the new campus or at a location in the Downtown area.

Chair Plaag asked if the HPC could wait until the August HPC meeting to vote on the applications. Ms. Shook yes because she would like to streamline the application process as much as possible prior to the August public hearing.

Chair Plaag reviewed the applicant signature section of the Chapel Hill COA application from the January 2021 meeting packet under COA applications. He said he liked the idea of the property owner or applicant also certifying that HPC members, town employees, and town agents are permitted to enter the exterior property to see the conditions. He said he would like to include this option. Ms. Shook said she would prefer to check in with the Town Attorney before changing the COA application for that item.

Chair Plaag talked about applicants not being allowed to contact HPC members to discuss their proposals before the hearing. She agreed this information could be added to the application.

Chair Plaag said he would like to include in the checklist the demolition language for existing elements from the Chapel Hill application. Ms. Shook said she would check with the Town Attorney regarding this proposed change as well.

Discussion ensued on the COA process. Ms. Shook asked Chair Plaag if he knew what the process should be for major works. He said that he did not know and suggested that Ms. Shook contact other jurisdictions and the State Historic Preservation Office to discuss it. She noted that she would also consult with the Town Attorney regarding this topic.

Chair Plaag recommended changes to the UDO language and draft design standards for filing a Statement of Conformity for Minor Work application. He recommended under C. that the language read, “replacement of roofing materials with like materials for flat or low-slope roofs not visible from the street”.

Motion and Vote:

Chair Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Bond, to change the proposed language under C. on the Application Information for Filing for a Statement of Conformity for Minor Work in Local Historic Districts and Landmarks to: “Replacement of roofing materials with like materials for flat or low-slope roofs not visible from the street”.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay- None

The motion passed.

Quasi-Judicial Training Status

Ms. Shook explained that the quasi-judicial training would occur virtually around late August or early September, depending on the availability of the Town Attorney. She said she would let the HPC pick the dates that work best for them. She said the training would be in the evening for approximately two hours and it may involve one or two training sessions. She said the training would include district designation and landmark designation processes. She noted that there would be further discussion on said training at the August HPC meeting.

Ms. Shook talked about the Blue Ridge Tourist Court. She said NC General Statute 160D requires both the HPC and the Council to either hold a joint legislative hearing or hold separate hearings on the landmark designation. She said the HPC was invited to the August 23, 2021, special public hearing. She explained that if a quorum of the HPC cannot be obtained, she will schedule a legislative hearing at the August meeting.

Historic Preservation Commission Priorities List

Chair Plaag explained that the HPC had been assigned several tasks from Council. He offered to make a list of these tasks. He said he would list the tasks in the order that he thinks they should be worked on and include a timeline for each task. He said he would forward the list to Ms. Shook for her review. He said he would present the list at the August HPC meeting for the HPC to review. Ms. Shook sent Chair Plaag the list of HPC tasks that she keeps in her department work plan.

Unified Development Ordinance Update

Ms. Shook presented the adopted changes to the Unified Development Ordinance that was effective on July 1, 2021. She referred to the Town of Boone website: www.townofboone.net/departments/planning-inspections/unified-development-ordinance/.

Chair and Vice-Chair Discussion

Ms. Shook reviewed the HPC Chair and Vice-Chair Application and answered questions on it. Chair Plaag asked for a copy of the application to be emailed to him and Member Bond requested a copy of the application to be mailed to her. And they both agreed that they would submit their completed applications at the next HPC meeting.

Informal Discussion

Chair Plaag told Ms. Shook that he would email his suggested August 2021 meeting agenda items to the Planning Staff.

Adjournment

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Chair Plaag, to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

Vote:

Aye - All
Nay – None
The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary