

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 10, 2020
3:00 PM**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chairperson Eric Plaag, Vice-Chairperson Phoebe Pollitt, Bettie Bond, Chuck Watkins, Rennie Brantz and Loretta Clawson

Town Staff in Attendance:

Christy Turner – Senior Planner and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present:

Lane Moody-Downtown Boone Development Coordinator

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, November 10, 2020 at 3:06 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Member Clawson to adopt the agenda as amended by Chairperson Plaag's suggestion to change number eight Cemetery Regulations to Cemetery Deeds and adding a Lovill House Update after number eleven Town Website.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Member Clawson to approve the October 6, 2020 meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Junaluska Marker

Chairperson Plaag began discussion on this topic by explaining that Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner had received a call from Mr. Andrew Cole, a reporter with the Mountain Times newspaper. Mr. Cole told Ms. Turner that he was requesting comments from Chairperson Plaag regarding the Junaluska Marker.

Chairperson Plaag asked the Historic Preservation Commission, if they would approve him to speak with Mr. Cole to address his questions and comments on said topic.

Member Clawson made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to give Chairperson Plaag permission to speak to Mr. Andrew Cole, a reporter at the Mountain Times newspaper who is requesting information regarding the Junaluska Marker.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag said that someone suggested having the Watauga Historical Society book event and the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker at the same time. He said there has been discussion on having the book event in February of 2020. He also noted that Black History Month occurs in February as well. He said that the possibility of having these two events together would depend on if we get the Junaluska Marker in time. He asked Ms. Turner if she had an update on the Junaluska Marker. She said that Sewah Studios are still working on the Junaluska Marker. She said that Mr. John Ward, Town Manager is communicating with Mr. Deron Geouque, Watauga County Manager about the placement of the Junaluska Marker. She said that hopefully there will be an update on the placement of the Junaluska Marker at the next meeting.

Discussion ensued on when to unveil the Junaluska Marker. Chairperson Plaag asked the HPC what they thought about the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker in February of 2020. He said that it would be an outdoor event that would include the wearing of masks and social distancing. He said it would be helpful if the HPC asked the Town to close the intersection of Queen Street and North Depot Street for about one hour for said event. Member Brantz was in favor of having the event in February. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt said the weather can be unpredictable for that time a year. Chairperson Plaag said the alternative is to wait until later in the year of 2021, when there is also the risk of rain on a given day.

Ms. Turner said that if the HPC is proposing an intersection closure involving Town Streets, a motion would be required to get the request on the Council's agenda for approval. Ms. Turner asked the HPC if they wanted to put the intersection closure on the December Council agenda.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the HPC choose some possible dates for him to present to the Junaluska Heritage Association for the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker and get their feedback. The following dates were selected by the HPC to present to the JHA for the unveiling of the Junaluska marker: Friday, February 5, 2020, Friday, February, 12, 2020 and Friday,

February 19, 2020 for the proposed events. He then suggested that the motion include that the HPC is offering the three proposed dates to the JHA and to also request the closing of the intersection on the date that the JHA would prefer to have the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker. There was consensus from the HPC on the three proposed dates for the proposed events including the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker.

Ms. Lane Moody, Downtown Boone Development Coordinator noted that she is experiencing some meetings being moved to a virtual format as far out as March of 2021. Ms. Moody asked the HPC to let her know the date that is approved by Council and she will help get the word out through social media regarding the said events.

Chairperson Plaag suggested using an invitation process to include the JHA, HPC and Council and Staff to be limited to 50 persons. He also suggested asking Council for their direction on how they would want the HPC to proceed with the said events.

Motion and Vote:

Member Brantz made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt for the HPC to approve Chairperson Plaag to email representatives of the Junaluska Heritage Association and explain the situation of the possible 50-person limitation for the unveiling event of the Junaluska Marker on one of the three proposed dates, Friday, February 5, Friday, February 12, or Friday, February 19, in 2021. Chairperson Plaag said he would include in the email that this event would follow Covid-19 protocol and if they had rather wait until June of 2021 to have the event, when there may not be a 50-person limitation requirement.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Ms. Turner asked Ms. Moody, if the Town had a good quality camera to livestream the event. Ms. Moody said the Jones House might have this type of camera for their livestream events. Chairperson Plaag supported the idea of livestreaming the event.

Member Bond said if the February 2021 dates do not work for the event, she suggested the date of June 19, 2021 since it is being discussed to be a National holiday.

Motion and Vote:

Member Clawson made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to request from Council how they would like to proceed with the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker based on the feedback that Chairperson Plaag gets from the Junaluska Heritage Association on the option of the February 2021 dates or the June 2021 date.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag said that Ms. Turner can prepare an action item request for the December 2020 Council agenda to ask for Council direction on the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker event. Ms. Turner said that she can ask the Town Clerk to hold a place in the Council agenda for this agenda topic.

Turner House

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner, if there was an update on the Turner House. She said that they are still working on the engineering of it. Chairperson Plaag suggested making the Turner House a recurring agenda item on the HPC agenda.

Council, CAC, HPC Joint Meeting

Chairperson Plaag explained that he has received an email about HPC business, he will reply back only to say that has received it because of open meeting laws. He talked about the emails becoming public record. He encouraged anyone sending emails to be careful about the information they are including in an email. He suggested only including in an email the information that you would not mind anyone else reading.

Chairperson Plaag said it was helpful to have the joint meetings because it created some cohesion for what the real issues are. He said that the CAC approved Chairperson Williams and the HPC approved him to meet with the Planning Staff, and they discussed and came to a consensus on many issues. He told the HPC that this is their opportunity to voice their questions or concerns if they disagree with the proposed recommendations that he will review in this meeting, before Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections sends all of the information to Council.

Chairperson Plaag reviewed the proposed boundary changes. He explained that there are two distinct zoning designations being reviewed.

Chairperson Plaag said the first zoning designation would mirror the current B1 and it would be called the B1 Downtown Core. He said the second zoning designation would extend down King Street in either direction outside the Core. He said this zoning designation is separate from the creation of a Downtown Historic District. He said that as a result of discussing the zoning processes and the Historic District processes these two processes got blended together which is why the questions came up regarding where the boundaries should be.

Chairperson Plaag shared a map prepared by Planning Staff that highlighted the various boundaries. He said the CAC and HPC were asked to discuss if it made sense to make the Downtown Core and the Downtown Interface have the exact same boundaries. He said that after a lot of discussion there were many reasons brought up as to why this is not practical.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the two parcels with houses on them located on Howard Street, where a parking deck is planned. He said if they are included in the proposed Historic District, they would possibly force the Town to have a delay for up to one year because a demolition

delay on properties located in a historic district. He further explained that these two houses had been changed so much over time that they were not contributing resources to any historic district that we would have. He added that even though these parcels were built within the period of significance, they are not contributing resources.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the old Baptist Student Union house and noted that it had not been surveyed. He said that he did go out and survey this property, but it will take time to do the research on it to figure how it relates to the context of the district.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the residential properties on Hippy Hill that face Wallace Circle. He said with these properties being in the Downtown Core, they would be subject to a zero setback, if re-developed. He said during the discussion that they tried to be sensitive to properties that are in these extended areas.

Chairperson Plaag said at the meeting with Staff, that they decided to make no proposed change to the Historic District boundary. He said the boundary that the HPC previously agreed on will be presented to Council for the Downtown Boone Historic District. He said, however, when talking about zoning issues, there was a lot of discussion on the properties at the west end and the east end of Downtown.

Chairperson Plaag said at the meeting it was proposed to put the Watauga County Courthouse in the Downtown Core and not in the Downtown Interface. He said the Stanley Harris Apartments, now known as the Nathans Walk Apartments should stay in the Downtown Interface because of the setbacks.

Chairperson Plaag said all the properties between the Watauga County Courthouse and Straight Street, which are architecturally similar in many respects to the rest of the Downtown Core, should be included in the Downtown Core. He said that Straight Street would become the western entry into the Downtown Area on King Street.

Chairperson Plaag said for several reasons on the east end of the Downtown Core, the decision was made to include everything from Appalachian Street to College Street as part of the Downtown Core.

Member Watkins asked Chairperson Plaag to define the Downtown Core on the proposed boundary map. Chairperson Plaag said it is the portion of Downtown Boone that is historically related to the growth and evolution of Downtown Boone during its period of historical development from 1918 through the 1960's. Member Watkins asked if this was not the same definition as the Historic District. Chairperson Plaag said this is a zoning district and there does not have to be an historical rationale for this boundary.

Member Watkins asked Chairperson Plaag if the zoning requirements were different between the Historic District and the Downtown Core. Chairperson Plaag said there is a great amount of similarity in terms of the design standards between the Downtown Core and the Historic District. Chairperson Plaag noted there are some minor procedural differences.

Member Watkins said if there was no Community Appearance Commission would there be a Downtown Core. Chairperson Plaag said there would be a zoning district and further explained that the CAC is a committee that has been asked to create proposed design standards for all of the zoning districts in Town. He said their project over the last seven years has been working on creating a set of design standards for the Downtown area.

Chairperson Plaag said that there were some other minor proposed changes that were made, to the CAC Design Standards, with the most significant change being in reference to the appearance of buildings with a continuous facade. He said the proposed text was changed to, "a continuous line of a building" which is to help prevent having breaks in the building's façade for individual buildings in the Downtown Core.

Chairperson Plaag expressed some concern for the way the proposed text was written, which would permit rooftop bars to be constructed on the top of the Downtown Core buildings under certain circumstances. He said this type of construction would have serious impact on the historical appearance of the buildings Downtown. He talked about the Horton Hotel rooftop bar and he said he felt it was built too far forward on the building. He said if you look at the top the Horton Hotel from across the street, it looks like it has a hat sitting on top of it. He said in any other Historic District, if this type of appearance had been proposed it would not have been approved with a historic district in place. He said he wants to avoid the potential issues of the CAC approving a design under their guidelines and the HPC not approving a design under their historic guidelines. He said that this proposed text has been flagged for Council to discuss the screening of rooftop bars and where they are placed on building roof tops, so there is not a negative impact on the appearance of historic buildings.

Chairperson Plaag said there was an issue with the term, "transom" being used interchangeably for clerestory windows, which was an issue throughout the whole CAC document, but it was addressed.

Chairperson Plaag had proposed that the term "quoins" be added as a defining feature on historical buildings.

Chairperson Plaag proposed that a major change be made for porch overhangs/awnings that have vertical supports posts. He said the proposed text reads as though they are allowed in the Downtown Core. He said they are not historic to the Downtown Core or the Historic District. He said he proposed that they not be allowed.

Chairperson Plaag said that all of the proposed changes made at the meeting with Staff, CAC Chairperson Williams and himself will be presented to Council for their review. He said these are the recommendations that were made for proposed changes to the existing zoning documents for the Downtown Core and Downtown Interface. He said these proposed changes do not change any of the Historic District work that has been proposed at this time.

Member Watkins said that he is still uncomfortable with the Historic District being a core within a core and also having a Downtown Interface. He said that he feels that what is being proposed is administratively complex.

Chairperson Plaag said in an ideal world, he would like to see the Historic District and the Downtown Core have the same boundary. He noted that he has had this concern throughout the whole discussion on the Downtown Area. He said that he is still concerned about it because there may be confusion on it.

Chairperson Plaag said that the CAC used the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the foundation, when creating their design standards. He said the changes to the properties in the Historic District will basically be following guidelines that apply to the Downtown Core with some additional elements that will apply. He said the only property that there might be confusion on is the Nathans Walk Apartments. He said that the Planning Staff can work with that property owner to help them understand.

Member Watkins noted that simplicity is the better way to present information to the public. He said by adding the multiple layers provides an opening for criticism.

Discussion ensued on emailing among the HPC members. Member Watkins explained that he had emailed Chairperson Plaag his concerns and questions regarding the work of the HPC because Chairperson Plaag had asked all of the HPC members to email him if they had concerns or questions on the work of the HPC. Chairperson Plaag said that it is legal and noted that once an email is sent to him with information regarding the work of the HPC it becomes public record. He explained that he has to maintain that email for a period of time, in case there is a public records request for all of the emails that he has received as Chairperson of the HPC. He explained that he wanted to caution everyone who writes an email to be tactful and discreet with the wording within the emails in case they are viewed in the future. He confirmed that he cannot share the content of an email with another board member; the content has to be shared in a meeting setting.

Member Watkins told Chairperson Plaag that he could append Member Watkins emails to the meeting minutes. Chairperson Plaag noted that he would rather forward Member Watkins's emails on to the Planning Staff. Member Watkins said he was alright with the Planning Staff receiving his emails.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the completion of the work of the HPC and CAC puts Council in a position where they can move forward with the proposed zoning changes and the Historic District at the same time.

Chairperson Plaag said the Planning Staff, CAC Chairperson Williams, and himself also talked about the timeline for presenting the proposed information. He noted that Ms. Shook would present that proposed information to Council at their November meeting. He said that both he and CAC Chairperson Williams have been asked to be on standby incase there are questions of them during the Council meeting.

Motion and Vote:

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Brantz to authorize Chairperson Plaag to speak on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission at the Council's November 2020 meeting regarding the proposed zoning changes and the Historic District proposals for the Town of Boone.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion is passed.

Member Clawson noted that as the process moves forward that she may need more information on it.

Ms. Turner said that the Planning Staff is preparing an educational component to present to Council in January of 2021 and then later will be presented to the public. She said the information will include the storybook journal that will probably be presented to the HPC in January of 2021. Member Bond said that it is good that the HPC will be able to review the information before it goes to the public.

Cemetery Deeds

Chairperson Plaag began discussion on this topic, noting his appreciation for all of the work that Vice-Chairperson Pollitt and her son have done on the cemetery deed research. He noted that this research information was not included in the meeting packet but he emailed it out to the HPC prior to this meeting (permanently attached).

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt asked Chairperson Plaag about the content of the email that she sent to him regarding this agenda topic. Chairperson Plaag read aloud the contents of her email at this meeting which talked about the book and page of the deeds and with the help of the Register of Deeds Staff, she found that Mr. R.F. Greene owned the land and now the land is owned by his heirs. She said that Ms. Amy Shook, Register of Deeds for Watauga County suggested that she could research the King's Grant at the Ashe County Courthouse for more information. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt noted that she uses www.ancestry.com for one of her other resources.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner how much longer does the HPC have to research the deeds for the ownership of the cemetery. Ms. Turner said the HPC was not given a timeline to do this research and she thought it was alright, if the HPC took a couple of more months to work on it. Chairperson Plaag suggested compiling Vice-Chairperson Pollitt's research information with his research information and to create a summary explaining that the HPC is not clear on the owner or heir to the cemetery property that they can identify. He said that he would like to present it back to Council for their direction. There was consensus from the HPC for Chairperson Plaag's to compile the research information and present it to Council to request their direction.

Black and Indigenous People of Color

Chairperson Plaag began discussion on this agenda item noting that the purpose of this discussion would be to talk about the process for making recommendations for markers for any people identified by HPC, Council or Community Members. He suggested that this agenda item be tabled until early in 2021. He said the reason for tabling this agenda item is to allow he and Ms. Shook the time to complete their work on the Town website which they believe is the key in getting public feedback on the markers. Chairperson Plaag confirmed there was consensus from the HPC members to table this agenda item.

Town Streets

Chairperson Plaag asked for volunteers to work on specific Town Streets to research the history of them. He assigned a January of 2021 HPC meeting dead line for each HPC member to complete their research.

The following HPC members volunteered to work on the Town streets: Member Brantz- Grand Boulevard and Linney Street, Member Bond-Howard Street and Rivers Street, Member Clawson-Depot Street and Queen Street, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt-Church Street and North Street, Member Watkins-Appalachian Street and College Street and Chairperson Plaag-King Street, Junaluska Rd. and Water Street.

Chairperson Plaag said that he has a 1947 Sanborn Map and some other resources that he will send to the HPC members via an open link to help them with their research.

Town Website

Chairperson Plaag said he had a great discussion with Ms. Shook regarding the HPC webpage of the Town Website. He said he is going to create a mock-up of how he is proposing for the HPC webpage to look like. He said he will submit it to Ms. Shook who will present it to Mr. Ward to review. Chairperson Plaag said he will have an update on it at the December 2020 HPC meeting.

Lovill House

Member Brantz said that he was asked to visit the Lovill House. He said it is an older 19th Century home that takes you back from a modernized bustling time to an earlier time in Boone. He said it is a welcoming and comfortable place. He said it has modern appliances and computers. Chairperson Plaag asked Member Brantz, if the Lovill House was under contract. Member Brantz said it is in the process of the 30 day due diligence period and noted that there are some zoning and property line issues that they are looking into as well during this time. Member Clawson noted there is also an issue with the adding of solar onto the Lovill House.

Informal Discussion/Other Matters

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner if there was an update from Mr. Ward on the 150th Sesquicentennial event. Ms. Turner said she did not have an update from Mr. Ward but she would get an update by the next HPC meeting.

Ms. Turner said her father found a coin collection from the Bicentennial that the Jaycees had done. Chairperson Plaag said that Digital Watauga would like to host this collection. He said they would scan it into their website. He suggested that Ms. Turner leave the collection with the Watauga County Library Staff.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the following topics for the next meeting agenda: Junaluska Marker, Turner House, Zoning and Historic District processes, Town Streets and Town Website. He suggested to include the Cemetery Deeds agenda item at the January 2021 meeting.

Member Watkins asked for an update on the Watauga Medical Center buildings that were discussed at a previous meeting. Chairperson Plaag said that the buildings were offered for sale. He said there was interest in the barn but not in the house. He said some of the windows have been removed from the house. Ms. Turner said it was her understanding that neither of the structures were purchased. Chairperson Plaag noted that he felt that both structures would be demolished.

Chairperson Plaag noted that he was granted access to make photographs of the Watauga Medical Center buildings for both the interior and the exterior of the house and the barn. He said that early next year, he will be hosting those photos on the Digital Watauga website.

Chairperson Plaag noted that early next year Digital Watauga will host the photographs of the Turner House.

Adjournment

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Member Clawson to adjourn the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary