

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 08, 2020
3:00 PM**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

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

Town Staff in Attendance: Jane Shook-Director of Planning and Inspections, Christy Turner – Senior Planner, Brian Johnson-Urban Design Specialist and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present:

Call to Order

Chairperson Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software to order on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Chairperson Plaag requested to amend the agenda to move agenda item fifteen the Historic District Action Guide to between number seven and eight on the agenda.

Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Member Clawson to adopt the agenda as amended.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag welcomed Ms. Sophie Williams who was invited by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to observe the meeting to see, if she would like to apply to become a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. Chairperson Plaag told Ms. Williams that he or the Planning Staff would be happy to answer any questions she might have about the HPC.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections reminded the HPC that they currently have a seven-member board counting the two Council Liaisons. She explained that there is a proposed text change going to Council at the September 2020 public hearing where the Council Liaisons may be removed as voting members. She said they would just be Council Liaisons and no longer members of the Commission as the HPC moves forward to the judicial process. She further explained that under state law only five members are required for the HPC. She said the HPC currently has five members. She pointed out that Member Pearman has served the

two consecutive terms currently allowed and can continue to serve until another member is appointed. Chairperson Plaag further explained that Member Pearman's seat on the Commission is open and can be filled by another member that is appointed by Council. Chairperson Plaag thanked Member Pearman for her service on the HPC over the past six years which included her service as vice-chairperson for a period of time on the Commission. Ms. Shook pointed out that at this time no one else has been appointed and she is welcome to continue to serve for now. Ms. Shook also pointed out that there are vacancies on other Town boards, if she had a desire to pursue one of those positions.

Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Plaag explained that he had not reviewed the August 11, 2020 meeting minutes. He requested that the approval of minutes be tabled to the next meeting.

Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Member Pearman to table the approval of the August 11, 2020 meeting minutes to the next meeting.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this meeting.

Burrell Monument

Chairperson Plaag gave some history on this topic noting that the Council had directed the HPC to work with Ms. Mary Moretz and research the possibility of a marker or some other means of recognizing Burrell. He said the HPC created a statement in July of 2020 that stated the HPC did not think that there was enough historical evidence to justify a historical marker in Burrell's name. He said the HPC decided to let Council know at their meeting last month that they did not feel comfortable moving forward with a marker designation based on their research of Burrell.

Chairperson Plaag explained the two things that the Council assigned to the HPC. The first thing was for the HPC to identify black and indigenous people of color candidates from Boone's history who might be deserving of a marker or some similar honorary designation. He said the Council would like to hear from the HPC about for both a process and how such people would be identified. The second thing was to come up with a list of street names in Boone and research the history of why the streets are named the way they are.

Chairperson Plaag recommended that the HPC should look at the Junaluska Community as well as others, as part of the process of identifying black and indigenous people of color candidates from Boone's history. Member Brantz agreed with Chairperson Plaag's recommendation. Chairperson Plaag said once the Council has agreed to a process, it may be possible to open up

publicly an invitation process. He said the process would include the HPC is actively considering a potential historic marker or other honorary designation for black or indigenous people of color that had an important impact on Boone's history. He said the process would also include inviting them to make suggestions for who the HPC should consider as part of that process which would include the Town's public comment process. Ms. Shook explained that the Staff could help the HPC with information about the public comment process. She also noted that it depends on if there are in-person meetings at that time and the Staff would make it as easy as possible for the public to participate. She said an email process is a possibility for the public to submit their information for the Staff and HPC to review. She noted that the Town website is another way to receive public input in a form-filled type of response.

Chairperson Plaag suggested for the next meeting that the HPC make a list of ways to begin the process for identifying black and indigenous people of color candidates. He said the HPC could discuss the list at the next meeting.

Chairperson Plaag said in the most recent copy of the High-Country magazine, there is an article on Burrell and Ms. Mary Moretz's ancestors. He noted that the magazine article relates to the topic of identifying black and indigenous people of color and a worthwhile read as it relates to said topic.

Councill Store Local Marker

Chairperson Plaag said the Council had approved the HPC to work on the Councill Store Local Marker for their marker project. He explained that there were some possible concerns from Council as to the location of the said marker. Chairperson Plaag explained that he felt the HPC had addressed the Council's concerns.

Discussion ensued on the proposed Councill Store Local Marker location. Chairperson Plaag began discussion on the possible locations for the marker. He said that it was previously suggested to put the marker next to Boone Town Hall on the other side of the Town parking lot driveway from the Veteran's Memorial. He said currently there is some public art located there along with a tree and some type of sign. He said that Mr. Ward showed concern for this location because there is a long-term plan to take the entire space and to expand Town Hall. He said there would be a fairly large pocket park in front of it. He said Mr. Ward thought it was alright for the said marker to be located there but temporarily moved during the construction process and then brought back to said location. Chairperson Plaag offered to work on the initial draft for said marker because he has already completed a considerable amount of research on it.

Member Bond talked about the Boone's 150th birthday being in January of 2022 and possibly tying in the inclusion of the Councill Store Marker around the same time. Chairperson Plaag agreed with Member Bond but he explained that he would like to prioritize the Watauga County Jail Landmark Designation before the Councill Store marker. Chairperson Plaag explained that he has already done a considerable amount of work on the Watauga Jail Landmark Designation and he would like to complete it first. Member Bond agreed as long as

the Council Store marker can be completed in the same year as the Town of Boone's birthday year of 2022.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt joined the meeting at approximately 6:05 p.m.

Downtown Survey Report, District Designation Report and Downtown Design Guidelines

Chairperson Plaag drew to the attention of the Planning Staff that he would like to recommend that the Council review the Downtown Survey Report and Ms. Shook explained that it was her understanding that the Council was waiting until after the joint meeting On September 30, 2020 with the Council, Community Appearance Commission, Historic Preservation Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office before they took action on the proposed adoption of the Downtown Survey Report. He talked about the recommendation for the adoption of the Downtown Survey Report being placed on the Council's October 2020 meeting agenda. He further explained that the three documents are separate reports and often are looked as the same document. Ms. Shook explained that she would try to get this topic on the Council's agenda for October 2020. Chairperson Plaag pointed out that the map that supports the Downtown Survey Report is not included at this time. He explained that the map has to be sent to SHPO as part of the survey report materials. Ms. Shook asked Chairperson Plaag if the Planning Staff already has the final survey map. Chairperson Plaag said yes it was submitted in July of 2020 and included in the survey report. Chairperson Plaag added that the map that shows all of the surveyed parcels is not in the survey report. Chairperson Plaag said he could present the survey report and final map to Council at their October 2020 meeting.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the Downtown District Designation Report. He said it is currently in draft form.

Historic District Action Guide

Chairperson Plaag gave an overview PowerPoint presentation (permanently on file) on "Strategies for Establishing Historic Districts" as presented at the meeting via a PowerPoint presentation based on the book entitled, "Historic District Action Guide" written by Mr. William E. Schmickle.

Chairperson Plaag pointed out that there was an initial public information session in 2015 regarding the Downtown District that went very well. He said there were about 50 people that attended the session.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the Town already has Downtown B1 zoning district standards within the Unified Development Ordinance that reflect the Secretary of the Interior Standards which are fairly broad. He said the property owners and tenants in Downtown Boone are already living under a zoning district that essentially has a set of design standards that are somewhat similar though not quite as detailed as what they will ultimately see if the district standard design guidelines are approved. He said the Council approved the HPC to explore the possibility of a Downtown District. He said the HPC made a unanimous recommendation to support a proposed Downtown District.

Chairperson Plaag stated that it is important for the Town attorney to review the draft Downtown Designation Report before it goes out for public comment. He said that he does not anticipate any issues with the draft report. He noted that in some ways the draft designation report mirrors the draft survey report.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the SHPO review process usually has a 60-day turn around. He said the SHPO review would typically not happen until after the public comment session has occurred and any proposed changes have been made, if necessary. Then the draft designation report would be sent to SHPO for their review of it. He said there would then be a second public information session about the proposed district after SHPO review, if they approve it. He said this process involves the Planning Commission and Council and the Planning Commission makes recommendations to Council who would then at their next meeting vote on the proposed district designation which is the formal designation of the district. He said he has tried over the years that the HPC has been working on the draft district designation to emphasize that it is really important to distinguish your review of the design guidelines from the designation process. He said they are two separate processes.

Chairperson Plaag reviewed the pitfalls and cautions. Chairperson Plaag said that you cannot adopt the design guidelines first. He explained that there are two separate votes, one for the design guidelines and one for the district. He said you cannot debate the guidelines until a district is designated. He said the design guidelines are negotiable once you have the designation. He suggested that the HPC focus on getting the proposed district designation.

