

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 6, 2022, 3:00 p.m.
WebEx Video Conferencing**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

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

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: Amy Davis-Interim Town Manager, Ms. Paige Henderson-Downtown Boone Development Coordinator, Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources, and JC Feimster

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

Chair Plaag suggested moving the Boone 150 Projects and Historic District Promotion topics after adopting the Agenda. Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to amend the Agenda as suggested by Chair Plaag.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chair Plaag introduced Ms. Paige Henderson, recently hired as the Town of Boone's Downtown Boone Development Coordinator. Ms. Henderson introduced herself and stated she previously worked in Tryon, North Carolina, as a Main Street Program Director. She is from Avery County, North Carolina. She achieved her master's degree from Appalachian State University. She said her role as the DBDA Coordinator includes being the Main Street Program administrator and working with Downtown businesses. She continued that the DBDA role includes working with businesses on façade incentive grants, and helping with Downtown development and events, as well as building renovations, and rehabilitation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in the grant process. She considers her role was more economic development based. She is excited to have a chance to work on things in the Downtown area that will last and impact generations.

Chair Plaag thanked Ms. Henderson for reminding the HPC that the façade incentive grants are available to Downtown business owners for appropriate façade renovation, if their business is located within the Municipal Service District. He suggested to Planning Staff to remind applicants, when applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), that this type of grant is available. Ms. Henderson confirmed that this grant is for up to \$5,000 for matching.

Chair Plaag introduced a new HPC member, Mr. James Sharp. Member Sharp said he moved to Boone, North Carolina, from Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. He is currently working at Appalachian State University. He worked in the private sector of planning and architectural design. In Dallas, he served as a co-chair for one of Dallas's tax increment financing districts, the board of the United Way, and served on the city's

housing finance committee; he also volunteered for a neighborhood conservation coalition district. He continued that as an urban planner and with an interest in architecture, he sees the preservation of our built environment and how it shapes our communities today and as important to our health, financial health, and economic health.

Boone 150 Update

Mr. Mark Freed, Cultural Resources Director, talked about upcoming Boone 150 events including the "Boone Reads Program," and the next one is scheduled at the Watauga County Library on Saturday, September 10, 2022, at 10 am. He said that Junaluska Heritage Association members, Ms. Roberta Jackson and Dr. Sue Keefe would be at this event to talk about the Junaluska Oral History Book. He announced the "Boone Summit" is scheduled for Wednesday, October 26, 2022, at 7 pm at the Appalachian Theatre, a free event. He continued that speakers will discuss Daniel Boone and his connections to the Boone area. He also mentioned the "Boone Cemetery Tours" will continue to be organized and advertised. He said that in January of 2023, they would wrap up the Boone 150 events. Chair Plaag confirmed with Mr. Freed that a meeting is scheduled on September 12, 2022, at 2 pm to discuss the Cemetery Tours. Mr. Freed noted that after the September 12 meeting, hopefully, they will have the promotional material ready to publish regarding the cemetery tours. He said he would inform the HPC of the promotional material's status.

Historic District Promotion

Ms. Henderson said that she and Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Long Range/Special Projects Planner, had discussed ideas to promote the historic district and to help the Downtown business owners understand and the benefits of being in a historic district, resources available, and the process of securing a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). She mentioned that the idea is for material to be available digitally, and the materials would be for current and new businesses. She continued that the material would also include businesses' responsibilities and the Town's responsibilities of being in the historic district.

Discussion ensued on Wayfinding Signage. Chair Plaag asked about the recent signage directing people to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Historic Boone. Ms. Mitchell said this signage project was through a partnership with the Watauga Tourist Development Association (WTDA). Ms. Mitchell said this was an excellent opportunity for advertising the Downtown area and the historic district, and then later determine if additional signage should be added for the historic district.

Chair Plaag strongly supported the Staff inquiring of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) about the brown cultural marker signs. He suggested that one of these signs be placed at or near the intersection of Hardin Street and Blowing Rock Road and King Street headed northbound to let people know to turn there to go into Historic Boone. He also suggested that these signs be placed on the western edge of Downtown Boone and a few other places where they might be useful.

