

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 3, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
WebEx Video Conferencing**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

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

Student Member: Riley Ziegler

Council Liaison: Virginia Roseman

Town Staff in Attendance:

Jane Shook- Director of Planning & Inspections, Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary, Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources, Lane Moody-Downtown Boone Development Coordinator

Others in Attendance:

Jill Privott, Katie Mack, Doris Stam, Rebecca Triplett-Johnson, Brenda Councill, Susan Keefe, Roberta Jackson, Anna Boyce Phillips

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eric Plaag called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting via WebEx to order at 3:01 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Student Member Ziegler made a motion, seconded by Member Smyth, to adopt the agenda as written.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chair Plaag referred to the Town of Boone Rules of Procedures for Boards and Commissions for public comment. He explained that public speakers would have five minutes per speaker in the order they were received from the Planning and Inspections Department.

Chair Plaag asked Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist, if anyone had contacted her to speak. Ms. Mitchell stated that she had been contacted by some individuals who confirmed that they wanted to speak, some said they did not want to speak, and she was unsure if some of the other individuals on the call wanted to speak.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The first speaker was Ms. Jill Privott, who stated she was a resident of Boone. Ms. Privott clarified her position on any opposition to some of the content in the Boone Cemetery Panel, especially since no one from the HPC had asked her about her position for her reasons, motive, or intent. She said she had been put in a position to defend her integrity because it concerns her stance on any dissenting areas of the panel. She explained her intent was not to disregard or marginalize any racial aspects of the Boone Cemetery's history or to help any family promote their history but in a true and balanced light. She pointed out that she was not from the local area and any evaluations she would share are highly objective historian

perspectives from her knowledge and experiences in her work, which involves marker work on a national and local regional level. She pointed out that she was familiar with the standards because she used them in her work with numerous marker projects. She talked about the local families she had worked with privately, and she added that no one had tried to disregard or suppress the racial history intertwined with their family's history. She appreciated that some of the proposed changes she made had been accepted, but she saw the cemetery panels as not being ready for production for many reasons. She stated that the content in the cemetery panels included narrow topics about the cemetery and did not follow best practices of historic marker standards of succinct language. She said the cemetery panels must consist of a comprehensive presentation of the cemetery, as summed up in Ms. Tracy Council's letter. Ms. Privott referenced to this letter, in which Ms. Council said the draft cemetery panels might read that Boone has not progressed from the days of slavery and Jim Crow. She said more time is needed to research to increase the balance of history. She clarified that the term "systemic racism" had been misidentified in the panel. She said that no one has said it did not exist; they only challenged the use of the catchphrase, and the meaning or concept should not be used. She said the signage needs to transcend societal changes and terms become obsolete. She added that a well-written sign gets the point across in its linguistic style. She said the term systemic racism needs to be deleted, not the concept. She said words like QR Codes could become obsolete, like floppy disks, CDs, and jump drives. In closing, she stated it is a well-intended project. However, it still is infused with stereotypical historical interpretations, opinions, and commentary that paints an inaccurate and incomplete history of the Boone Cemetery and, consequently, of Boone and cheats the visitors of Boone from the full scope of the cemetery's history. She concluded this project needs to be halted for further review and input.

The second speaker was Ms. Brenda Council, who stated that she was not a resident of Boone. She agreed with the public comment given by Ms. Privott. She pointed out the unified discontent regarding the draft cemetery panels she and her group had given to the Town of Boone and the HPC, including their collective and various communications and legal opinions. She told the HPC they should be fully aware of their discontent with the draft cemetery panels text. She received a letter from Ms. Tracy Council and read aloud the following topics from the letter written by Ms. Tracy Council. The first statements from the letter were: the cemetery panels would better be titled "Racism in the History of Boone and Its Burial Practices" because the footnotes focus on the history of segregated burial practices in Boone, from its early days through the modern era period. The topics listed on the panels focused on the practice of slavery, segregated burials, the internment of three Union soldiers on the back side of the cemetery subsequent to Stoneman's Raid, speculating without historical documentation as to the motives of their placement there, and calling into question the decision made by business and civic leaders in the 1950s and 1970s. The panel focuses on racist institutions and behavior partly based on fact and conjecture. She said the footnotes make it difficult to follow the thread of the story being told, particularly in the parts that deal with the 1950s through the 1970s. She said that the cemetery panels focusing exclusively on racism omit the opportunity to talk about the folks who came to Boone to work on the railroad, taught in one-room schoolhouses, and people who died caring for the people during the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1919. In the letter, Ms. Tracy Council added that she is a descendant of Boone's largest slave-holding family, and she and her group do not defend the practice of slavery. She said she was not proud of what her ancestors had done, and she did not seek to suppress that story but to find a fair and balanced history for our community.

Chair Plaag clarified with Ms. Brenda Council that neither the Staff nor the HPC was aware of a legal opinion being delivered to the HPC. Ms. Council responded to Staff's question that the information was given to the Town of Boone on August 25, 2023. Chair Plaag asked who the legal opinion was from and whether it was on the cemetery panels. Ms. Council responded that the HPC could contact Mr. Nathan

Miller, Attorney at Law. Council Liaison Virginia Roseman said that the Town Council did receive something and it would be best to contact Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney. Ms. Council said she would not speak on that subject and agreed it would be best to contact Ms. Meade on said topic.

Ms. Mitchell said next on the list of attendees was Mr. Samuel Deibler, a journalist from "The Appalachian" newspaper. He was not present at this meeting.

The third speaker was Ms. Doris Perry Stam, who noted that she had emailed the Mayor and Town Council regarding the cemetery panels text. Ms. Stam was unable to speak and approved Ms. Mitchell to read the email to the HPC. Ms. Mitchell read the letter which stated that Ms. Stam was a Watauga County taxpayer and member of the Dougherty family, and she was opposed to the cemetery panels for many reasons. She mentioned the discussion of the Union soldier's skirmishes and burials, highlighting the slavery practice of one family and belittling their name, and the attention given to the traveling circus girl. She said Chair Plaag had done excellent work researching the cemetery's history. She said, why not make his research more inclusive by informing others through articles and local publications at tourist locations. She said more than three meetings were needed to discuss the cemetery panels text.

Ms. Mitchell added that from the list of invitees these were the individuals who requested to speak under Public Comment.

The fourth speaker was Ms. Anna Boyce Winkler Phillips a resident of Boone. She asked why are the Blacks buried in the White cemetery. She said the Council's could have buried their family in a new place. She said that maybe they were friends with the enslaved people. She pointed out that she did not know Mount Lawn was a segregated cemetery. She explained that the Rein-Sturdivant Funeral Home in North Wilkesboro owned Mount Lawn then, and owned the funeral home next to the First Baptist Church. She noted that she was not prejudiced and she admired Black people and all people of Boone.

The fifth speaker was Ms. Rebecca Triplett-Johnson a former resident of Boone and a descendant of many families in Boone, and some interred in the Boone Cemetery. She said more research needed to be done on the cemetery panels. She added that no media blitz had occurred to inform the public about the proposed cemetery panel project. She noted that in one of the meetings she had attended, someone said when the proposed cemetery panels were completed, they could add them to the ghost tours. She said the ghost tours are no reason to stop valuable historical research, and time should not be a factor. She proposed that a media blitz be made a priority to inform the public of this proposed project and to create a new starting point that could include anyone who wants to be a part of memorializing the people interred in the cemetery with respect and integrity.

The fourth speaker, Ms. Anna Boyce Winkler Phillips, gave additional public comment. She did not understand why three northern soldiers were mentioned by name and age when the Councils are one of the founders of Boone, the Dougherty Family, who founded Appalachian State University, and the Rivers Family, who started the Watauga Democrat are not mentioned.

At approximately 3:35 p.m., Chair Plaag closed public comment.

BOONE CEMETERY INTERPRETATIVE PANELS REVIEW

Chair Plaag stated that he would like to address some of the statements made during public comment and there was no objection from the other HPC members.

Chair Plaag reminded everyone that the HPC had been working on the proposed cemetery panel project for at least three years. He said there was an initial draft text for the cemetery panels produced about two and one-half to three years ago, but the HPC tabled it because the Town Council asked the HPC to review other pressing matters. He said the HPC has been revising this proposed text since January 2023. He said the proposed revised version in the meeting packet was version five. He said that at the August 2023 Town Council meeting, the Town Council directed the Town Manager to send out a communication to the various people who, at that point, had submitted comments or appeared to make comments at the Town Council meeting. The Town Council asked those people if they had documentation or had questions about information in the draft material, to submit that information to Ms. Mitchell in the Planning and Inspections Department by a date at the end of August 2023. He added that at the September 2023 HPC Advisory meeting, at the request of one of the HPC members, this topic was tabled to this meeting for discussion. He said he asked anyone who saw an error in the draft material to submit the documentation showing that the text included in the drafts needed more accuracy. He asked Ms. Mitchell if she had received any documentation since the September meeting from anybody that addressed any of the factual claims made in the draft panel text. Ms. Mitchell responded that since the September 2023 meeting, there has been no documentation submitted to Staff and the communication received was shared with Commission members.

Chair Plaag responded to some of the statements made during public comment. He addressed the comment made by Ms. Stam regarding the burial of Rita Sheridan, the "Circus Girl," by the people of the Town of Boone. He said that Ms. Stam's statement was not true because there was newspaper documentation that indicated that friends of hers from the circus when they were in Town for a subsequent circus many years later, brought the stone with them and installed it into the cemetery. He said residents of the Town of Boone did not install the stone. He said this is why the stone reads, "By Her Professional Friends." Vice-Chair Bond noted that Ms. Sheridan's birth date was not on her gravestone because no one knew that date.

Chair Plaag responded to Ms. Rebecca Triplett-Johnson's statement about ghost tours in Boone. He said to his knowledge that since he has lived in Boone, no one had given ghost tours, and none are planned. He said last year the Town of Boone and the Watauga County Historical Society, with five different people led a series of tours that covered various topics on various people, both Black and White. He said some were Confederate and Union veterans, past politicians, past police officers, and business leaders. He said these tours were not designed to be ghost tours and were held on Friday evenings in October of 2022. He noted that Mr. Trent Margrif, an Appalachian State University faculty member, had been giving cemetery tours for many years. He added that the tours were meant to be informative and cover a wide range of the cemetery's history. He asked the people who are making accusations that somehow the Town or the Watauga County Historical Society intended to be disrespectful to the people buried in the cemetery by doing ghost tours to desist from characterizing them in that way. He added that the HPC has never planned ghost tours for the cemetery, and that is something they would not do.

Chair Plaag stated that he received an email from Mayor Pro-Tem Edie Tugman and he wanted to read it to the HPC. In the email, Mayor Pro-Tem Tugman noted that the cemetery's history is not pretty and, in some ways, disgraceful, but it is what it is. She acknowledged the families' feelings and contributions to Boone, but it is our history and not our fault. She quoted an old saying, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." She said our history must be recognized and reported, and it can be told without bludgeon.

Chair Plaag noted that he worked closely with Staff to get all of the communications into the meeting packet that he had received personally or the HPC had received, including communication received by the Watauga County Historical Society that he believed was intended for the Commission.

Chair Plaag opened the floor for comments from the HPC. Member Smyth stated that he was recently appointed to the HPC and had read the meeting packet. He pointed out that the proposed cemetery panels are not made of bronze material and are not carved in stone. He said they may last ten to 15 years, then, different Commission members could revise these panels and change their text. Vice-Chair Bond said she was amazed that more people did not know the HPC was working on the draft cemetery panel text. She said had they known, they would have gotten a lot more feedback on them.

Chair Plaag addressed a public comment made by a person in this meeting who needed help understanding why Mount Lawn was included in the recent draft text. He said it was included because the commentary on the last draft from July 2023 was why there was a discussion on Clarissa Hill and no discussion on Mount Lawn. He said in an attempt to include Mount Lawn, he did the research and incorporated that information. He said the outcome of adding Mount Lawn was that the story of Mount Lawn was not very attractive either. In the 1950s, he said White town folk were segregating the Town cemetery and told the Black community there was no room for them. They needed to go to the cemetery on the west side of Town. He also pointed out that with the request for additional context he provided in the latest draft, if you don't like the additional context, he said it is disingenuous to object to having additional context.

Vice-Chair Bond agreed with Chair Plaag about providing additional context on the Mount Lawn cemetery. She added that the HPC asked for documentation and did not receive it. She mentioned the request for a media blitz. She was unsure how much more the HPC could advertise it. She added that the people who stated they were frustrated that the families of the people interred in the cemetery needed to know about the work of the HPC, she suggested that those people tell the families about it.

Student Member Ziegler commented that signs, like words and QR codes only last for a while before they go defunct and would be replaced with something else. She said the HPC looked at an option for signs where the information panel could be changed out easily without removing the entire structure.

Member Watkins summarized the topics in his memo dated October 3, 2023 (permanently on file). He explained that he was troubled by the fact that this proposed cemetery panel project had evolved into an unintended and unnecessary controversy when we all are trying to achieve the same goal. He had read

the communications that had been submitted, and it was unfortunate that we encountered difficulty in achieving that consensus. He said one form of controversy is who is and who is not a "real" historian. He pointed out that as the number of panels had increased, we have been getting more and more into a level of detail that the average person would not read or be interested in. He pointed out that in different studies in different museums, visitors spend between eight and twenty-seven seconds looking at very fine works of art. He proposed a revision to one panel with two sub-headings.

Member Watkins read aloud the section of the memo named "Welcome to the Boone Cemetery." He talked about the land for the Boone Cemetery being originally owned by the Councill Family, and the Councils and their slaves were buried there. The cemetery was segregated, with the Blacks buried on the east side and the Whites buried on the west side, with a fence separating the two sides. By the 1950s, the Black and White residents developed new burial spaces outside Boone's Downtown area. In 2015, the Town of Boone acquired the cemetery. Many of Boone's most influential people are buried there, including B.B. and D.D. Dougherty, who founded Appalachian State University, writer John Preston Arthur, and veterans of the nation's wars, including those who fought on both sides of the Civil War. He said this section is 173 words.

Member Watkins read aloud the second section of the memo named: "Visiting the Cemetery." He pointed out in this section that the Boone Cemetery is open to the public year-round from dawn to dusk. The visitors are reminded that it is a sacred place and not for recreation or sports, pets are not permitted, children must be accompanied by an adult, and behavior including interfering with a grave, rubbing a gravestone, removing grave goods, or leaning on a stone are forbidden. It reminds visitors that the desecration of gravesites in any form is a violation of North Carolina Law. He said this section is 89 words.

Member Watkins added that he was not suggesting that this wording is sacrosanct. He said he revised the wording on the panel to begin a discussion about what wording might appeal to everyone and still be within the grounds of appropriate professional historical practice. He also wanted to make people, generally, citizens of the Town, feel included in the process and satisfied with the outcome.

Chair Plaag asked the HPC members for feedback on Member Watkins's revised text for the cemetery panel. Member Smyth said that he visited the cemetery, and the dog waste station outside the cemetery gate invites dogs into the cemetery. He said when he was a student at ASU, and he did not know there was a cemetery there. He asked how are others expected to find out and be directed to the Boone Cemetery and who would the audience of these panels be.

Chair Plaag responded that he recollected that members of the Town Council said they would like to see some interpretative signage for the Boone Cemetery that addresses the key things that are interesting in the cemetery, and how to behave in the cemetery because there has been a long history of bad behavior in it. Chair Plaag commented that many people who gave public comment described these cemetery panels like Chair Plaag was forcing everybody to accept them and that they were Chair Plaag's panels. He explained that the work on the cemetery panel text was the work of the HPC body, and the proposed project was assigned to the HPC by the Town Council. He said they had done the best that they could do.

He added that the HPC asked him to draft the language, which he did. He said it had been discussed and revised many times. He said that the fence between the two sections was removed when the chain-link fence was removed, and the Town Council showed an interest in seeing this fence interpreted. He explained that Vice-Chair Bond had suggested that a run of granite markers be placed on the fence line. Chair Plaag said that later, the HPC learned that the cost of putting the granite markers was cost-prohibitive.

Chair Plaag explained that the Junaluska Heritage Association (JHA) knew about the discussion of the granite markers, and they said if the HPC were not going to put them in, the JHA said they would put them in because they had some stones and gravel left from the JHA's project of marking unmarked graves from the ground penetrating radar study. He added that the JHA would mark the line if there were no objections from the Town Manager or Town Council; there were none and JHA completed the project.

Chair Plaag responded to Member Smyth's comment about how will people locate the cemetery. He said a separate project was being done by the Watauga County Historical Society that would be funded by the Watauga County Tourist Development Associations (TDA). He explained that the funding would create an application allowing for the Downtown Boone Walking Tour with satellite sites, one of which would be at the Boone Cemetery.

Chair Plaag pointed out that one thing that has been overlooked in the critiques of the cemetery is that each of the QR codes leads someone visiting the cemetery to additional content on significant people buried there. He said content still needs to be developed because the HPC has focused on the cemetery panels text. He said that topic would presumably be a task for the HPC to work on that content, which would allow the HPC to talk about significant political figures, business leaders, religious leaders, soldiers, women leaders and important Black leaders in the community. He added that the intent is to provide a complete inventory of every variable with the QR codes, but probably not for every individual as that would be labor prohibitive for the Commission. Vice-Chair Bond pointed out that the Stoneman's Raid history could be tied into the Downtown Boone Walking Tours.

Chair Plaag pointed out that he had been asked implicitly why there was so much focus on the segregation of the cemetery. He said it was a defining characteristic of the cemetery. He explained that every person that he had ever spoken to about the cemetery, including on the tours last year, had no idea there was a Union occupation of Boone and if they had seen the Union soldiers here and not have known that they were in the Black section of the cemetery, they would have been very confused by it. He added that people said because of this tour, they knew what was going on in the cemetery.

Chair Plaag noted that he had discussed with author, Mr. Terry Harmon the assumption that Benjamin Council, Sr., played a role in the location of the burials of the Union soldiers. He said it was completely believable that the location of the burials was determined by Union officers occupying Boone at that time. He thought Mr. Harmon was wise to bring this topic up, and Chair Plaag modified the language to reflect it.

Student Member Riley talked about the people who had mentioned they were dissatisfied with QR codes on the panels. She explained that Staff had developed a design for a sticker to go over the panels when QR codes go defunct so the panels do not have to be changed out when information changes.

Discussion ensued on QR codes. Member Smyth talked about the feedback he had received on QR codes from the Blowing Rock Historical Association. He said because of the demographic of the Blowing Rock area, they were not as much in favor of QR codes as they were brochure stands, whereas the differing demographic of Boone might be different. He suggested having a brochure stand at the Jones House listing a map of the Boone Cemetery. Student Member Ziegler said in her age group and on campus at Appalachian State University, the students are hesitant to use QR codes because they can contain viruses. She added that the HPC had previously discussed having a brochure box at the cemetery.

Ms. Mitchell added to the discussion that when she talked to the Civil War Trails Program representatives regarding the Stoneman's Raid interpretative panel, they indicated to her that they did not necessarily support putting QR codes in the text of the panels. She told them that the HPC had discussed putting a QR code on a sticker that could be easily changed out as necessary. She suggested not having the words QR code imprinted on the panel so that the sticker can be peeled off in the future when it is no longer needed. Vice-Chair Bond added that speaking from her age group, it would not matter if there was a QR code on the panel because she doesn't use QR codes to access information. She noted that other people are familiar with QR codes and have the devices to read them, and it would be beneficial to them to have a QR code on a sticker. Member Smyth noted that when QR codes become obsolete, the sticker could be removed and replaced with newer technology.

Ms. Mitchell informed the HPC that she had contacted the Vacker Sign Company to tell them there was a delay in the HPC sending them their order for the panels. She said the sign company responded that they understood, and they would provide Ms. Mitchell with a new estimate when the HPC was ready for one. She reminded the HPC that they had previously discussed having a brochure holder on one of the panels to be incorporated with the Downtown Boone Walking Tours.

Member Smyth suggested that the cemetery panels include highlights from a broad range of people buried there and information on the segregation topic, and Chair Plaag supported this suggestion. Chair Plaag added to the discussion that the text should be balanced and consider the important people from the Junaluska community that are buried there. Vice-Chair Bond added there should be recognition for the monument the JHA installed. Member Smyth noted that the fine line that the JHA put in at the cemetery was stark. He pointed out that a sign at the top of the hill in the cemetery talking about segregation would be appropriate. He suggested adding another sign near the front of the cemetery using Member Watkins's proposed suggested text, "Welcome to the Boone Cemetery." Member Watkins responded that the JHA may have more than one prominent person they might want to highlight in the cemetery. He said this is why he mentioned in his memo that he recommended that the proposed text be revised and vetted by all interested parties. He said he hoped that, ultimately, people would agree on who should be on the list for a general panel to be read by the average visitor to the cemetery.

Chair Plaag stated that he wanted to push back slightly on the comments he had heard during public comment and the idea of every interested party having an opportunity to weigh in on the cemetery panels. He explained that this is different from how the Town government works, except there is a public comment period where people can give their Town representatives and boards feedback on what they like and do not like about what they are doing in the Town. He said there are better ways to get the cemetery panels completed than the approach of trying to reach the approximately 20,000 people. He explained the Town Council directed the HPC to create proposed text for the cemetery panels that they may or may not vote to accept. He stated that the HPC had heard feedback three times prior to this meeting, and he tried to incorporate that information into the draft cemetery panel text. He added in the fourth revision of the draft cemetery panel text, he tried to include feedback from the community, including the broader Boone area. He stated that he revised the proposed text four times and does not care to do it again on his own. He said that Member Watkins's point was a fair one, and there is a way to encapsulate one more time to use the words that reach a broad audience and explains things in the eighth-grade language that would be typically used to make a historical interpretation on signs. He said that the HPC could revisit to see if four panels were the correct number because two panels might be the correct number of panels. He said one panel could be at the entrance and maybe a panel further up in the cemetery that interprets the dividing line and possibly includes something about the oddity of the three Union Soldiers being buried in the Black section in 250 words or less.

Chair Plaag suggested that another HPC member make the next revision to the proposed text. He opened the floor for the HPC to discuss how to move forward with the next revision. Vice-Chair Bond suggested that the HPC start with Member Watkins's information in his memo because it is well written, and he summed up the point of adding names to the text. She suggested that the HPC hold a special meeting to discuss the revised text. The HPC agreed to schedule a special in-person meeting on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 3 p.m. in the Planning and Inspections Conference Room at 680 W. King Street, Ste. C.

Member Smyth offered to work on the revision to the proposed text for the cemetery panels. He said he would prepare the proposed text from what he had learned in this meeting, and he would email it to Ms. Mitchell. It was discussed that Ms. Mitchell would forward the email to the HPC for their review and discussion in the special meeting and include in the meeting packet.

Discussion ensued on the revisions to the proposed cemetery panels text. Chair Plaag said he agreed with Vice-Chair Bond that the spirit that Member Watkins wrote about in his memo, and a good portion of the content, and his thoughts on condensing it all into one panel was a good starting point for the first panel in the next revision. Vice-Chair Bond asked if there should be another panel somewhere between the entrance panel and the one at the top of the hill of the cemetery. Member Smyth talked about incorporating segregation and the stark dividing line into the text.

Chair Plaag offered to create a list of historically significant people to be highlighted because he already had that information. He encouraged all the people attending this meeting via WebEx to email their list of historically significant people to Ms. Mitchell for the HPC to review. He noted that he preferred that the list of people be emailed within the next week. He added that the emailed information should include

the name and a few words about each person. Ms. Mitchell noted that she could do a brief social media announcement and email all of the people contacting her on the cemetery panels.

Chair Plaag talked about reducing the panels from four to two would give the flexibility to put a brochure holder in the cemetery and at the panel at the cemetery entrance, in addition to the QR codes.

JONES HOUSE LOCAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT UPDATE

Student Member Ziegler said she had been working on the architectural description and grammatical errors that Staff had pointed out. She requested some help from Chair Plaag on formatting photos and maps. Chair Plaag told Student Member Ziegler that he would give her explicit instructions on this formatting process. She said that she had been working on historical data from the packets Ms. Mitchell had given her on the National Register information for the property, and she needed find a better way to sort and organize the photos.

Chair Plaag said he was contacted last week by a Jones' relative and they have photos and materials from Dr. Jones, including family letters to donate. He said he hoped there was some information on the changes to the Jones House in the new donation materials. He said he thought it would be an outright donation, which would make it easier to allow Student Member Ziegler to use some of this new information if an exception could be made at the request of Chair Plaag. Ms. Mitchell stated the Planning and Inspections Department library might have some material that Student Member Ziegler could use with her work on the designation report. Chair Plaag pointed out that the P & I Department had the book entitled "Architectural History of Watauga County." Ms. Mitchell said she would check to see if the P & I Department had more architectural materials that Student Member Ziegler could use with her work on the report.

STREET NAMES PROJECT – REVISED HOWARD STREET NARRATIVE

Chair Plaag talked about the Howard Street Narrative and that it did not get on the Town Council agenda. Ms. Mitchell said that based on her research the HPC had worked on a draft narrative, and the Staff was waiting on Chair Plaag to update it and return it to the HPC. She stated that after that was completed, Staff would submit it to the Town Council. He asked the HPC for feedback on the updated narrative in the meeting packet. Vice-Chair Bond asked the HPC if someone was working on the Howard Street Project. Ms. Mitchell responded that the Public Works Department was doing the work. Chair Plaag reviewed the specific items that he changed in the narrative, including the four major events on the day of the 1913 auction. He said it added another page to the narrative. He asked the HPC if they were alright with his proposed changes to the draft narrative before they voted to send it to the Town Council for their consideration. Ms. Mitchell explained that after the Town Council approved the narrative, it would be added to the Town Website on the HPC page with the other street narratives.

Motion and Vote:

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Student Member Ziegler, that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends approval of the draft Howard Street Narrative by Town Council at their November 2023 meeting.

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

Ms. Mitchell said she would update the HPC in December on the decision of the Town Council on the Howard Street Draft Narrative.

Chair Plaag added that the November Advisory material discussion should include the HPC's work plan for the next fiscal year.

STAFF UPDATES

Ms. Mitchell reminded the HPC of the topics added to the Town Council's October 2023 agenda for their consideration and approval. She outlined the three items as the R.L. Clay (Rivers) House Local Landmark Designation Report to be sent to SHPO for their review, the Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panels to see if the Town Council was interested in the HPC working with the Civil War Trails Program to get approval for outside funding, and the recommendation for the Dana Folk Way project. She noted that she and Ms. Lane Moody, Downtown Boone Development Coordinator, would jointly present the Dana Folk Way recommendation to the Town Council. She added that Ms. Moody had spoken with the members of the DBDA, and they were interested in supporting the Dana Folk Way signage proposal. She said that Ms. Moody wanted to present some ideas from the DBDA.

Ms. Mitchell said she found some information from the Montana Historical Society regarding their plaques the HPC was recommending for the Dana Folk Way project. She said the cost for their plaques was about \$800.00. She said they have a fully established marker program and charge \$35.00 per plaque application. She said this information might be beneficial if the HPC wanted to go with a marker program.

Ms. Mitchell explained to the HPC that the Town had hired consultants to update the Comprehensive Plan, and they would be in Boone on October 23 and 24 to meet with stakeholders and to learn about Boone. She said the Staff would contact the HPC to check their availability on October 24, 2023, to see if they could meet with the consultants. She added that specific times would be set up for the HPC to meet with the consultants, and when she found out the times, she would let the HPC know. Vice-Chair Bond noted that she was available on the morning of October 24, and Chair Plaag said his schedule was flexible on that day.

Ms. Mitchell continued with Staff Updates and referred to Packet Page 340, and she explained with the new permitting software in the P & I Department, Staff can run a report that shows the Statement of Conformity monthly activity. She said moving forward, the Staff wanted to try to use this report instead of having other Planning Staff, including Ms. Christy Turner, Residential/Sign Administrator, attend the meeting to give the report. She pointed out that Mr. Mike James, Commercial Zoning Administrator, was now handling the zoning for commercial properties. She said that the Rams Rack – Statement of Conformity (SOC) was still under review by Staff. Chair Plaag stated that he believed repointing brick required a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Ms. Mitchell responded that Mr. James recently received

that project application and it was under review by Staff. She noted that by Staff providing a monthly SOC report with a brief description, there would be less conflict for the HPC if the SOC became a COA.

HPC UPDATES

Chair Plaag announced a community event that was coming up on Thursday of this week at 4:30 p.m. at the Blowing Rock Community Library. The event is the Blowing Rocket Digitization Consortium launching of Phase 1 of its digitization project. He said that Mr. Ralph Lentz would give a talk on the history of the Blowing Rocket. He said there would be an appeal for the money they needed to digitize the first section from 1932 to 1950.

Chair Plaag said that he had talked briefly to Mr. Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources, and with some of the tour guides from last year about doing the cemetery tours again, and the general consensus was that everyone was overwhelmed. Chair Plaag said it might be better to stay a year off and work on being more organized about the approach to the next cemetery tours.

Vice-Chair Bond announced on October 18, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. a Watauga County Historical Society meeting, and Mr. Mike Hardy would talk on Benjamin Cleveland.

Student Member Ziegler asked Ms. Mitchell how she should handle the media when they ask for comments. Chair Plaag explained to Student Member Ziegler that she is never obligated to speak to the media. He said the approach that he always took is unless he has been authorized to speak for the Commission or a Town Council member has allowed him to speak, he does not speak for the Commission. He also explained that Student Member Ziegler could handle the press by saying that she wanted to emphasize that anything she says to the media is her own opinion and not the HPC's opinion.

NOVEMBER ADVISORY SESSION MATERIAL

Ms. Mitchell stated that it was discussed to include the following items: Staff Updates to include the Rivers House Local Landmark Designation Report, Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel with the Civil War Trails Program, and the Dana Folk Way Project; HPC Work Plan; Boone Cemetery Interpretative Panels following the discussion at the October 17 Special Meeting. Chair Plaag suggested the following item for the November Advisory Material: Jones House Designation Report Update by Student Member Ziegler.

OTHER DISCUSSION

There was no other discussion at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Student Member Ziegler, to adjourn the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary