

**TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2025, 6:00 PM
1500 BLOWING ROCK ROAD AND VIA WEBEX SOFTWARE**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Tim Futrelle, Mayor Pro Tem Dalton George, Todd Carter, Eric Plaag, Virginia Roseman, and Edie Tugman

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Adrian Tait-Chair, Frank Veno-Vice-Chair, Chris Behrend, Garrett Kight, Michael Mileski, Frida PazMiranda, and Anne Pruitt

PLANNING STAFF PRESENT: Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Brandon Wise-Deputy Director of Planning & Inspections, Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Luis Tafolla-Zoning Code Compliance Official and Alyson Wuagneux-Board Clerk

Call to Order

Mayor Futrelle called the Town Council to order at 6:02 pm. Chair Tait called the Planning Commission to order at the same time. The meeting was held in the Town Council Chambers at 1500 Blowing Rock Road and via WebEx.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Council Member Plaag made a motion to approve the May 19, 2025, Public Hearing minutes as written. Mayor Pro Tem George seconded the motion.

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

The motion passed.

Council Member Roseman arrived (6:04 p.m.).

Commission Member Pruitt made a motion to approve the May 19, 2025, Public Hearing and Planning Commission meeting minutes as written. Commission Member Behrend seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 7
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Case A25-0426 Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future

Boone Next is the Town of Boone's initiative to update its comprehensive plan, serving as both the process and the final document for guiding future growth and development. Upon adoption, Boone Next will establish a shared vision for the town's long-term growth, outlining key goals, strategies, and action steps to inform policy decisions and town initiatives. Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future is being presented for adoption in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. §160D-501.

Planning and Inspections Staff (Shook, Mitchell, and Wise) presented a detailed review of the Boone Next process and the draft plan (permanently attached). The presentation covered the key aspects of the Boone Next initiative and draft plan. During the presentation Mr. Wise went over some changes that need to be made to the plan including:

- Typographical errors (grammar and spelling)
- Move Focus Areas out of the Appendix to the last chapter
- Update the acknowledgement page
- Adding photos (as presented) to the Downtown Edge, Walkable Mixed-Use, Undesignated Secondary Growth, and Parks and Open Space land use types
- Make changes that were missed on the Future Land Use Map (as presented)

At the end of the presentation, Ms. Shook extended her sincere thanks to the following: residents, neighbors, and community partners who participated during the plan process; Town Staff with a special thank you to the Public Works Department and Laney Wise; the other Town Boards that were invited to participate including the Board of Adjustment, the Cultural Resources Advisory Board, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Human Relations Commission, and the Sustainability Committee; the consultant team, including Nate Baker with LOI (formerly Quantum) and Kristy Carter and Teresa Buckwalter with McAdams (formerly TPD); the Town Council, the Planning Commission, and Town Attorney for their support, guidance, and engagement and to the Planning and Inspection team, especially Jessica and Brandon for their commitment to the project. She indicated that the presentation was concluded and turned the meeting over to the Town Council and Planning Commission for discussion.

Mayor Futrelle thanked staff and everyone at Planning and Inspections. He emphasized the need for a forward-thinking vision to navigate the changes in Boone and the importance of a comprehensive approach to help the community move forward. Futrelle praised Town Council's insight and the diligent work of the town in engaging community members and gathering their opinions. Mayor Futrelle noted that Boone Next was a dynamic, thoughtful, and practical guide to growth while balancing economic opportunities with the town's character in mind. He noted the plan lays out a clear roadmap for strategic land use, modernized infrastructure, affordable housing, and smart growth, and aims to build a prosperous and inclusive Boone for generations to come. He expressed his gratitude and noted he was looking forward to the final discussions and approval of the plan.

Council Member Plaag expressed gratitude to the town staff for their hard work and dedication, particularly highlighting the efforts of the Planning Department in keeping the project on track despite interruptions over the past year, including Hurricane Helene. Council Member Plaag requested a caption for the image on page 26 of Boone specifying the details to be included in the caption to ensure proper credit and historical context.

Council Member Plaag also raised a concern about the term "campus" used as one of the land use types and suggest that it might be misunderstood by the public as referring solely to Appalachian State University-owned properties. He clarified that the term "campus" includes properties used by the university as well as other institutions like the hospital, which represent a campus-like environment and

recommended making this distinction clear in the document to avoid confusion. After brief discussion it was suggested that using the term "institutional campus" was a more precise alternative to "campus".

Council Member Tugman echoed the gratitude expressed by the Mayor and Council Member Plaag. Council Member Tugman noted the enjoyable and educational nature of the process, emphasizing how the consultants and staff made it interesting and fun for those who were not familiar with planning, zoning, and comprehensive plans. She indicated that she appreciated the patience and thorough guidance provided throughout the process.

Mayor Pro Tem George expressed gratitude for the patience and hard work of everyone involved in the process and highlighted the evolution of the town's vision from the 2006 plan to the current Boone Next plan, noting the significant differences and improvements. Mayor Pro Tem George noted he appreciated being part of the process and looked forward to the public comment and discussion. He also emphasized the importance of the focus areas across town, which are key to Boone's growth and evolution and noted the areas represent opportunities to get things right or wrong, and their development is crucial for the town's future. He acknowledged the town's investment in these focus areas and the valuable conversations that have taken place.

Council Member Roseman recognized the importance of involving various entities, businesses, homes, and communities in the planning process. She expressed gratitude for those who came forward to give their opinions and voices, highlighting the immeasurable value of their input. She encouraged everyone to review the plan thoroughly, noting that it could shape the future of Boone. Council Member Roseman acknowledged the contributions of former Council Member Nenow, who advocated for 15-minute walkable communities and helped focus efforts on key corridors.

Council Member Roseman raised a concern about the median bioswale depicted in the plan, expressing worry about its effectiveness in flood-prone areas and asked for clarification on its inclusion. Brief discussion ensued as to the appropriateness of the use of bioswales.

Council Member Carter echoed the sentiments expressed by Council Member Tugman, highlighting the enjoyable and engaging nature of the planning process. He mentioned that certain activities, like the land use mapping, made the process exciting. He emphasized the importance of understanding the timeline and the work that went into the process. He noted that he appreciated the visionary approach of Boone Next, contrasting it with the town's previous reactionary stance and expressed excitement about making changes and going through the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to make it align with the new plan.

Mayor Futrelle asked the Planning Commission if they had any comments.

Chair Tait emphasized the comprehensive nature of the Boone Next plan, highlighting its vision for the future and the significant amount of public input that went into crafting the goals and vision. He expressed encouragement of the plan's focus on various aspects such as traffic and stormwater management, and the potential for the town's development in the coming decades. He concluded by expressing excitement and encouragement about the Boone Next plan and commending Ms. Shook and the team for their hard work and cohesive effort.

Commission Member Behrend noted that she learned a lot during the Boone Next process and was really happy and impressed with the work done.

Vice-Chair Veno noted that he was on his third term on the Planning Commission and the work on Boone Next was some of the most exciting work he had done so far. He thanked everyone, especially the Planning and Inspections Department. He noted he was really impressed with the team who forged the plan after Hurricane Helene, which he described as earth-shattering. He noted he felt reassured by the team's ability to pivot and present a future-oriented plan and noted he also appreciated how the plan addressed the unpredictability of climate change and commended the team's efforts in this regard.

There being no other comments from the Council or the Planning Commission, the Mayor opened up Public Comment after providing a brief review of the Town's public comment policies.

Sara Crouch, representing the Watauga Housing Council, expressed appreciation for the Town Council's commitment to addressing affordable housing needs. She highlighted the importance of affordable housing as a critical factor for Boone's future and recommended setting specific targets for additional affordable rental units with measurable objectives and time frames. She also emphasized the need for creative financing, increased infrastructure, and specific incentives to encourage redevelopment and support affordable housing projects.

James Milner expressed appreciation for the community's collaborative efforts in developing the comprehensive plan. He emphasized the importance of aligning the UDO with the new comprehensive plan, highlighting that density bonuses need real incentives and a fast-track ordinance to support them. He also stressed that zoning must follow the vision and not delay smart development proposals. He also pointed out the need for an actual economic development plan, including a clear tax-based growth strategy, defined target industry sectors, and a business attraction toolkit. He concluded by stating that the plan should be a foundation not as a fortress to deny development.

Brad Farrington expressed his appreciation for the neighborhood distinctions within the plan and noted he was pleased with the upcoming good neighbor program. He recommended that A.2 in the plan be modified to be more inclusive of other neighborhood conservation districts who also face the same problems as the Junaluska area.

David Jackson, representing the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, expressed appreciation for the community's collaborative efforts in developing the plan. He emphasized the importance of the Council's leadership and decision-making, especially in the current political climate. He acknowledged the hard work of the staff, consultants, and community members involved in the process. Mr. Jackson stated the need to operationalize the plan and bring new ideas to the community. He also stressed the importance of community accountability to ensure the plan's success and avoid the fate of the previous 2030 plan. He encouraged the Council to communicate the wins and progress made, emphasizing that not everything in the plan is a quick fix. He concluded by appreciating the inclusion of the arts economy in the economic development outline.

Andy Hill, representing MountainTrue, expressed gratitude for the wonderful process of developing the new comprehensive plan. He noted he appreciated the thoughtful, aspirational, inclusive, and timely nature of the plan, noting the importance of pausing during the process to ensure nothing was missed. He praised the town's sustainability measures and the plan's creative and proactive approach to funding sources for implementing stormwater programs. He also noted he appreciated the appendix and the implementation strategies, though he suggested adding more specificity.

Michelle Dineen, representing the Watauga County Farmers Market, thanked the town for recognizing the market's importance in the Boone Next plan. She appreciated the plan's goal to promote the market as a community destination and its connection to local food systems, economic vitality, and public spaces and noted she looked forward to continued partnership with the town to ensure the market remains vibrant and well-supported.

There being no more public comment, Mayor Futrelle resumed discussion with the Council and the Planning Commission.

Council Member Plaag noted that he took what Mr. Jackson said about looking for the wins to heart and noted that it was important. He suggested that the Council consider a retreat in one month of adoption to discuss next steps and to prioritize action.

Mayor Pro Tem George noted that he appreciated everyone who spoke during public comment. He noted that that Council had been discussing inclusionary housing and UDO alignment so he appreciated the comments on those topics and noted the Council will continue to work with Planning staff to continue the work necessary to achieve the plan vision.

Council Member Roseman echoed Council Member's Plaag's request for a meeting to work on priorities after the plan's adoption. She noted that some of the public comments focused on infrastructure and noted that it would be a big decision. She encouraged those who lived in the focus areas to consider annexation to assist with the growth of the town and its infrastructure.

Council Member Carter agreed with Council Member Plaag about looking for the wins and noted the Town was not always great about communicating the wins. He also was supportive of measurable objectives and timelines and again expressed his desire to begin work on the UDO to bring it into alignment with the plan. He agreed the plan was a foundation and not a fortress and noted he understood the concern regarding past planning efforts. He noted the plan was a living document and would need continued input from the community and everyone working together to achieve plan goals.

Chair Tait asked if there was a timeline for the next steps and what it would look like. Ms. Shook noted that work on making UDO revisions to align it with the plan had already begun and noted that a text amendment to allow flexibility within the conditional district process was already scheduled for July. She noted that for the timeline that Council would need to set priorities and then dedicate resources to those priorities.

Vice-Chair Veno noted that previously the Planning Commission's involvement in this type of work had been discussed and noted his interest in participating in these types of meetings. Council indicated that they agreed that the Planning Commission should be involved. Brief discussion ensued as to upcoming work sessions already scheduled with Council.

Mayor Futrelle asked if there were any other comments from the Planning Commission or Council.

Commission Member Paz Miranda noted that this was her first meeting and wanted to emphasize that the Town should focus on affordable housing, citing the devastating loss of dwellings after Hurricane Helene. She discussed how the area she lived had been impacted and was interested in seeing actionable steps taken to address the concerns. A brief discussion ensued as to affordable housing efforts in the town.

Commission Member Mileski also noted this was his first meeting and noted that as part of the board application process, he looked at both the current plan and Boone Next and noted that there was a ninety-degree difference in that the policies follow the values. He voiced his appreciation for the inclusion of green infrastructure and noted his hopes that both work on green infrastructure and affordable housing would go hand in hand.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the Town's authority in planning and zoning, as well as current and proposed limitations.

Adjournment of Town Council

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Tim Futrelle, Mayor

Jane Shook, Director

Adrian Tait, Planning Commission Chair

PLANNING COMMISSION

Chair Tait called a break in the meeting from 7:50 pm until 8:00 pm.

Case A25-0426 Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future

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Chair Tait reviewed the Planning Commission's next steps in making a recommendation to the two new Planning Commission members.

Brief discussion ensued as to the required votes. Ms. Shook noted that statutorily the vote to approve the comprehensive plan was the same as to amend the UDO, which requires the Council to vote on both

comprehensive plan consistency and reasonableness. She noted that the prompts were similar, but the references were changed from the UDO to the comprehensive plan.

Commission Member Pruitt noted that the plan was fantastic and that in her opinion should be broad and not into the specific details as had been suggested during public comment. She noted the plan should serve as the blueprint for detailed tasks and priorities that come after plan adoption.

Brief discussion ensued as to the timeline of plan adoption, which has been scheduled for June 25, 2025, and what would be the next steps. Ms. Shook confirmed that one of the next steps would be to schedule a joint meeting with the Council and the Planning Commission for an initial discussion on priorities.

After a brief discussion, there was consensus that the Planning Commission had no further changes to recommend beyond those discussed at the public hearing, as presented by Staff.

A brief discussion ensued regarding which current plan policies should be referenced in the motion.

First Motion and Vote: Commission Member Behrend made a motion, that Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future, with the changes as discussed at the public hearing, is consistent with the Town's current 2006 comprehensive plan and any other adopted plans of the Town that are applicable because of:

2.1.1 Economic Development

- A. The Town shall protect and enhance a high quality of life, image, cultural amenities, and natural beauty as the most effective, long-term component of an economic development strategy.

2.3 THE COMMUNITY

- A. Urban type development within the Urban Growth Area shall meet appropriate Town standards.

2.3.4 Public Involvement

- A. Public involvement shall be encouraged in decisions concerning land use and development by making the public aware of proposed developments at the earliest opportunity, as well as fostering communication among developers, the Town, the County, the University, and the general public.
- B. Neighborhood and special area planning shall be encouraged to foster public involvement in the production of closely tailored, action oriented special area plans and programs.
- D. Special committees, advisory panels, educational forums, public workshops, leadership seminars, town meetings and media contacts shall be encouraged and fostered to enhance the effectiveness of citizen involvement in community planning and action.

Commission Member Pruitt seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 7
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Second Motion and Vote: Commission Member Pruitt made a motion that the Planning Commission recommends approval of Ordinance A25-0426 within Exhibit A and believes approval is reasonable and in the public interest because Boone Next supports infrastructure planning, has clear vision and goals, guides development and land use, encourages economic development, protects natural and cultural resources and provides legal and policy foundations and improves access to grants and funding. Commission Member Behrend seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 7
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Adjournment

Commission Member Kight motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Commission Member Pruitt seconded the motion.

Vote: Aye – 7
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Adrian Tait, Planning Commission Chair

Jane Shook, Director