

**TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026, 9:00 AM
1500 BLOWING ROCK ROAD**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Dalton George, Mayor Pro Tem Todd Carter, Anne Pruitt, Virginia Roseman, and Adrian Tait

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

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

OTHER TOWN STAFF OR REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Todd Moody-Public Works Director, Shane Robbins-Police Major, Lane Moody-Downtown Development Director, George Santucci-Sustainability and Special Projects Manager, Guy Miller-Finance Director, Dale Presnell-Interim Town Manager, and Allison Meade-Town Attorney

Call to Order

Mayor George called the Town Council to order at 9:01 a.m. and announced the continuation of the March 23, 2026, Public Hearing/Planning Commission meeting. The meeting was held in the Town Council Chambers at 1500 Blowing Rock Road, Boone.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Case A26-0067 Taft-Mills Group, LLC (Hemlock Ridge Trace Apartments) – Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

Taft-Mills Group, LLC has submitted a Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment application to rezone property located on the corner of US Hwy 421 S and Yosef Drive (Watauga County PINs: 2911-70-9321-000, 2911-80-0228-000, and 2911-80-2433-000) from B3 General Business to Conditional District R3 Multiple-Family Residential with a site-specific development plan for Use 1.13 Multi-Family Dwelling (>100 bedrooms).

Amy Snider, Commercial Zoning Administrator, introduced the case. She stated that the applicant submitted elevations last week, which were included in the meeting packet as Applicant Exhibit 8. Ms. Snider noted that the applicant was requesting an extension of the two-year vesting period to four years.

Ms. Snider introduced Nate Broman-Fulks from the Taft-Mills Group. Mr. Broman-Fulks thanked the Council and Commission for taking their tight tax credit timeline and deadlines into consideration by fitting them on this agenda. He stated that since the March meeting, his team had worked to create and finalize the renderings and elevations to present to the Council and Planning Commission so they could get a good sense of the development's look and feel. Mr. Broman-Fulks noted that the property was at the entrance to Boone, along a gateway corridor, so they wanted a product everyone could be proud of. He stated that McMillan Pazdan Architects were hired to tailor the design to Boone by using different building materials throughout the buildings. He noted that the buildings would be brick and fiber cement, Hardi-Plank, with multiple colors to break up the buildings. The different articulations would provide depth and help the

development fit in with the surrounding area and Boone's culture and style. Mr. Broman-Fulks noted the site's walkability, with the path in front. A safety concern for children playing was expressed at the previous meeting, and they had addressed that by incorporating vegetation and landscaping and two knee walls, one closer to the building, and one closer to Hwy 421, providing multiple layers of safety measures for families. Another area of concern at the public hearing was the retaining wall. Mr. Broman-Fulks stated that there would be multi-layered textured walls with landscaping around them to help them blend in.

Mr. Broman-Fulks noted that the playground and covered picnic areas were located in the development's interior courtyard. Also located internally was the retaining wall for which they were seeking a deviation to allow a height of 10 feet instead of 8 feet. He stated that they were planning to terrace the wall in multiple layers and provide landscaping around it. He added that they were also considering mechanically stabilized earth walls that could help minimize the height and the need for concrete or pavers. Mr. Broman-Fulks explained that they might be able to keep the wall within the required eight-foot height, but requested the deviation to allow a ten-foot height in case they were not. He added that he did not believe this wall would be visible from Hwy 421.

Mr. Broman-Fulks stated that this was an incredible and rare opportunity to provide a very high-quality, long-term, affordable housing development in an area that called for growth. He felt that this was exactly the kind of development that Boone Next called for, in the exact location that it wanted.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that there were several larger retaining walls already in this area. He felt that the renderings were fantastic and depicted a development that would fit in with its surroundings. He added that affordable housing was desperately needed. Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that it was hard to build in Boone without retaining walls.

Council Member Pruitt appreciated the graphics because they provided the visual that they did not get to see at the last hearing. She stated that she liked the outdoor spaces and the balconies.

Council Member Roseman asked how many one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units were proposed. Mr. Broman-Fulks replied that there would be 15 one-bedroom units, 65 two-bedroom units, and 15 three-bedroom units. Council Member Roseman noted that information in the meeting packet stated the buildings would be three stories; however, the renderings depicted them as four-story buildings. Mr. Broman-Fulks explained that the buildings would be three stories from the interior grade and four stories from the Hwy 421 side, meaning the buildings would be three stories with a basement. Council Member Roseman asked if the basement level of each building would contain living units. Mr. Broman-Fulks replied that each basement level would contain living units.

Council Member Tait felt that the proposed development met a lot of the town's needs. He appreciated the inclusion of public spaces for kids to play and residents to gather.

Commission Member King felt that the proposed development was a home run, not just a base hit.

Council Member Roseman stated that the Town Council and Planning Commission received a letter from a community member noting that the buildings were not facing the main road. She noted that, looking at the plans, the front and back of the buildings look almost identical. Council Member Roseman felt that the applicant had met the spirit of the ordinance by designing the buildings so that the view from Hwy 421 did not appear to be the backs of buildings.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter added that he never wanted the development's entrance to be on Hwy 421. He felt that having the entrance on Yosef Drive and orienting the buildings that way looked appealing.

Council Member Roseman asked whether a stoplight would be installed at this intersection, given the increased population. Mayor George replied that it was noted at the first hearing that the proposed development did not require a transportation impact analysis. Brandon Wise, Deputy Director of Planning & Inspections, added that he believed that discussion from a previous development had led to the conclusion that a light at this intersection would create overlap with the light at the Industrial Park intersection.

There were no public comments.

With nothing further, Mayor George recessed the Town Council at 9:20 a.m. to allow the Planning Commission to make recommendations on the case.

Dalton George, Mayor

Brenda Henson, Board Clerk

Frank Veno, Planning Commission Chair

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

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

Case A26-0067 Taft-Mills Group, LLC – Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

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Commission Member Mileski stated that the development did a good job of blending in with the existing site and the surrounding building context, especially the strip mall adjacent to the property.

Commission Member King stated that he lived in this area and would be thrilled to have this project as a neighbor.

Chair Veno felt that the orientation of the buildings was appropriate in this case. He was appreciative of the development providing affordable housing.

Mr. Wise reminded Commission members of the extended vesting requested, which would allow the applicant to receive their tax incentives. He noted that the four-year vesting would need to be part of the Planning Commission's recommendation to the Town Council.

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, with the allowance of a four-year vesting period, because of the following from Boone Next:

Goals & Policies

Policy 1.6.1: Support permanently affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents geographically located throughout the town. Prioritize permanent affordability, particularly for those at or below 60 percent of the area median income, through community land trusts, nonprofit ownership and management, the Housing Authority, town ownership, and restricted deeds and covenants. Consider programs that fund home improvements for low income homeowners in exchange for right of first refusal to purchase homes for affordable housing partners.

Policy 1.6.3: Diversity Boone's Housing Options: Promote a variety of housing types as well as housing tenure options around Boone. While the town should continue to build single-family, townhome, and multifamily buildings, explore other types of well-designed and contextually compatible housing, such as quadplexes and small-scale multiplexes. The town can use creative tools, like zoning "opt-in" districts, to ensure additional densities come with public benefits like income-restricted units. Also, support alternative housing tenure options like the community land trust model and cooperative housing. Unless Boone's rugged terrain precludes it, consider the use of pre-approved blueprints to reduce construction costs while ensuring high quality building designs and materials.

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.

The motion was seconded by Commission Member Paz-Miranda.

Vote: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Vote 2

Commission Member King made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Mileski, that the Planning Commission recommends approval of Ordinance #A26-0067 within Staff Report Exhibit B, and approval is reasonable and in the public interest because this development offers a unique opportunity to provide affordable housing in a growth area. The recommendation is subject to the following conditions:

1. Where there is a conflict between the original application information and the plans (received on February 10, 2026), the plans shall control. Insignificant deviations may be permitted to comply with the requirements of the UDO. For application elements not depicted on the plans but included in the written materials provided by the applicant and considered at the public hearings held on March 23 and April 8, 2026, those details shall be considered part of the approved plan except as may be specifically provided otherwise in these conditions or was represented otherwise by the applicant at the public hearings.
2. Any commitments and representations concerning the proposed development made by the applicant at the public hearing shall also become a condition of the permit and a basis for a stop work order and/or permit revocation if violated.
3. The applicant shall submit the necessary applications, plans, details, and specifications meeting the requirements of the Town Code, UDO, Building Code, and any other applicable codes for review and approval necessary to issue Zoning and Building Permits.

Vote: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Adjournment of Planning Commission

Commission Member Kight made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 a.m. Commission Member Mileski seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Frank Veno, Planning Commission Chair

Brenda Henson, Board Clerk