Chair Plaag asked the Staff if they knew what happened to the brown cultural marker signs that used to point to the Horn in the West. He noted that the person in charge at the Horn in the West was concerned and upset over the missing sign. He suggested that Staff ask NCDOT about this missing sign when inquiring about the other brown cultural marker signs. Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, pointed out that Ms. Mitchell had found out from NCDOT that because the Town of Boone was a local historic district and was not at a State or National status, it did not qualify for one of the brown cultural marker signs. Ms. Mitchell confirmed and said she could inquire about the signs again, especially with Chair Plaag's concern regarding the missing sign. Chair Plaag suggested that Staff contact Ms. Kristi

Brantley at the State Historic Preservation Commission (SHPO) and confirm with her that local historic districts do not qualify for the brown cultural marker signs.

Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner, said that when she meets with applicants, she informs them of the Façade Incentive Grant Program and refers them to Ms. Henderson. Ms. Henderson stated that an application could be submitted to the UNCG-School of Design through the North Carolina Main Street Program to get free design services for a façade renovation. She said she had seen some interest in this application, and those applications are being prepared to be submitted in the fall. She explained the process working with UNCG, which the applicant includes photos and a request of what they are proposed to do with their facade. She said a UNCG School of Design student donates their time to prepare a complete design free of cost that the applicant can use for their proposed façade. She also mentioned that it is according to SHPO standards through the Main Street program. Chair Plaag asked Ms. Henderson if she would like to schedule time at another HPC meeting to discuss strategies for the said promotion. She said she would prepare a strategy in the next few weeks and would like to attend another HPC meeting to go over that strategy.

Ms. Henderson and Mr. Freed left the meeting at approximately 3:30 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Plaag said that due to the volume of draft meeting minutes presented for approval, he suggested that the HPC table the August 9 and August 15, 2022 meeting minutes until their next meeting.

Chair Plaag reviewed the July 12, 2022, meeting minutes. He pointed out the following proposed change:

- Page 3, second paragraph change the last sentence change: "Mr. Gaston said that is correct" to "Mr. Gaston said that as the plans are currently drawn, there would not be pedestrian access"
- Page 5, first paragraph, fifth sentence change: "juridical" to "judicial"
- Page 7, third paragraph, fourth and sixth sentence change: "gabled, hipped" to "gabled or hipped"
- Page 8, first paragraph, third sentence change: "coins" to "quoins"
- Page 8, second paragraph, third sentence change: "having an open angle but used" to "being a vault type building that used"
- Page 8, second paragraph, fourth sentence change: "arches that were flat" to "arches that were not flat"
- Page 8, second paragraph, tenth sentence change: "is to use the stone pilasters" to "is not to use the stone pilasters"
- Page 8, second paragraph, eleventh sentence change: "lentils" to "lintels"

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Sharp, to approve the amended July 12, 2022 meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chair Plaag began a discussion regarding a glossary or list of architectural terms that are likely to be used in HPC discussions to assist Staff. Ms. Mitchell stated this would be helpful to Staff, and Ms. Turner agreed.

Chair Plaag suggested HPC members email directly to Ms. Mitchell and Ms. Turner, and blind-copy HPC members. He suggested this to not violate open meetings laws. He mentioned the intention of this task would be to include architectural terms regarding buildings in Boone.

Chair Plaag also mentioned to Member Sharp that it is the Town's practice to allow a commission member not present at a meeting to make a motion and vote on the minutes.

Chair Plaag reviewed the July 26, 2022, meeting minutes. He pointed out the following proposed changes:

- Page 2, paragraph six, second sentence change: "false chimneys" to "false corner chimneys"
- Page 4, paragraph one, third sentence change: "across for the Trundle Hotel" to "across from the Trundle Hotel"
- Page 4, paragraph two, fifth sentence change: "recently raised the seam-type roof" to "recently installed raised seam-type roof"
- Page 4, paragraph two, tenth sentence change: "building" to "roof"
- Page 4, paragraph five, fourth sentence change: "roll lock header" to "rowlock or header sill"
- Page 5, paragraph eight, last sentence change: "roll lock header" to "rowlock or header sill"
- Page 6, paragraph four, third sentence change: "exterior walls of upper level" to "interior of the exterior walls of the upper level"
- Page 8, paragraph nine, fourth sentence change: "regarding the issues" to "in regard to the issues"
- Page 11, paragraph nine, fourth sentence change: "at the time" to "to that time"
- Page 11, paragraph ten, third sentence change: "he thought it was a concrete building" to "at that time he thought it was a concrete building"

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Sharp, to approve July 26, 2022, meeting minutes as amended:

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passes.

Chair Plaag reviewed the August 2, 2022, meeting minutes. He pointed out the following proposed changes:

- Page 4, paragraph nine, eighth sentence change: "those elements could be discarded" to "those other elements, discussed earlier, could be discarded"
- Page 5, paragraph five: "structural integrity" to "structural integrity in mind"
- Page 5, paragraph nine, last sentence change: "expensive" to "inexpensive"
- Page 6, paragraph two, first sentence change: "property on a National Register" to "moved property on the National Register"
- Page 7, paragraph three, fifth sentence change: "resume and that" to "resume that"
- Page 7, paragraph seven, add to the end of the first sentence: "of the Watauga County Public Library supervised by Digital Watauga"
- Page 7, paragraph seven, add to the beginning of the second sentence: "For the landmark reports,"
- Page 7, paragraph eight, add to the end of that sentence: "on the photography project"
- Page 9, paragraph nine, second sentence change: "arrival" to "appearance"

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Sharp, to approve August 2, 2022, meeting minutes as amended:

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passes.

Ms. Mitchell reminded the HPC that at the next HPC Advisory meeting, the HPC would have draft meeting minutes to approve from August 9, August 15, August 30, and September 6, 2022.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Watauga County Jail Local Landmark Designation

Chair Plaag began discussing the topic and noted he thought there was a misunderstanding regarding the Basic Local Landmark Designation Process flowchart, which can be addressed later in this meeting.

Ms. Mitchell talked about the response from SHPO regarding the submittal for the landmark designation of the Watauga County Jail. She said the SHPO's review was completed within the 30-day window. She said Staff felt that the greatest concern from the review was the comments that SHPO made on the façade of the building. She said the Staff would like feedback from the HPC on the response from SHPO.

Chair Plaag read the comments in the meeting packet by Architectural Survey Coordinator, Ms. Beth King. He pointed out that the HPC was not recommending this property for landmark designation based on its architecture, but on its association with patterns of history. He said this information was overlooked in the review of the designation report. He explained a different standard discussed at length in the National Register guiding bulletins between properties nominated for their architecture significance under Criterion C and properties nominated under Criterion A or B.

Chair Plaag pointed out that Ms. King may have potentially an argument in terms of the building's ability to communicate its association with its period of significance about the interior of the building. He said the changes to the interior of the building are not dramatic. He said the jailhouse elements are missing from the interior of the building, there are no bars on the windows, and we do not see other elements of the jail infrastructure in the building. He said that the interiors of buildings are not considered with local landmark designation, unless the owner explicitly requests the interior be designated. He further stated the significance of the building is considered based on the exterior appearance of the building. He noted that the Boone Post Office's interior was considered part of its designation because the Town wanted the lobby designated as well. He said that any discussion of missing jailhouse elements is irrelevant and should be removed from this discussion because we are not asking for interior designation.

Chair Plaag talked about the exterior of the building; he said historically, the building had a porch, from very early in its period of significance, which has not changed. He said the design of the porch has changed, and many of the things on the porch are reversible. He said there are sufficient historical images to show the more craftsman-style porch that was originally, or at least during the period of significance, on this building. He said if the owners were inclined to go back, they could accomplish that relatively easily. He thought no other exterior elements had been removed or disturbed to impact the building's ability to convey its historical significance. He said he included this information in the designation report that was submitted to SHPO for their review, but it was mentioned in the response from SHPO.

Vice-Chair Bond shared her thoughts on the Watauga County Jail House. She said the jail house is one of the anchors of the Howard Street Project. She said it was important to the Town to have this building recognized as historically significant.

Chair Plaag referred to and read comments made in the SHPO letter dated August 20, 2022, from Ms. Kristi Brantley, which stated the comments are “advisory only” and “non-binding.” He explained that the process for local landmark designation is to get feedback from the SHPO. He said if they have concerns about the property's eligibility, those concerns are not binding upon the Town. He felt this is where the misunderstanding about the said flow chart occurred.

Discussion ensued on the flow chart. Chair Plaag referred to the flowchart in the meeting packet and read the item, “Does the report establish the property's historical significance and fully account for its condition/degree of integrity?” He said the report establishes the significance, condition, and degree of integrity. He said the HPC has a difference of opinion with the SHPO, and, specifically with Ms. King, about the integrity level. He said that from this point, the HPC could, or could not, recommend landmark designation after receiving feedback from the SHPO. He concluded that it is then up to the Council to know that there is simply a disagreement in the interpretation of the SHPO, which seems to be applying national registry standards, to a local historic landmark request, and they are not the same standards.

Member Sharp asked if there are landmarks at the Town, County, or Regional scale where comparable efforts have been successful that could be presented to Council to help carry the landmark designation through, even with contradictory feedback from the SHPO. Chair Plaag explained that in the Town, the landmarks designated are the Downtown Boone Post Office, the Linney House and the Linney Law Office, and the Blue Ridge Tourist Court. He noted that these were approved without objection from SHPO. He further noted that the Blue Ridge Tourist Court motel and its related buildings were added as landmarks, and at that time, they did not retain their original appearance. He said that roof lines are important on the National Registry. He said the annex, the tourist court, and the motel all had built up additions that resembled hats that helped with the water intrusion at the property, and those hats were still there. He said the owner intended to remove the hats, but that had not been done when the landmark designation was made and encouraged without objection by the SHPO. He said he thought Ms. King's question was interesting regarding the owner being open to removing or correcting the porch. He suggested Staff could contact the owner and ask if they were open to correcting the porch. He said it is not binding and not required to remove that element to secure a landmark designation. He said he did not feel good about that being the standard by which we evaluate whether this is appropriate or not. He said the better way to evaluate it by is whether what has been done reversible. He stated that with this case, he said the answer is yes, it is reversible, and possible to restore this porch's original appearance at some later date.

Chair Plaag said that on a regional level, he does not know of another 19th Century jailhouse building that survives in any of our Northwest North Carolina counties, with the possible exception of Wilkes County. He explained that it is not known if it is considered or designated as a local landmark for Wilkes County, and it would be a surviving building at the rear of the Wilkes Courthouse.

Ms. Mitchell clarified that in talking with Staff, she wanted to present this to the HPC based on the comments made by SHPO for HPC feedback, prior to contacting the owner. She stated that Staff is aware that the porch on the building is used for the owners' restaurant operation. She explained that the conversation by the HPC clarified the landmark process.

Member Watkins said it is useful to remember that the exhibits stopped at Winston-Salem in the old North Carolina Museum of History, and did not represent areas further west. He said the only way in which the western part of the state was represented was through the subject of folk art. He said he felt that local landmark designation should be left up to the community because it knows best what is important. He thought the jail was remarkable, not so much for its alterations, but because it survived in complete a state as it has. He further stated he supports this building as a local landmark designation, whether the owner wants to correct the porch or not.

Motion and Vote:

Chair Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to recommend designation of the Watauga County Jail building, presently known as the Proper Restaurant and located on Burrell Street, as a local historic landmark, not only for the reasons listed in the report that was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), but for the following reasons including:

- The building's association with patterns of history,
- The property being evaluated based on the exterior appearance and not the interior appearance, and as such, the missing jailhouse elements mentioned by SHPO are irrelevant to the decision,
- The building having no other exterior elements removed to impact the building's elements of significance
- Existing landmark properties within the Town of Boone being successfully accepted as landmarks with alterations to the properties,
- There are no other known and existing jail buildings regionally of such significance, and
- The building as a local landmark property would represent the western area of the state with a historic building.

Chair Plaag continued with the motion to request that Staff, upon presenting this to Council, will include the meeting minutes from September 6, 2022, or an accurate summary of the discussion by HPC members explaining our rationale.

Ms. Mitchell added discussion to the motion in which she explained that a map amendment is needed for a local landmark designation. She said the map amendment includes a public hearing process, which is generally a joint meeting with Town Council, Planning Commission, and in this case, the HPC. She continued that the next public hearing is scheduled for November 28, 2022. Chair Plaag requested that this case be the first on the public hearing agenda. Ms. Mitchell said the Staff would consider Chair Plaag's said request, and decide if that is possible depending on the other cases.

Chair Plaag asked Staff if, at this point in time, the property owners have been informed that their property has been considered for a landmark designation. He noted that it is good practice to have the property owners aware of the process, especially before the public hearing process. He requested that Staff contact the property owners to make sure they still favor the landmark designation. He also requested that Staff remind the property owners of the property tax abatement benefit that is available with a landmark designation. Ms. Mitchell said that based on the discussion at this meeting, the Staff would make it a priority to contact the property owners.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None
The motion passed.

Chair Plaag reiterated that this motion recommends designation of the property as a local landmark and begins the process to schedule the case for a public hearing.

UDO Updates

Ms. Shook said the Staff is currently working on revising the sign ordinance to bring it into compliance with current legislative and case law. She explained that while working on it, she came across an issue where the direction Staff has been given in the past conflicts with a portion of Appendix D. She will present the issue to the Council when she presents to them the sign ordinance, and she stated this issue was not for the HPC to resolve at this meeting. She said the issue is specifically the frame signs or sandwich board signs. She pointed out that the DBDA has approached the Town in the past, stating their desire to have those types of signs. She said that in UDO Appendix D, Design Standards for Historic Streetscapes, Landscapes, Monuments, and Other Resources in the District, Section 8.1, this type of temporary signage is not encouraged. She also noted that in Appendix D Section 8.1, seating and sales are mentioned; she has talked with Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, and Ms. Meade is checking into a possible concern about whether or not HPC has a regulatory authority on the sales portion on the sidewalk. Ms. Shook said she would let the HPC know the outcome from Ms. Meade on the sales topic, and she would forward any feedback of the HPC to Council on these topics. She said she wanted to present this information to Council and get their direction on how to proceed. She said that in the past, the Staff had been given authority to allow the sandwich boards with certain parameters, but it did not mean every business could have one. She said the Staff took suggestions from Council at the time, looked into best practices from other regulations for these signs, and drafted regulations for them. Chair Plaag asked Ms. Shook when the Staff reviewed regulations from other jurisdictions, if it included looking specifically at Downtown Historic Districts and how they handle these types of signs. She said that was included in the initial research; she said Staff would check to see before they send the revision to Council. He thought he included those comments in the standards because, at that time, that was the regulations for the Downtown area. He said things that come in after store hours, like a cashier stand, rack of clothes, or sandwich boards, would not normally be regulated in a historic district. He noted that the HPC would be concerned with reviewing something built out or permanent, like a deck, knee wall, or seating area.

Discussion ensued on COA, Conditional District, and Special Use Permit Cases. Ms. Shook talked about how staff has been discussing these topics of which process should be done first. She explained that the conditional district is the overall project approval. She said that in the recent process with the HPC's recently completed and approved COA cases, such as Café Portofino and the Watauga County Jail, those applicants completed the COA process and then applied for a conditional district process. She added that the applicants for Café Portofino first went through the variance process, then the COA case, and now starting the conditional district processes. She stated the question has been explored as to which process should be completed first, the COA or conditional district process. She explained that the conditional district process is the overall project approval for a site-specific plan. She explained that the COA covers the project's exterior and could include some exterior building elements. She said that Ms. Turner had seen language that states that if a rooftop addition is being done, the conditional district process has to be completed first before the COA process. Ms. Shook stated that it has been questioned if the conditional district process needs to occur before the COA, or if it involves a text amendment to change the language or leave it as it is. She said if the process is changed, the language will have to be modified for Staff to be consistent with the process for directing applicants with their proposed projects.

Chair Plaag asked Ms. Shook in his particular case, he serves on the HPC and the Planning Commission. He said our practice has been that he typically recuses himself when a case comes before the Planning

Commission that has been authored by the HPC, specifically a text amendment. He said he would like to see the reverse addressed if we require the conditional district process first and then the COA process. He said he wants to avoid any appearance of himself hearing anything that is said during the planning commission and public hearing being construed for that particular case. Ms. Shook said she understood his concern and would consider it as we worked through this particular issue. She said she would let the HPC know the direction from the Town Attorney on this issue.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Application Status Update

Ms. Mitchell said that she submitted all of the documents to Ms. Kristi Brantley at SHPO on September 2, 2022, and she should have a response by October 17, 2022. She asked Ms. Brantley about the requirements after CLG status was reached. She replied that Ms. Brantley informed her that annual training would be required, and it could be through virtual options with free videos or attending conferences, depending on the Planning and Inspections budget.

Chair Plaag talked about the NC Historic Preservation listserv and urged the HPC members to sign up for the email listserv. He said the listserv is useful to see what other commissions in other areas are doing and how they handle those types of things through best practices. He said it would have been helpful to see what other commissions were doing while the HPC reviewed the Café Portofino COA case. He also talked about using the listserv platform for future HPC training sessions. He mentioned that he would like Staff to contact Ms. Brantley, and the network of Commissions represented, about training sessions as opportunities to learn from other commissions. He continued that these training sessions could include a number of topics with a free forum to openly learn from other Commissions' experiences. Ms. Mitchell said she would ask Ms. Brantley if that was an option for the training, or if there is one similar available.

Ms. Turner said she would provide the HPC members with the email address to subscribe to the said listserv.

Council's Store and Hayes-Bryan-Greene Cemetery Marker Update

Ms. Mitchell said the marker company is experiencing significant delays. She mentioned that if she did not announce it previously at the last HPC meeting, that unfortunately, the company said it would be six months. She said that the last time she checked on the markers, she confirmed that we should be getting an order confirmation sometime in September, and hopefully a copy of the proof of the marker. She said the marker company estimated we would receive both markers by October or November. The marker company said that we would probably receive the Council's Store Historical marker first based on when the orders were submitted. She said she would follow up with the marker company on the markers.

Chair Plaag commented that it would be great as a final holiday Boone 150 gift to our community if we could unveil both markers at separate times but in the month of December.

Intern: Local Landmark Designation Reports/Digital Watauga Project

Ms. Mitchell explained that Ms. Ellie McCorkle, Part Time Intern for the Town of Boone, will work on local landmark designation reports. She said Ms. McCorkle would work first on the Rivers House and then the Jones House designation reports. She noted that Ms. McCorkle has started researching the Rivers House report, and is scheduled to visit the Rivers House to take photos documenting the interior of the Rivers House. Ms. Mitchell said she and Ms. Shook will be acting in a supervisory role for Ms. McCorkle, and will provide her with applicable resources and materials as she works on the designation reports. Chair Plaag noted that he had spoken with Ms. McCorkle and explained that he would happily answer questions on

either property on the designation reports. He also noted that he had provided Ms. McCorkle with some image surveys of the properties.

Chair Plaag asked that Ms. McCorkle also document 'Baby', which is a Champion sugar maple tree in North Carolina located up the hill and to the west of the Rivers House property.

Chair Plaag, as Chair of Digital Watauga, a partnership between the local historical society and the public library, spoke on behalf of Digital Watauga and said the payment was received from the Town of Boone for Ms. McCorkle's hours for the Digital Watauga Project. He noted that Ms. McCorkle started work this week, and she will be doing all of the work on this project. He explained how employee operations work at Digital Watauga, in which Ms. McCorkle would not report hours worked for the last two weeks in December. He explained that every year the Digital Watauga employees have to stop work in December because they are temporary employees, but they are usually rehired again in January.

Chair Plaag explained for Member Sharp the Digital Watauga project, and that the HPC, when reviewing a quasi-judicial case, is relying on historical images of the buildings in the historic district, or historical images of a landmark to evaluate what isn't appropriate on proposed work for a building of the district or a landmark. He said earlier this year; the HPC had discussed a project that the Town would fund and dedicate a technician to spending 500 hours in the first-year combing through the collections for all historical images of buildings in the historic district. He said this work would build a digital library for the Planning Department to use when they meet with the applicant because they would be able to present historic images to the applicant to help them with their COA process.

Member Sharp asked Chair Plaag what platform is used to catalog the historic images, and if it involves a tagging process or subfolders associated with the structures. Chair Plaag said that Digital Watauga is creating a digital library using sub-folders for the Planning and Inspections Department. He included that in addition to the subfolders of images, it will include a meta-data sheet with the state survey numbers of the properties as identification, a list of images and their dates if known, and a description of the image. He asked Ms. McCorkle to provide two images; he said one image would be a master image, and the other would be a cropped image of a building. He said this would be helpful when the meeting packets are being created because there will be a clearer view of that building. He said he has already talked with Ms. Shook about that after the digital library is established, the Staff would pull the images from their digital library to use during a hearing, so the full resolution of that image can be seen.

Project Updates by the HPC Members

Vice-Chair Bond informed the HPC members of the annual Watauga County Historical Society meeting to be held on Wednesday, September 7, 2022, at 5:30 pm at the Watauga County Public Library. Chair Plaag said that after a short business meeting, he will briefly review historic rehabilitation tax credits and how they work with property. Mr. Brian Williams and his wife Mira, property owners of Blue Ridge Tourist Court, will talk about their experience with their tax credit, historic landmark, and National Registry listing at their Blue Ridge Tourist Court project. Vice-Chair Bond suggested that Member Sharp attend this meeting to take advantage of the learning opportunity.

Boone Cemetery Tours

Chair Plaag said the various people who are giving tours are in the process of writing their scripts. He said there would be a meeting on September 12 to discuss the final details.

Downtown Boone Walking Tours Revisions with Watauga County Historical Society

Chair Plaag said the Watauga County Historical Society had created a sub-committee comprising Vice-Chair Bond, Mr. Ross Cooper, Mr. Ralph Lentz, Ms. Ellie McCorkle, and Chair Plaag, whom all have a background in walking tours. He said the sub-committee members would work on revising the walking tour for the Town. He said they are all meeting for the first time on September 14, 2022, at 4:30 pm at the Watauga County Public Library. He said they would figure out what must be done at this first meeting. Vice-Chair Bond encouraged other people to attend this meeting.

Boone Cemetery Interpretative Panels

Chair Plaag said he did not have the opportunity to complete the report on the interpretative panels. He said the information would need to be deferred to the HPC October meeting.

Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panels

Chair Plaag said he did not have the opportunity to complete the report on the interpretative panels. He said the report would need to be deferred to the HPC October meeting.

Other Discussion

Ms. Turner gave an update on some Statement of Conformities that the Staff had recently issued. She said an HVAC unit was installed on the back of the old Eggers Law Office building that houses the Escape Room. She added that the HVAC unit was placed back far enough that it could not be seen from either direction.

Ms. Turner explained that at the Old Farmers Ski Shop building, now the Orvis store, the owner had started painting the building before the historic district was approved, and now they want to continue to paint the building. She said they applied for a Statement of Conformity to complete the painting of it.

Ms. Turner informed the HPC about some work that will be occurring near Mast General Store and the di Santi, Capula & Garrett law office building, on the wall owned by di Santi, Capula, and Garrett law office. She explained that Mast General Store has a brick fascia wall that has been falling down for years. She noted that Appendix D, 160-D-948 states that a building inspector can determine a public safety hazard. She said the wall work would start next week. She said that this week, the old damaged Bradford Pear tree in front of this wall would be taken down at 6 am on September 7, 2022, to get a crane in and out of this location before a lot of traffic starts coming through Town. She noted that this type of action in Appendix D would be considered repair and maintenance. Chair Plaag added that the brick wall was installed, in approximately 1963, against the west wall of the Mast General Store building to have uniformity between the two buildings. He stated that it has been an issue since 2014. Chair Plaag confirmed with Ms. Turner that any subsequent work to this building would require a COA. Ms. Turner said there might be a ghost sign behind the wall, and if there is, they will not do anything else to the building wall and will leave the ghost sign. It was discussed that the wall that might have a ghost sign is owned by Mast General Store.

Ms. Turner pointed out that the windows in the front of the di Santi, Capua, and Garrett law office building are coming out because of how the brick was put on the building. She said a COA would be needed to replace anything. She said the same company that did the re-mortaring on the Farmers Hardware building would be doing the work on the Mast General Store wall. Chair Plaag said his recollection of the image of the Mast General Store wall is that the ghost sign covers the wall in its entirety. He said the HPC does like to see ghost signs restored when possible. Ms. Turner said the work on the wall is supposed to start on September 17, 2022.

Chair Plaag asked the Staff if they had received information from the Public Works department about the product used to clean the headstones at the Boone Cemetery. Ms. Shook said that she had received information and pointed out that the product used would not be a product that the HPC would approve, as it contained bleach. Chair Plaag asked Ms. Shook to forward that information to the HPC. Ms. Shook noted that this lesson was learned, and the Public Works department is aware of it.

Chair Plaag said that previously the HPC had talked about providing some guidance for the Town and the Public Works staff on communicating with the HPC on proposed work on landmarks, Town properties within the district, and potential historic properties. He said he wanted to make sure that is on the HPC's work plan to schedule a discussion in an HPC meeting about how we can work better. Ms. Shook responded that the conversation was continued after that meeting with the Planning Staff, Public Works Staff, the Town Attorney, and the Interim Town Manager. She said that the Staff needed more time to discuss the details for the meeting and would like to place this topic on the next HPC advisory agenda. She said there is a possibility that we could have a joint meeting with Council to discuss the said topic.

Member Watkins suggested that the Staff use the glossary of architectural terms in the Architectural History of Watauga County book. Chair Plaag said he had other similar types of work he could look at to make a list of terms. He said he asked for the other HPC members to help him with the list of terms so that he does not overlook any terms that might be useful to help the Planning Staff.

Adjournment

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to adjourn the meeting at 5:21 pm.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary