

TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
November 9, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance: Chair Eric Plaag, Vice-Chair Bettie Bond, and Chuck Watkins

Council Liaisons: Rennie Brantz and 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: Chris Miller-GIS Specialist, Mark Freed-Director of Cultural Resources and Laney Pilkington-Administrative Support Specialist/Communications

Call to Order

Chair Eric Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software, to order on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 6:03 p.m.

Chair Plaag welcomed Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Long Range/Special Projects Planner, to the HPC. Ms. Mitchell explained that she is a recent graduate of Appalachian State University. She said her bachelor's degree includes a major in Geography and a minor in Community and Regional Planning. Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, said that Ms. Mitchell would be taking over as the lead staff person for the HPC. Ms. Shook noted that Ms. Christy Turner would handle the Certificate of Appropriateness applications and their processing.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Chair Plaag, to approve the October 5, 2021 meeting minutes as written.

Vote: Aye – (Plaag and Watkins)

Nay – None

Abstained- (Bond)

The motion passed.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Historic Preservation Commission Quasi-Judicial Rules of Procedure

Chair Plaag explained that the HPC would begin to see Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications submitted for review because of the recently approved Town of Boone Historic District. He further explained that this requires that the HPC function as a quasi-judicial board. Ms. Shook said the HPC has a set of rules of procedure that they have already adopted, but she has asked Ms. Mitchell to review them for possible changes specific to the work of the HPC. Ms. Mitchell said that she has been comparing the HPC rules of procedure to the current

Board of Adjustment rules of procedure. Ms. Mitchell said that she has made some edits to the HPC rules of procedure, and sent that draft document to Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, to review.

Chair Plaag talked about a recent discussion on the North Carolina Historic Preservation listserv regarding scripts. He said that the listserv had posted about five or six examples from various communities in the state that have Historic Districts. He said these scripts are designed explicitly for HPC's that are reviewing COA cases. He said that he forwarded the said scripts to the Planning Staff and to Ms. Meade to review. He noted that Ms. Meade would create a script for the HPC to follow when hearing a case. He said that Ms. Meade might have the script and HPC rules of procedure prepared by the December 2021 HPC meeting to discuss and possibly adopt. Ms. Mitchell said that she would follow up with Ms. Meade on the HPC rules of procedure. Chair Plaag asked that the draft rules of procedure be emailed to the HPC members before the packet is posted because the HPC needs more time to review them.

CLG Status

Chair Plaag referred to a memo on page nine of the meeting packet. Ms. Mitchell said that she and Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner, talked with Ms. Kristi Brantley from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) about the Certified Local Government (CLG) process. She said that from that meeting, she learned that the HPC needs to work towards the following seven required documents:

1. Evidence that a comprehensive inventory of the area's cultural resources has been or will be conducted.
2. Information regarding the area's locally designated historic districts and/or historical landmarks.
3. The ordinance creating the local commission.
4. The commission's rules of procedure.
5. The design guidelines used by the commission.
6. Resumes of the members of the commission.
7. A description of the commission's past and current activities.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that she has completed initial research on the process. She said she found a completed inventory, which is the comprehensive architectural survey of Downtown Boone completed in the spring of 2021. Additional documents found are reports on the local historic landmarks for the Blue Ridge Motor Court, Linney House, Linney Law Office, and the Downtown Boone Post Office. She said there is an ordinance creating the HPC, and there are design guidelines which are the Downtown Boone historic district standards.

Ms. Mitchell referred to page ten of the meeting packet. She said the following documents need to be finalized and are in the process of being finalized: locally designated Historic District and Historic Landmarks (for landmarks only), rules of procedure (updating rules of procedure among staff and the town attorney), design guidelines (using historic district guidelines from updated ordinance), resume of members (existing form to be completed by members), and description of past and current activities. The description is an existing list of HPC activities and objectives, where descriptions need to be completed. Ms. Mitchell mentioned that SHPO recommends adding descriptions of one or two sentences for most items.

Ms. Mitchell said that SHPO has a specific resume form that will need to be completed by the HPC members. She said the purpose of the resume is to make sure that the HPC members have the experience and education specifically related to historic preservation including archaeology, architectural history, or architecture.

Ms. Mitchell reviewed the additional requirements. She said that SHPO requires that the Commission show or act, review, and issue Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) for approximately a year to two years before application. She said that an additional requirement is for COA applications to be heard through the quasi-judicial

process. She said the draft application would be sent in between May and June of 2022. She said once SHPO receives a draft application after the COA work and the completed documents are submitted, SHPO will review the documents. After review then a re-submittal can be processed for the final CLG approval. She said that SHPO suggested that she finalize all of the documents as soon as possible and send them to SHPO by the spring of 2022.

Chair Plaag noted that he would like for the HPC to see a draft of the past and current activities as soon as possible. He asked Member Bond and Council Liaison Brantz to add past activities to this list. Ms. Turner noted that the HPC has been active since about 2007. Ms. Mitchell said that SHPO recommended that the past and current activities have a description. She said she would be working on the said descriptions.

Chair Plaag asked if Council formally approved the Downtown Boone Historic District Designation Report as a final document. He noted that this document was submitted to Council technically labeled as a draft. He said if the Council has not approved it, it could be approved at the December 2021 Council meeting before turning over the Council members. He said once it is approved, it could be included with the Downtown Boone Historic District. He noted that under number five of the required documents, it should be made clear that the HPC is currently using the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as the default set of guidelines for any landmark.

Chair Plaag explained that there had been a change in staff at the western and eastern regions of North Carolina SHPO offices for local landmark designations and the National Registry. He said if these processes are reviewed at the Raleigh, North Carolina offices, the review periods will be longer. He said that he had already submitted his report for the Blue Ridge Tourist Court. He said it would be late 2023 before it would be reviewed.

Cemetery Mapping Project – Website & Press Release

Ms. Shook explained that the staff had created the press release, but they could not release it until some mapping changes occurred on the Town website. She said the staff is working with Mr. Chris Miller, Town of Boone GIS Specialist, on the mapping changes and adding an interactive link to the online zoning map. She said the goal at this time is to try to release the press release early next week.

Discussion ensued on historical structures in Watauga County. Chair Plaag said that maybe in the future, the HPC might want to discuss if the Watauga County Historical Society would like to take more of an advocacy role with regard to properties in Watauga County.

Town Streets

Chair Plaag asked Member Watkins for an update on his work on town streets. Member Watkins said that he had not been able to work on it. Chair Plaag told Member Watkins that he could perform the task that was assigned to Member Watkins. Chair Plaag pointed out that the December 2021 HPC meeting is the end of the year for the HPC. He said he would like to see all of the town street drafts completed by this time, and the HPC can review them at their December meeting. Ms. Shook said that Ms. Mitchell can help with the research on the town streets project, and if so Ms. Shook needs to know to fit it into Ms. Mitchell's schedule.

Hayes, Bryan, Greene Cemetery & Cemetery Designation/Interpretation Guidelines

Chair Plaag suggested merging these two agenda items for discussion. There were no objections from the HPC members on merging them.

He noted that the criterion information was not included in the meeting packet. Ms. Shook said that the HPC could take action on this topic because the information was emailed out to the HPC and staff before this meeting.

Chair Plaag talked about the proposed guidelines for cemetery designation. He said he took the outline that Member Bond and Council Liaison Brantz had created, including the essential qualifications that are significant to various cemeteries. He said he merged their information with the guidance from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service regarding the significance and integrity of local historic landmarks.

Discussion ensued on the four criteria under which properties are usually eligible. Chair Plaag explained that Criterion A through Criterion D are the usual criteria that properties are eligible. He described the criteria consideration issue that applies to both birthplaces and graves and then cemeteries separately. He went through each criterion and explained how those particular properties are judged for either National Register listing or local landmark designation. He said the proposed language is taken mainly from guiding bulletins from the National Park Service. He noted that Ms. Meade had reviewed the said information. She had made some suggestions and revisions to the proposed guidelines; suggestions included modifying the title to Proposed Guidelines for Cemetery Local Landmark Designation and/or for Acquisition by the Town of Boone. He suggested adding a sentence that says that cemeteries must meet these criteria determined by the HPC to be recommended for acquisition.

Discussion ensued on abandoned cemeteries. Ms. Shook questioned if the concern only referenced abandoned cemeteries in terms of town acquisition. Chair Plaag noted that the Boone Cemetery was not abandoned when the Town acquired it. He suggested modifying the language to include a statement "for action by the Town of Boone pursuant to its authority with respect to the acquisition of abandoned cemeteries or acquisition from an existing property owner of any other cemetery." Member Watkins said he felt that Ms. Meade should probably review any proposed changes that the HPC makes. Chair Plaag suggested that the HPC vote on it at this meeting under the condition that Ms. Meade will review it. Ms. Shook said that the HPC could include that Ms. Meade reviews their proposed changes in their recommendation.

Discussion ensued on the Hayes, Bryan, Greene Cemetery historical marker. Chair Plaag read an email dated October 22, 2021 that he had received from Ms. Meade regarding said marker. In the email, Ms. Meade noted that she thought the HPC should proceed with the historical marker, assuming that a marker can be placed in the cemetery parcel or in the Town right of way. She also stated that she felt the HPC could proceed assuming that the Town has the authority to take over the cemetery under G.S. 168-344, should the Town want to exercise that authority. Chair Plaag said he emailed Ms. Meade and Ms. Shook asking that this topic be placed on the Council agenda for November 2021 for their consideration. He noted that Ms. Mitchell is securing photographs of the cemetery and its headstones. He said he would begin writing the marker text. He said the two open questions are about the marker's location and if the Council wants an interpretative panel located in the cemetery. He said the marker would probably be placed on or near King Street, possibly near Straight Street. He noted to Ms. Shook that there would likely be some problematic history issues with a few of the significant figures buried in this cemetery. He said that he would include them in his marker report.

Chair Plaag said that he would like to report to Council at their November 2021 meeting on what is happening with the cemetery. There was a consensus for Chair Plaag to speak at the November Council meeting. He said he would like to recommend this set of proposed guidelines so that the HPC has something to operate from in terms of recommending either designation or acquiring the cemetery. He asked if the HPC wanted to see the marker in the cemetery's neighborhood or near King Street where people can see it. He also asked if the HPC wanted to interpret that cemetery using the Civil War Trail style in a tabletop style of the marker in the cemetery. Member Watkins suggested that the HPC submit the proposed guidelines to Council now and defer any questions of marking other cemeteries to the future. Chair Plaag said that he thought the most pressing topics were the proposed guidelines and whether a historical marker is appropriate. He noted that these two immediate things

are on the HPC's task list to be completed. He added that having a marker completed could be included in the Boone 150 Celebration.

Chair Plaag further discussed, questioning if the Town wants to interpret cemeteries located in the Town and do they want to devote town resources to it. He questioned if the Town would want to design them or recommend acquisition to the Town. He asked the HPC if there are further amendments to what is proposed to include interpretation among the options on that list. He questioned if the HPC would want to use the proposed guidelines to determine if they want to expend town resources on interpreting a cemetery.

Motion and Vote:

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins, to recommend the adoption of the Proposed Guidelines for Cemetery, Local Landmark Designation and for Acquisition by the Town of Boone, subject to further revision by Ms. Allison Meade, Town Attorney, and to make the recommendation conforming to local and state law.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chair Plaag said he would revise the proposed changes to the guidelines and email them to Ms. Shook. Ms. Shook said that she confirmed that this recommendation could be placed on the Council's December 8, 2021 meeting agenda for their consideration.

Mr. Tim Futrell joined the meeting at approximately 7:37 p.m.

Discussion ensued on a recommendation that the Town commit funds to interpret the cemetery in the form of a historical marker. Chair Plaag recommended in light of the proposed guidelines, if the HPC would want to make a recommendation, presuming that this graveyard rises to the standards that the HPC has already discussed. He said the reason for this recommendation is because of at least two of the individuals, and there are several other important individuals in the cemetery as well. Member Bond suggested just staying with the recommendations in the proposed motion and voting at this time.

Member Bond left the meeting at approximately 7:44 p.m.

Downtown Projects

Ms. Shook said that Council did approve the B1 Expansion and the Historic District projects in October 2021. She noted that she found a couple of errors in the ordinance and other documents, including the zoning map. She said she would report it to Council at their November 2021 meeting. Depending on Council direction, she said the staff will work on those revisions and present them to Council at their January 2022 meeting. She said that the staff could work on including in the ordinance the historic district standards and historic landmark language.

Ms. Shook pointed out the deadline for COA applications to be submitted. She confirmed with Ms. Turner that no COA applications have been received.

Ms. Shook pointed out that she had previously spoken to Chair Plaag about potential signs for the Historic District. Ms. Shook said that Ms. Mitchell had done some research on said signs. Ms. Mitchell said she has talked to the North Carolina Department of Transportation and Ms. Lane Moody, Downtown Boone Coordinator, regarding the Wayfinding signs. She said she hopes to have more information to report to the HPC by their December 2021

meeting. Member Watkins suggested that Ms. Mitchell research the signage in the New England towns rather than just going by what the State of North Carolina offers for signs.

Chair Plaag said the Tourist Development Authority is funding some of the wayfinding signage for Downtown Boone. He said there would be one sign that would specifically mention Historic Boone that would be located near Brookshire Road at the New River Bridge. He said there would be another sign located near the intersection of Hwy 421 and Hwy 194. He said these signs would direct people to continue straight towards Historic Boone. He said another sign would be at the intersection of Hwy 321 and Hwy 421, where the Lutheran Church would be ahead if traveling in that direction; he said it would point left towards Historic Boone. He said it would be good to see a sign be near Hwy 105 Bypass and Hwy 421 to the west of Boone. Ms. Shook confirmed that the signs have been finalized and been sent in for approval. Ms. Shook explained that if the Town works with other organizations besides the TDA, there might be other areas outside of the NCDOT's right of way to install signage.

Council Store Historical Marker

Council Liaison Roseman explained that she has been working on this historical marker. She said she found different accounts of where the store was located. Chair Plaag said he would look at the information that she had sent him on the store. He said he would be working on the historical marker draft and hoped to have it completed by the December 2021 HPC meeting. He said he planned for the unveiling of the historical markers happening maybe once a month in May, June, July, and August, combined with other events in the Town. He did show some concern for the current supply chain issue and wondered if the studios that create the Town's markers are being affected by it. Council Liaison Roseman suggested unveiling a historical marker during the July 4, 2022 event.

Watauga County Jail

Chair Plaag said that he had been working on the report for the Watauga County Jail, and he should be able to report on it by the December 2021 HPC meeting.

Other Discussion

Member Watkins suggested that Chair Plaag ask Ms. Mary Moretz about applying for an open position on the HPC. Ms. Shook pointed out that the Town had recently received an application for an HPC student member. Ms. Turner noted that the applicant's name is Ms. Izabela Willis. Her student application will be considered at the November 2021 Council meeting.

Adjournment

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Chair Plaag, to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

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

Eric Plaag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary