

**TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026, 6:00 PM
1500 BLOWING ROCK ROAD AND WEBEX**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Dalton George, Mayor Pro Tem Todd Carter (via WebEx), Eric Plaag, Virginia Roseman, and Adrian Tait

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Anne Pruitt

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Frank Veno, Garrett Kight, Declan King, and Frida Paz-Miranda

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Mileski

PLANNING STAFF PRESENT: Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Brandon Wise-Deputy Director of Planning & Inspections, Amy Snider-Commercial Zoning Administrator, and Brenda Henson-Board Clerk

OTHER TOWN STAFF OR REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Todd Moody-Public Works Director (via WebEx), Justin Stines-Public Works Deputy Director, and Allison Meade-Town Attorney (via WebEx)

Call to Order

Mayor George called the Town Council to order at 6:03 p.m. Chair Veno called the Planning Commission to order at the same time. The meeting was held at the Town Council Chambers, located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road, Boone, and via WebEx.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Council Member Tait moved to approve the January 5, 2026, Special Public Hearing minutes and the January 26, 2026, Public Hearing/Planning Commission meeting minutes as written. Council Member Plaag seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Pruitt)

The motion passed.

Chair Veno asked for the name Marilyn Hall to be changed to Candace Hall on page 5, paragraph 3 of the January 5, 2026, meeting minutes. Commission Member King moved to approve the January 5, 2026, Special Public Hearing minutes as amended, and the January 26, 2026, Public Hearing and Planning Commission meeting minutes as written. Commission Member Kight seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Mileski)

The motion passed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Case A25-0892/A25-0893 Greer Watauga, LLC – Joint Annexation & Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

In conjunction with a voluntary annexation request, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has submitted a Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment application to zone property located between US Hwy 421 S and Old 421 S (Watauga County PIN: 2921-30-9963-000) to Conditional District B3 General Business with a site-specific development plan for Use 8.03 Religious Assembly, Category 3 with a Corridor District overlay.

Amy Snider, Commercial Zoning Administrator, introduced the case

Tyler Moffatt, attorney representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, introduced Michael McLeod, project architect, Jason Gaston, civil engineer with Valor Engineering, Dylan Coley, traffic engineer with Davenport, James Milner, real estate broker, and Chelsea Garrett, attorney representing the property owner, Watauga Greer, LLC.

Mr. Moffatt stated that the applicant did not yet own the property, noting that they wanted to obtain approval of the project before purchasing.

Michael McLeod stated that he was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He explained that the building had been designed for up to four different congregations. The chapel would seat approximately 250 people. Mr. McLeod stated that the building would be used on a rotating basis from 9 a.m. until 4-5 p.m. for Sunday services. The building's design was one of the church's newer designs, and it was being built across the country. Mr. McLeod stated that the building would be brick, with some feature elements and two primary entrances on the side. The parking lot was designed to hold two overlapping congregations. Mr. McLeod noted that by opening some partitions, larger gatherings of 500-600 people could be held. Larger meetings would primarily be held on Saturday or Sunday. Smaller gatherings such as scripture studies, group meetings, and youth activities would take place during the week. Mr. McLeod stated that there would be no daycare or school at the church.

Council Member Plaag noted that the steeple height did not conform to UDO requirements. He asked whether any hardship from the site's conditions required the steeple to be that height at the front of the building. Mr. McLeod replied that the height of the steeple had nothing to do with the site. He added that the building's design was a standard plan produced by the church, so it was identified with the church, and they did not wish to change it. Mr. McLeod stated that one of the requirements of the UDO was to set the steeple back from the face of the building, but they instead set the whole building back so that it was 655 feet from Old 421, 295 feet from new 421, and 230 feet from the Elevation Chevrolet property line. The steeple contained a framed box approximately 42 feet high, and then the spire sat atop that. The spire would be the only portion of the steeple to exceed the 45-foot height limit. Mr. McLeod stated that most jurisdictions allowed the steeple to exceed building height limitations, and asked that this design be approved. He indicated that he would have to go back to the church to see if they would allow any modifications, but felt that the building had been set back sufficiently so that there should be no problems with what the code envisioned.

Council Member Plaag questioned the land-use intensity calculations, noting that the proposed impervious area was listed at 4,000 square feet, which seemed extremely low. Jason Gaston explained that the figure was with LSR broken out, not the total impervious area for the site. Council Member Plaag asked how runoff from the new pervious surface would be captured. Mr. Gaston replied that the stormwater would flow away from the building into a series of inlets around the parking lot, which would carry it to an above-ground pond.

Council Member Plaag noted there were three different renderings of a church building. He asked which one was actually being proposed. Mr. McLeod stated that the two photos were examples of similar designs, but the proposed design was depicted in the elevation plans. He added that the building would be brick with areas of EIFS, have precast lintels over the windows and doors, have gutters and downspouts, and have nice landscaping.

Council Member Roseman referred to the steeple box and asked if the windows allowed any light into the rooms below. Mr. McLeod replied that they were for looks and did not let light in.

Council Member Tait asked whether the applicant preferred the building to be oriented toward Old or New 421. Mr. McLeod stated that the proposed orientation toward New 421 was the preference of the church project manager and the real estate team because it provided a nice view. He added that with the buffering and tree planting, the building would not be as visible from Old 421.

Council Member Plaag asked about the ownership of the Vannoy Cemetery and if that property would be annexed. Mr. McLeod replied that the church had spoken to a surveyor about separating the cemetery property so that it would not be conveyed with the purchase of the rest of the property. Chelsea Garrett added that her clients had reached out to people with family members buried in the cemetery to negotiate for them to assume ownership. She stated that an easement would be retained in the deed, and that access to the Brown property would remain the cemetery's entrance. Mr. Moffatt added that the metes and bounds surveyed out the cemetery.

Council Member Tait asked about the driveway's location. Mr. Gaston replied that the driveway location was not ideal for the site, but it accommodated the property across the street to diminish the headlights shining into houses. He stated that they worked with DOT to make sure the site distance was appropriate.

Mr. McLeod explained that the seller had required a 50-foot-wide buffer from the cemetery to the proposed driveway, which had to remain.

James Milner stated that there was a 60-foot right-of-way on the south side of the cemetery, but using it as a driveway to the church would require substantial changes that the property owner, Kent Brown, did not want to make. Mr. Milner added that the 50-foot buffer in the contractual agreement was quite large compared to other developments. Council Member Plaag asked if the driveway Mr. Milner was speaking about, which contained the right-of-way, was the driveway to New 421 from the Chevrolet dealership. Mr. Milner replied that the conversation he had with Mr. Brown was about the driveway on Old 421. He referred to Mr. Gaston for information on the driveway to New 421.

Mr. Gaston noted that New 421 was a corridor district overlay. He stated that he had provided a driveway design, but the road grade could not meet town standards because of the 70-foot elevation difference between the church's finished floor and New 421. The driveway would provide private access to a road with a higher speed limit, and DOT opposed the plan.

Council Member Plaag referred to the transportation impact analysis, noting that on peak Sundays, approximately 103 vehicles per hour would be heading north on Old 421, 104 would be heading south on New 421, and 76 vehicles would be trying to turn left out of the church. That would work out to roughly two vehicles per minute traveling in each direction, and those cars would have to figure out, over the span of that hour, how to get out onto Old 421 while those vehicles were traveling by. Council Member Plaag predicted that this scenario could require a police officer to direct traffic after Sunday services. He asked how the people would get turned out of the church safely.

Dylan Coley explained the process of compiling a transportation impact analysis, including studying intersections, traffic counts, projected trip numbers, and surrounding land uses. The level of service

allowed by DOT during peak hours was Level D. It was determined that the level of service for the Old 421/New 421 intersection would be Level B or C.

Council Member Plaag stated that people typically speed on these roads. He felt that if people had to wait too long to get onto the road, they would make bad decisions. Mr. Coley noted that the DOT reviewed sight distances and that adding a turn lane at the site would allow for some stacking.

Council Member Plaag asked if DOT would consider lowering the speed limit on Old 421. Mr. McLeod replied that they had not asked DOT about the speed limit. He added that the church would like assurance that they could proceed with their project before purchasing the property. Mayor George asked Mr. McLeod whether the applicant would be willing to accept a condition that the applicant requests from DOT: that the speed limit on Old 421 be reduced. Mr. McLeod replied that he would have to ask the church to be sure, but he felt they would likely agree to that condition. Mr. Milner clarified that the condition could only be that the applicant make the request to DOT, with the understanding that the applicant had no control over DOT's response.

Council Member Tait referenced the standard growth rate of 1.5%, which he felt was unrealistic, given that the area would grow rapidly over the next 10 years.

Council Member Roseman stated that several properties had recently been annexed along the 421 corridor, which could potentially add more traffic in that area. Mr. McLeod replied that the design team was not made aware of any additional developments planned for the near future. Jane Shook explained that the recently annexed properties included a single-family home, an existing business, and vacant land for future development. Council Member Plaag asked if surrounding properties located in the county were considered in the TIA. Ms. Shook stated that the applicant had contacted Watauga County, so that data was considered in the TIA.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed with Council Member Tait that a 1.5% growth rate was inaccurate. He also asked the applicant whether they would be willing to turn the project 180 degrees so that the parking lot would face New 421 and the building entrance would face Old 421. Mr. Moffatt replied that he had posed that question to the decision-makers and his client this afternoon, and they responded that they were not open to changing the building's orientation to face Old 421.

Mayor George invited public comment.

Robert Gross stated he moved to Boone in 2014 and was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where he had served as bishop for three years. He said they had outgrown their current location on Poplar Grove Road and noted that the current building could not be expanded. Mr. Gross stated that the church drew members from about five counties, whose purpose was to minister, worship, support one another, and give back to communities.

Pam Williamson spoke on behalf of herself and her husband, Jerry Williamson. Ms. Williamson provided members with a copy of her comments **(on file)**. She stated that they had lived at 3705 Old 421 South, directly across from the proposed development, for over 40 years. Ms. Williamson noted that they did not oppose any of the church's proposed uses. However, there were several issues they felt should be addressed. Ms. Williamson asked for additional tree canopy along both New and Old 421, and a staggered line of evergreen trees behind the existing mature trees being saved along Old 421, to soften the visual impact of the historic homes across the road. She stated that the steeple should be required to meet the ordinance standards. Ms. Williamson noted that the building was oriented toward the New 421. She asked that the building be turned to face Old 421 to help create the corridor character envisioned in Boone Next.

Ms. Williamson stated that Old 421 was a two-lane, state-maintained road with a 45-mph speed limit and no pedestrian infrastructure. She added that DOT had no major improvements scheduled for this road until at least 2035. Ms. Williamson noted that the traffic analysis only evaluated conditions through 2027, although the area was envisioned as a major growth area. She stated that the TIA focused on peak-hour traffic on Sundays, without considering all weekday trips to and from the church. Ms. Williamson said that the driveway would be located approximately 300 feet from the signalized intersection of Old and New 421. She expressed safety concerns with drivers turning left from the church toward the intersection and asked that the existing driveway from the Chevrolet dealership be fully explored as a possible shared access point. Ms. Williamson asked that a conversation be held with DOT about lowering the speed limit on Old 421 from 45 to 35 mph.

Chance Powell, with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, stated that he had lived in Boone for seven years and that the church had been seeking property for a long time to build to accommodate future growth.

Ms. Garrett spoke on behalf of the property owner, Watauga Greer, LLC, noting that they also own the house next door to the Williamsons. She stated that annexing the subject property provided the town with an opportunity to regulate development and help shape the corridor. Ms. Garrett added that the proposed use created lower impacts than a multi-family development. She noted that the 60-foot easement stated that Brown would pay all expenses to build and pave the road on the easement, and that Brown may park vehicles for sale on the paved portion of the easement, which was outside the travel lane. The travel lanes must remain open and be at least 15 feet wide in each direction. Ms. Garrett stated that the proposed driveway on Old 421 was located as far north past the Williamsons' property as possible in an effort to decrease headlight glare to the residential properties across the road.

Mr. McLeod stated that the idea of a shared driveway was problematic because the Chevrolet dealership's driveway was located on the Brown property. The church would have to build a driveway right beside the existing Brown driveway, and DOT would not allow the two driveways to be that close.

Council Member Roseman felt that shared driveways, where a single driveway could serve multiple properties, were the best possible scenario and urged negotiation among property owners. She asked how many congregation members the church had. Mr. Gross estimated an average attendance per service of 130 to 200. Mr. McLeod added that 250 people would fit in the chapel. Mr. Gross stated that they were building the church to accommodate growth. Council Member Roseman asked how many people could be accommodated in the church's current location. Mr. McLeod replied that their current capacity was approximately 130.

Council Member Carter felt that the church was a good use for the property. However, based on Boone Next and the future land use map, he would want to see the project flipped on the property so it faces Old 421.

Council Member Plaag stated that, despite his concerns about traffic safety along Old 421, he was unsure that using the existing shared easement would improve anything. He pointed out that the building was proposed to be oriented toward a road that would not access the property, and he felt that was strange.

Council Member Roseman stated that the steeple did not seem to serve a function and felt it could be moved or altered.

Commission Member King stated that he did not understand how the church fit within the walkable mixed-use identified for this area. He added that the UDO and Boone Next encouraged compact human-scale development that integrated a vertical mix of uses and connected to other uses. Commission

Member King stated that this development seemed the opposite of human-scale development, unless it were flipped 180 degrees.

Commission Member Paz-Miranda stated that the site plan was insufficient, noting that more tree canopy and sidewalks were needed. She expressed concern about possible flooding from a nearby creek.

Commission Member King added that having services and a congregation here could help connect the community, but the design would need to be revised to orient the development to face Old 421 so it is inclusive of the neighborhood.

Chair Veno expressed concerns about the steeple's height, the building's orientation, and the speed limit on Old 421.

Mayor George noted there was a 25-foot and a 30-foot stream buffer mentioned in the meeting packet. Mr. Gaston stated that the stream buffer would be 30 feet, and the mention of a 25-foot stream buffer was an error.

Allison Meade stated that the applicant would need to agree to any conditions and, if approved, would have to sign an affidavit outlining those conditions. She asked for confirmation that the applicant had agreed to install the NCDOT's requested travel lane with 75 feet of storage. Ms. Meade stated that, per the UDO, the steeple was required to be set back one foot for every foot in height. This would, in essence, force every church to place its steeple in the middle of the church. She was unsure whether that was the intent of the ordinance and was supportive of the requested deviation.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that he had no issue with the steeple's setback. His issue was with the building's orientation and design, which did not conform to the comprehensive plan. Ms. Meade noted that a reorientation of the building and parking would be a deviation from the literal standard in the UDO.

Council Member Plaag asked whether there was a public or fire safety risk posed by having the steeple at the end of the building. Ms. Meade did not think so, but said it would be a question for the fire department.

Ms. Shook asked if the applicant would need to redesign the plan for reorientation to bring it back to a public hearing. She stated that the Planning Commission needed direction on a possible redesign and on any conditions that might be placed on the approval. Council Member Plaag suggested that one condition would be the reorientation of the building, and parking had to be flipped. Another condition would be that the applicant ask DOT about lowering the speed limit on Old 421 and provide the town with evidence of that conversation. Council Member Plaag stated that it did not appear that anyone present at the hearing could agree to the conditions for the church, which would require the applicant to return to the Town Council at another time. Ms. Meade stated that the applicant could proceed with a vote on their proposal as is, or could make modifications as requested by the Town Council and Planning Commission and bring them to the Town Council for a final vote.

Mr. Moffatt stated that he had previously asked the individuals that would have the authority to say yes or no and they were unwilling to reorient the building to face Old 421. He noted that the applicant would be willing to ask DOT to reduce the speed limit on Old 421. Mr. Moffatt stated that this case was scheduled to be considered by the Town Council at its meeting next Wednesday, and he would receive an answer from the applicant regarding their willingness to accept a condition requiring reorientation of the building and parking.

Ms. Meade asked Ms. Shook why the public hearing might need to be continued. Ms. Shook replied that a continuation of the public hearing might be necessary if the applicant had to provide a redesigned plan.

Ms. Meade stated that there had been significant discussion about the reorientation and that she felt the applicant could present the revised plan to the Town Council for a vote.

Council Member Tait mentioned a possible condition that a 75-foot right-turn lane be installed. Mr. Moffatt replied that DOT would require a turn lane to obtain a driveway permit, so the applicant would have to install it whether or not the town made it a condition.

Council Member Plaag asked if there would be a sidewalk along Old 421. Ms. Snider stated that the applicant had agreed to install the sidewalk.

Adjournment of Town Council

Council Member Plaag made a motion, seconded by Council Member Roseman, to adjourn the Town Council at 8:23 pm.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Pruitt)

The motion passed.

Dalton George, Mayor

Brenda Henson, Board Clerk

Frank Veno, Planning Commission Chair

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Chair Veno called a break in the meeting from 8:23 pm until 8:32 pm.

Discussion and Recommendation on Case(s) Heard at the Public Hearing

Case A25-0892/A25-0893 Greer Watauga, LLC – Joint Annexation & Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

In conjunction with a voluntary annexation request, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has submitted a Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment application to zone property located between US Hwy 421 S and Old 421 S (Watauga County PIN: 2921-30-9963-000) to Conditional District B3 General Business with a site-specific development plan for Use 8.03 Religious Assembly, Category 3 with a Corridor District overlay.

Discussion ensued regarding possible conditions to be placed on the project. Commission Member King stated that there was mention of additional tree plantings to enhance the tree canopy. Mr. Wise noted that the staff would request additional plantings, but could not require them unless a condition was imposed.

Commission Member King stated that he had no issue with the steeple's height or location. Mr. Wise added that the fire marshal had reviewed the plans and had no comments regarding safety concerns with the steeple.

Chair Veno noted that it was difficult not to have the applicant present to communicate with and discuss possible conditions.

Commission Member Kight asked if the sidewalk on Old 421 would connect to the building. Ms. Snider replied that it would, although that was not shown on the site plan.

Chair Veno suggested a condition that the applicant contact DOT to request a reduction in the speed limit on Old 421 and provide the town with proof of DOT's response.

Commission Member King stated that the proposed driveway location was likely the most viable option for the neighbors.

Commission Member Paz-Miranda mentioned a condition that the building and parking be reversed on the site. Commission Member King stated that he agreed with the Council members that the proposed building orientation was not aligned with Boone Next. Chair Veno asked what would be involved in flipping the orientation. Mr. Wise replied that the grading and stormwater plans would have to change.

Chair Veno felt that the church was a good use for the area.

Commission Member Paz-Miranda asked if the retention pond could instead be a bioswale. Ms. Wise replied that a bioswale would not handle the proposed stormwater from the site.

Mr. Moffatt addressed the Commission, stating, on behalf of the applicant, that they would agree to a condition requiring the installation of additional plantings as directed by staff.

Mr. Gaston explained that there were two landscaping issues: one involving the addition of plantings to the tree canopy, and one providing additional plantings in the 50-foot buffer. The installation of a turn lane and sidewalk would reduce the 50-foot buffer to approximately 38 feet, and the buyer and seller would need to agree on how to replace the buffer.

Commission members discussed conditions for additional landscaping, requiring the applicant to request a reduction of the speed limit on Old 421, and reorienting the architectural design so the building and parking would face Old 421.

Mr. Wise clarified that the proposed building orientation met UDO requirements because it faced the primary public way, New 421. However, because this was a Conditional District Map Amendment request, the Commission could recommend, and Council could approve that the orientation be flipped.

Vote 1

Commission Member King made a motion that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning map is consistent with the Town's current comprehensive plan and any other adopted plan(s) of the Town that are applicable because of the following from Boone Next:

Goals & Policies

Policy 1.1.1: Use the Future Land Use Map: Use the Future Land Use Map to guide development, growth, and conservation decisions. Additionally, use the Focus Area Plans for more detailed policy direction within each of those areas.

Policy 4.4.2: Proactively Manage Growth and Development: Anticipate and guide future growth and development using the planning principles, frameworks, and maps in this Comprehensive Plan to ensure that new development can be supported by town infrastructure and services while protecting open space.

Policy 4.4.3: Promote Smart Growth: Ensure new growth and development is fiscally balanced in the long run while directing more growth to areas with existing services and infrastructure. Some types of developments and land uses are necessary to the social needs of the town and do not necessarily directly improve the town's fiscal balance, such as recreation and cultural facilities or affordable housing. Encourage compact development that can be more efficiently served, especially as indicated on the Future Land Use Map.

Policy 5.2.2: Manage Growth on Boone's Edges: Intentionally manage outward growth to balance protecting community character and natural areas while directing desired growth to identified centers. Use the Utility Service and Annexation Criteria and the Growth Management Tiers Map to manage growth.

The recommendation is subject to the following conditions

1. The applicant shall contact NCDOT and provide evidence of the exchange to Town staff of a request to lower the speed limit on Old 421.
2. The applicant shall adhere to the staff recommendations for additional landscape plantings.
3. The building and parking lot shall be reoriented to Old 421 by being mirrored across the north south axis.

The motion was seconded by Commission Member Paz-Miranda.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Mileski)

The motion passed.

Vote 2

Commission Member Paz-Miranda made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Kight, that the Planning Commission recommends approval of Ordinance #A25-0892 within Exhibit A and approval is reasonable and in the public interest because this development upholds community values, provides community gatherings, utilizes underutilized corridor/acreage in east Boone, and benefits future development of Old US 421 for mixed use.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Mileski)

The motion passed.

Other Matters

There were no other matters discussed.

Adjournment of Planning Commission

Commission Member King made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 p.m. Commission Member Paz-Miranda seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Mileski)

The motion passed.

Frank Veno, Planning Commission Chair

Brenda Henson, Board Clerk