Discussion ensued on the property owners possibly wanting to know what the district designation means for them. Ms. Shook said wouldn't the property owners want to know what the district designation means for them. Chairperson Plaag said that he thinks the property owners should be told that changes within the district whether it be new construction or renovation to existing construction is required to be reviewed by the HPC. Then, once the district designation takes place, the Town will work on a set of guidelines that reflect the fabric of the Downtown to ensure that properties continue to maintain the character of that district whether they be new or existing properties. Chairperson Plaag said that topics like minor and major decisions being made by Staff or by the HPC. Chairperson Plaag said there are ways that can explain how simply the process is without causing the property owners to question the process as it relates to their properties. Chairperson Plaag said the best way to answer questions from property owners is to say is the prevailing general guidelines are the Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation which are incorporated into the basic Unified Development Ordinance guidelines for the B1 district. Chairperson Plaag also added that the property owners are already living under this general set of guidelines that informs what the specific set of guidelines will be. Chairperson Plaag said there is not a dramatic change that will be taking place as a result of the designation and there is already a fairly comprehensive set of guidelines under the UDO. Ms. Shook said at the same time don't we already have draft design guidelines specific for the proposed district. Chairperson Plaag suggested saying to the property owners that we have also been working on a draft set of design guidelines that are subject for

review by the town attorney and subject to public comment through both a formal and informal hearing process set for a future date. And there is no aspect of them binding on the Town or on the property owners. And the goal is to seek the designation of the district.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the four different groups that take part in a public information session which are the makers, breakers, takers and shapers. Chairperson Plaag first described the makers which are the HPC, Town Council, Town Manager, Town Staff and any other people that are supporters like the Watauga Historical Society. The second group is breakers which are people that will try to find a way to stop what is being proposed. The third group is takers are often people in the district that are tenants or property owners who are waiting to be convinced of what the best course is on the decision. They are called takers because they will take what comes. For example if there is community support for the adoption or opposition of a district, they are alright with either one. The fourth group is the shapers who are already in the district and have some experience with what it means to be part of a district who you can call on to speak for you. Chairperson Plaag talked about Mr. John Cooper, owner of Mast General Store and noted that it might be worthwhile to talk to Mr. Cooper and ask him about his experience with having properties that are within historic districts in the many cities in which your stores are in and what have you found to be beneficial about it. Chairperson Plaag also talked about asking Mr. Cooper if he would be willing to attend a public information session and speak to certain aspects of it. Chairperson Plaag said by asking Mr. Cooper to speak, it helps the other business owners in the district to see the benefits of it.

Discussion ensued on the strategies for Informing the Public. Chairperson Plaag explained that it is important to remember that when you are giving a presentation you are controlling the narrative. You are providing information and making a case for designation. He said your goal is not to be validated because it is not useful in the presentation. He said to the extent that is possible the public event should be held in a neutral venue. He said if it possible to have the event in a tradition setting, he would suggest having the event at the Appalachian Theatre or the Watauga County Library. He said the property owner notifications should be sent via the United States Postal Service and not hand delivered. He said the notice should be a simple invitation telling what the public event is about and include a link containing the information of the draft designation report. He added that in terms of the reasons for the district or the benefits for the district should be saved for the public information session. He said this allows you to control the narrative of what is being presented.

Chairperson Plaag said that the following people should be at the public information session: Town Manager, a lead presenter, as many as possible of the Town Council Members, Planning Commission Members, SHPO Staff, Town Planning Staff and district property owners who support the designation. He also stated that the shapers should be invited to testify of the benefits or advantages for property owners to have a district designation and the shapers should be prepared ahead of time on what to talk about.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the things to do during the public information session. He said the proceedings should be recorded. He said if it is a virtual meeting, there needs to be a

virtual sign-up sheet to keep a record of who participated. He said a FAQ sheet should be made available online a couple of days ahead of the session, if it is going to be a virtual session. He said the FAQ sheet should be prepared as a handout for when people walk in the door, if it not a virtual session. He said the presentations should be kept to about 20 minutes. He explained how to handle the questions during the Question and Answer part of the session. He said part of the strategy is knowing how to answer questions in the moment but not tipping your hand at what your answers are. He said before you answer a question, make sure you understand the question and to recognize the difference between motivations of takers and breakers by listening for the tone noted in the question.

Ms. Shook explained that the Town has purchased two copies of the book, "Historic District Action Guide). She explained that she thought this book has a lot of great information and she suggested that she and Ms. Turner and Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney read the book.

Discussion ensued on having remote or in-person meetings. Ms. Shook said she did not know how long the HPC would be meeting remotely. She said depending how fast the Staff moves after the joint meeting, we may have to rethink how we do the public input sessions. She asked the HPC to be thinking about alternate ways to get the information out to the public. She said the Planning Staff has discussed doing recordings as an option to include in online presentations for the public to view. She said there would still be some type of public information session whether it be virtual or in person. Chairperson Plaag talked about a process he is using with another meeting that includes broadcasting a zoom meeting to Facebook which will include a moderator who will tell him what the questions are being added through Facebook and he is able to answer those questions.

Chairperson Plaag said that the Council approved the joint meeting to be held with the Council, Community Appearance Commission, Historic Preservation Commission and various members of the State Historic Preservation Office and Town Staff. He told the HPC that they should have received a "doodle poll" suggesting possible dates for the joint meeting. Member Pearman said that she did not receive the "doodle poll". Ms. Turner explained that the majority has been for September 30, 2020 at 6 p.m.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the HPC has been asked to review the CAC Design Guidelines before the September 30, 2020 meeting and to look for contradictions between the Historic Guidelines and the CAC Design Guidelines for the Downtown core. He asked the Planning Staff to send out again the CAC guidelines to the HPC. He asked that printed copies be made for Member Clawson, Member Brantz, Member Pearman and Member Bond.

Ms. Shook explained that Mr. Brian Johnson, Urban Design Specialist who is the Planning Staff to the CAC is in attendance at this meeting to briefly review and answer questions on the final draft of the CAC guidelines.

Mr. Johnson began a brief overview of the draft Downtown Design Guidelines. Mr. Johnson noted that the CAC included in the design guidelines two downtown districts called the B1

Downtown Core and the B1 Downtown Interface. He said the CAC tried to keep the B1 Downtown Core consistent with the HPC's historic guidelines. He also explained that the B1 Downtown Interface was the CAC's idea of having a gateway in the historic core area or basically having a transition between the B1 Downtown Core and adjacent zoning districts. He said the design guidelines include the rhythm, proportion and massing of the buildings. Ms. Shook noted that the CAC has been working on the creation of two zoning districts that include the use and intensity standards in addition to the design of them. Ms. Shook said that Council has preliminarily approved that the UDO would be re-written at the same time. Ms. Shook explained that the Planning Staff created an Article 18 in the UDO for the B1 zoning district. Ms. Shook said the Planning Staff will further modify the UDO by giving each zoning district its own article.

Mr. Johnson said that the articles for each zoning district will include the use and dimensions and materials of buildings. He said there will be sections for prohibited materials, landscaping, retaining walls and utilities. He said that there will be about 254 properties that will need to be rezoned.

Mr. Johnson said the CAC was more concerned with the massing of buildings than other things that they reviewed. He said the CAC spent additional time discussing the massing of buildings and made some revisions. He said the CAC was concerned with the larger properties where multiple properties might be brought into one property. He encouraged everyone to look at the massing of the building, when they receive the draft design guidelines. He said the design guidelines are broken out into new construction and renovations. He said the CAC at their last meeting did review proposed maps for both the B1 Downtown Core and B1 Downtown Interface. He added that there was discussion on a couple of the properties on the maps that can be reviewed more closely once the draft design guidelines are reviewed.

Chairperson Plaag asked the HPC to review the draft CAC Design Guidelines and to identify any areas of conflict with the HPC Historic Design Guidelines.

Watauga County Jail Landmark

Chairperson Plaag said that Council approved the HPC to proceed with preparing a landmark designation report on the jail. He said that he could begin working on it because he already has information on it. He noted that it takes some time to prepare but he can probably have a draft for the HPC to review in the early spring.

150th Downtown Boone Celebration

Chairperson Plaag said that Council approved a series of events that would include the Boone celebration. He said these events would occur over the full year of 2022. He said he felt there was a general consensus from Council that this celebration would align with programs that take place including the first Friday events. He said the approval included exploring other ways to have the celebration in the most flexible way since the pandemic could still be going on at that

time. He said the directive that was voted on by Council was for Town Staff coordinate with the various Commission on recommendations and planning for what these events might look like.

Junaluska Historical Marker

Ms. Turner updated the HPC with the status of the ordering of the marker. She said she has contacted the company but has not yet heard back from them. She said she would let the HPC know the status at the next meeting. Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner if the Town had heard back from Watauga County on the location of the marker. Ms. Turner said that she is still working on it. Chairperson Plaag said that if the County does not approve the location of the marker, the HPC will need to discuss another location for it.

Bryan, Hayes, Greene Cemetery

Chairperson Plaag asked Member Clawson to report what she found out regarding the owner of the cemetery. Member Clawson said she called the funeral homes to no avail. Member Clawson said she called Mr. Gordon Noble to see what information he had on the ownership of the cemetery to no avail after checking at the court house. Chairperson Plaag said that he needs to go to the courthouse to research Judge Greene's parcels, so he will research the cemetery as well. Chairperson Plaag said if the Town is going to take over the cemetery, the Town might need to advertise about the graveyard parcel saying the Town would like to take responsibility for it and if you have claim to this parcel, please come forward.

Discussion of Boone cemetery regulations. Member Bond talked about forming an advisory board. She suggested asking Mr. John Ward, Town Manager about the board. Member Bond talked about the burial rights. Member Bond suggested talking to the Town Attorney about the burial rights to see if the HPC should discuss. Member Bond also talked about the burial procedures and including someone from a funeral home on the advisory board, if the Council wants an advisory board. Ms. Turner said the Council directed the HPC to work with the Town Attorney on the regulations. Mr. Turner said she could take Member Bond's questions to the Town Attorney for her review. Member Bond suggested adding the cemetery regulations to the next meeting agenda to see what the Town Attorney has said. Member Bond also suggested contacting a funeral home regarding their protocol for cemeteries.

Chairperson Plaag presented the rules and regulations for the Boone cemetery that was approved by Council in March of 2016 under the consent agenda. Chairperson Plaag asked if the regulations that the HPC has been asked to prepare are for any cemetery that the Town might take over, if this document be prepared to meet the specific needs of the individuals of cemeteries that the Town may take over. Member Bond said she would like to see the directive regarding the cemetery regulations presented as simple as possible.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the low amount for fees. He asked Ms. Turner to ask the Town Attorney if the fee amounts are bound by state statute or does the Town have the ability to set its own class of misdemeanor and fines. Member Bond asked Ms. Turner for some guidance on what should be included in the draft cemetery regulations. Ms. Turner said she would ask the

Town Attorney on these items. Chairperson Plaag suggested talking about the draft cemetery regulations at the next meeting.

Discussion ensued on rescheduling the next HPC meeting. Member Bond noted that she will not be present at the next HPC meeting scheduled for October 13, 2020 at 3 p.m. It was the consensus of the HPC to move the meeting to October 6, 2020 at 3 p.m.

Turner House

Chairperson Plaag said he was able to photograph the interior and exterior of the house. He said that he was not aware of the status of the negotiations between the Town and the County. He asked Ms. Turner if she had an update on it. Ms. Turner said it is still being negotiated.

Historic Preservation Commission Material inclusions on Town of Boone's Website

Chairperson Plaag said that Council directed the Planning Staff to explore ways of creating a Historic Preservation Commission webpage on the Town website. He said Ms. Shook volunteered a space on the Planning and Inspections webpage. Ms. Shook said that she would like to have a good idea of what the HPC wants on the webpage and how the HPC wants it set up. He said he would email Ms. Shook information on the webpage. He said he would update the HPC what was discussed regarding the webpage.

Historic Meanings of Downtown Streets

Chairperson Plaag said that Council has approved the HPC to begin the process of researching the Downtown streets and why they have the names that they do. He opened the floor for volunteers to begin this process of identifying the streets. He said he thought it was fair to extend not only the five or ten principals streets in the immediate Downtown area but the areas right around the Downtown which would include the Cherry Drive neighborhood, Orchard street, Grand Boulevard area, Junaluska neighborhood and Bear Trail. He said that Council may ask the HPC to expand on it. Member Bond asked for the Planning Staff to provide a list or map of the streets so each HPC member can choose a street to do research on. Ms. Shook said she already has a list of streets that she can send out to the HPC members.

Informal Discussion/Other Matters

Chairperson Plaag said that he was able to photograph the interior and exterior of the Edmisten house. He noted that the interior was not a grand show place but full of junk and there has been trouble with rats and groundhogs inside the house.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the following topics for the next meeting agenda: Cemetery Regulations, Downtown Streets, and Town website, Turner House, Junaluska Historic Marker and Survey/Designation Process.

Member Bond informed the HPC that on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 the Watauga Historical Society will have a program on Steve Suddreth and his new book about Blowing Rock. You may view this program on the Digital Watauga Facebook page.

Adjournment

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to adjourn the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary