

**MINUTES – TOWN COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 25, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 5:08 p.m. on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at the Boone Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Dalton George presided. Town Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Todd Carter (remote), Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait (entered the meeting at 5:17 p.m.), and Anne Pruitt. Town Staff present included Interim Town Manager/Human Resources Director Dale Presnell, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Grants Coordinator/Communications Laney Wise, Planning Director Jane Shook, Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Finance Director Guy Miller, Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager George Santucci, Human Resources Specialist Linda Council, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, and Town Attorney Allison Meade.

**SWEARING-IN CEREMONY**

Council Member Anne Pruitt was sworn in and seated.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

A brief moment of silence was observed.

**TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION**

Upon a motion by Council Member Plaag, seconded by Council Member Roseman, Council voted to approve the agenda as presented.

**WORK SESSION**

Council Member Plaag reported that complaints had been brought to his attention regarding booting activity along Howard Street. He stated that he personally walked the corridor and observed multiple parking lots that did not appear to comply with the Town's ordinance. He indicated that photographs were taken and shared with Interim Town Manager Presnell. Council Member Plaag further noted that discussions had occurred between himself, Mr. Presnell, Ms. Meade, and Police Chief Duckworth, and that a formal response from the Chief would be forthcoming.

Council Member Plaag also reported significant discussion on social media regarding booting enforcement. He stated that members of the public had begun sending messages directly to his spouse and that there appeared to be widespread concern within the community regarding current practices.

Ms. Meade clarified that parking lots were not required to comply with the ordinance unless towing or booting enforcement was actively occurring on the property. However, Ms. Meade expressed concern the ordinance language was very difficult and made it unfairly challenging for police officers to interpret. Ms. Meade suggested that the ordinance should be simplified and that

enforcement expectations placed upon police officers should be more reasonable and clearly defined.

Council Member Roseman stated that, over the past two weeks, four individuals had approached her at work to discuss concerns about booting. Both Council Members Roseman and Plaag recounted specific instances shared by community members involving disputes with the local booting company, including weather-related issues and snow-covered parking lines that allegedly contributed to violations.

Next, Council Member Roseman reported that she had forwarded an email from Marrena Greer with the Southern Appalachian Historical Association (SAHA) to staff regarding potential remaining funds from the \$2.4 million in state funding previously allocated to the project. She noted concerns about the paving of the vendor parking area, specifically an approximately 8-inch pavement drop-off, and suggested that any potential surplus funds could be directed toward addressing it. She added that SAHA staff had also previously raised safety concerns about the drop-off and potholes in the lower parking lot of the Daniel Boone Native Gardens (DBNG). Council Member Roseman stated that she had photographs documenting these conditions, which were included in the email sent to staff.

Council Member Roseman suggested that the Cultural Resources Advisory Board (CRAB) could collaborate with the entities in the park that use the parking lots to conduct appropriate due diligence and advise on needed repairs. She further stated that she would like to see a clear accounting of how the state funds had been expended.

Council Member Plaag stated that his understanding was that paving of the upper lot had been identified as a priority within the allocation of state funds. He expressed concern that, if the paving had not been completed satisfactorily, that portion of the project should be considered incomplete. Council Member Plaag stated that the Town should complete the originally allocated project components before moving on to additional improvements. While acknowledging that the lower lot required repaving and that other safety issues were present, he noted that those items had not been included in the original state funding allocation. He also expressed discomfort with Town advisory committees that are not quasi-judicial bodies making determinations regarding the expenditure of Town funds.

Council Member Roseman clarified that any involvement by CRAB would be advisory in nature only. She further stated that the paving had been extended to the back pole as indicated in the funding scope and, technically, the paving component had been completed in accordance with the allocation.

Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed agreed that the amphitheater area and lower parking lot required paving improvements and noted that such work would likely cost tens of thousands of dollars. In contrast, he stated that addressing the pavement drop-off issue would likely cost only a couple of thousand dollars.

Public Works Director Todd Moody provided an overview of project expenditures to date. He stated that approximately \$600,000 had been allocated for paving, \$150,000 for the Hickory Ridge Homestead sidewalk, and that restroom construction costs were approximately \$1.6 million. He

further explained that the Town had negotiated approximately \$400,000 in reductions from the construction contract. Remaining costs included architectural fees and an anticipated change order related to rock encountered during construction, which would be presented the following month. Mr. Moody estimated that paving the lower parking lot would cost approximately \$175,000. By comparison, he noted that the amount of gravel needed to address issues at the vendor area of the Farmers' Market would be relatively minimal, estimated at only a couple of thousand dollars, and agreed with Mr. Freed that the two items were not directly comparable. He concluded that, if funds remained after final project reconciliation, staff could return to Council for direction regarding their use. Council Member Plaag suggested using Town funding to cover a portion of the gravel cost for the vendor spot repairs if there were no leftover funds from the state.

Council Members Plaag and Tait suggested that any additional concerns from park entities be reserved for discussion at the upcoming summit scheduled for next month.

### **APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS**

Upon a motion by Council Member Roseman, seconded by Council Member Tait, Council voted unanimously to approve the following:

1. Proclamation – Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month
2. Resolution – Fair Housing Month

Mayor George read the following proclamation into the record:

### **PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH AS BLEEDING DISORDERS AWARENESS MONTH**

**WHEREAS**, I, Dalton George, Mayor of the Town of Boone, am proud to proclaim March 2026 as Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month in Boone; and

**WHEREAS**, this designation builds upon federal recognition of March as “Hemophilia Awareness Month” beginning in 1986 and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ designation of March 2016 as National Bleeding Disorders Month; and

**WHEREAS**, bleeding disorders, including hemophilia, von Willebrand Disease, and rare bleeding disorders, impair the body’s ability to form proper blood clots, causing prolonged bleeding after injury, surgery, trauma, or menstruation, and potentially resulting in serious illness or death if untreated; and

**WHEREAS**, this Awareness Month will increase public understanding of inherited bleeding disorders affecting millions worldwide and highlight advances in treatment, research, and the pursuit of cures; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bleeding Disorders Foundation of North Carolina will recognize March 1, 2026, as von Willebrand Disease Awareness Education Day and March 15, 2026, as Ultra Rare Bleeding Disorders Awareness Education Day; and

**WHEREAS**, this observance will strengthen community connections, promote engagement, and help prevent illness, unnecessary medical procedures, and disability;

**NOW, THEREFORE,** I, Dalton George, Mayor of the Town of Boone, North Carolina, do hereby proclaim March 2026 as BLEEDING DISORDERS AWARENESS MONTH in the Town of Boone.

This is the 25<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dalton George, Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_(SEAL)  
Nicole Harmon, Clerk

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Council Member Plaag read the following resolution into the record:

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING  
NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH**

**WHEREAS,** April marks the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which sought to eliminate discrimination in housing opportunities and to affirmatively further housing choices for all Americans; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town of Boone desires that all its citizens be afforded the opportunity to attain a decent, safe, and sound living environment; and

**WHEREAS,** individuals in the State of North Carolina have the right to choose where to live without discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, handicapped status, or familial status; and

**WHEREAS,** the State of North Carolina enacted the North Carolina State Fair Housing Act in 1983;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Town of Boone does hereby join in the national celebration by proclaiming April 2026 as Fair Housing Month.

Adopted by the Boone Town Council on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

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Mayor George called for a break at 5:39 p.m. Council reconvened at 6:00 p.m.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor George gave a brief overview of public comment rules and announced that each speaker would have 5 minutes.

Hannah Woodburn of MountainTrue spoke against establishing data centers in Boone and supported a proposed moratorium. She stated concerns regarding the potential negative impacts associated with data centers, specifically citing the substantial power and water usage such facilities require.

Andy Hill was listed on the sign-up sheet but was not present to speak.

Bettie Bond of Boone spoke regarding Digital Watauga and her efforts to help ensure the program's continuation. She provided a brief history of the program and noted that the Watauga County Public Library had provided a space for the group to meet and offered support from its staff. She commended the Town's Planning staff and emphasized the importance of Digital Watauga to the community and the Town of Boone. Ms. Bond suggested that the program be incorporated into the Town government and housed at the historic downtown Post Office. She encouraged Council to remember the program's importance in future decision-making.

Adelia Daily, a student participant in Digital Watauga, spoke in support of establishing a Town Historian position. Adelia highlighted Council Member Plaag's leadership and involvement in the program and expressed concern that Digital Watauga's current structure was not sustainable. Adelia stated that there was a significant need for additional physical and digital space and suggested that the Planning and Inspections Department could benefit from creating a Town Historian position.

Alex Edgerton of Boone spoke in support of the proposed data center moratorium. She expressed concerns about the impact of data centers on local infrastructure, particularly given the ongoing effects of Hurricane Helene. She stated that such facilities could have devastating consequences, including strain on limited water supplies and potential displacement of residents.

### **APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA**

Upon a motion by Council Member Plaag, seconded by Council Member Tait, Council voted unanimously to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

1. Agreement – NCDOT and Town of Boone for TIP #EB-5979
2. Agreements for On-Call Engineering Services (Kimley-Horn, McGill, Municipal, Rummel, Lepper & Kahl, Summit Design, & Davis, Martin, Powell)
3. Budget Amendment

|     |                         |                    |             |
|-----|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| To: | Boonerang Contributions | 010-000-000-482206 | \$15,000.00 |
|-----|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|

|       |                              |                    |               |
|-------|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| From: | Appropriated Fund<br>Balance | 010-000-000-499900 | (\$15,000.00) |
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Explanation: To appropriate funds for Boonerang sponsorship per Council approval at the 01/14/2026 meeting.

## **REQUESTED APPEARANCES**

### **Informal Discussion of Proposed Hotel & Conference Center At 2748 Highway 105**

Justin Patel with Panoramic Hospitality gave a brief presentation on a proposed hotel and conference center off Highway 105 that is currently used as a hotel, go-kart track, and cabin rentals. Council Member Plaag expressed support for the proposed park-and-ride component of the project but raised concerns regarding traffic impacts along Poplar Grove Road and U.S. 105. Council Member Plaag suggested that the development team direct as much traffic as possible onto Homespun Hills Road instead of Poplar Grove for entrance and exit from the hotel to minimize impacts to U.S. 105, subject to coordination and approval from NCDOT. Mr. Patel agreed that this would be his preference, but noted that the proposal utilized Poplar Grove because of existing egresses and concern that NCDOT would not be supportive of installing a signal at Homespun Hills. He also referenced the former “superstreet” proposal for the corridor and stated that those prior discussions would be taken into consideration as the project moved forward.

Council Member Roseman expressed concerns about potential flooding impacts from the development. Mr. Patel stated that the project would include underground stormwater containment systems and that there would be no additional water runoff from the property. Council Member Roseman also expressed concern regarding the height of the proposed four-story hotel. Mr. Patel responded that no neighboring properties would have visibility of the top of the hotel and that the structure would be constructed at the existing elevation of Highland Hills Avenue. He noted that there were already multiple structures in the area of a similar scale. He added that, if the Town viewed the proposal favorably, additional architectural drawings would be presented. He further stated that the project would incorporate significant plantings and vegetation.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter stated that he was pleased to see the project proposed, noting that a conference center was needed in Boone. He stated that the development would fit well within the area, that he was not concerned with the proposed layout, and that the facility would see substantial local use. He further described the project as serving as a potential gateway to Boone.

Council Member Roseman stated that she agreed that a conference center would benefit the community, but reiterated concerns about impacts on homes along Highland Avenue. Mr. Patel responded that the development group owned all of the houses on Highland Avenue. He also stated that creek restoration efforts were planned as part of the project and would help mitigate existing flooding issues. He indicated that the development team was open to discussing potentially increasing the size of the convention center if the Town desired.

Council Member Tait stated that the project appeared to be moving in the right direction, particularly with respect to the stepping of the site. He commented that, based on the initial renderings, the project could be a significant and visually appealing addition to the area. He noted that the traffic study indicated that conferences would likely adjourn around 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. during weekdays, which could create traffic management needs. Mr. Patel responded that the development team would be open to hiring off-duty police officers to assist with traffic control during peak departure times, if necessary, and would work with NCDOT to explore installing additional traffic lights, etc.

#### **Monica Caruso – Watauga County Public Library**

Ms. Caruso gave the annual update for the Watauga County Public Library and expressed support for the proposed town historian position.

#### **James Milner – Appalachian Commercial Real Estate**

Mr. Milner expressed appreciation to Town staff for their assistance throughout the process and stated that he was present on behalf of his client in connection with a Conditional District (CD) application submitted late last year. He noted that the last two scheduled Planning Commission/Public Hearings had been cancelled and asked Council to consider the economic impact that such cancellations have on applicants. He requested that, when cancellations occur, Council consider providing alternative meeting dates at the time notice is given so that applicants may better prepare.

He stated that his client had been searching for an appropriate site for approximately 3 years and was eager to move forward with the process. He acknowledged frustration among all parties and indicated that his comments were intended to raise awareness and help prevent similar issues in the future. He suggested considering alternative meeting options during the winter months to allow applicants to plan accordingly.

Mayor George responded that the recent cancellations were due to inclement weather and were made to ensure members of the public had a reasonable opportunity to attend. He stated that Council would work to determine how it could be helpful in facilitating the process while maintaining public access.

Council Member Tait stated that the cancellations were unfortunate but had prompted internal discussions regarding how such situations might be handled in the future.

Council Member Plaag noted that board members serve in a volunteer capacity and maintain full-time employment in addition to their service. He stated that the number of meetings held each year had doubled and emphasized that weather-related cancellations are beyond the Town's control. He asked that applicants remain mindful of the volunteer commitment of board members. Council Member Plaag further stated that Council could consider the possibility of scheduling backup meeting dates in the event of weather cancellations, but expressed hesitation due to the additional demands already placed on members.

Mr. Milner explained that he, too, was a former member of the Board of Adjustment and stated that he understood the nature of public service. However, he expressed the opinion that boards should

not be prevented from conducting business due to inclement weather and encouraged the Town to take a proactive approach. He stated that if business needed to be conducted, it should occur as soon as reasonably possible.

Council Member Roseman inquired whether virtual meetings could be utilized in such circumstances. Ms. Meade responded that virtual meetings had been permitted during the COVID-19 pandemic pursuant to statutory allowances at that time. However, she stated that there is currently ambiguity regarding the legality of remote meetings outside of declared emergencies. She noted that the UNC School of Government has advised that taking official action remotely under current law would be legally risky. Ms. Meade further stated that the General Assembly has been specific in granting such authority only when a state of emergency has been declared.

Mr. Milner concluded by reiterating his gratitude to Council and staff for their service and for the opportunity to express his concerns regarding the recent cancellations.

## **PLANNING MATTERS**

### **Board of Adjustment Chair**

Council Member Roseman nominated David Welsh to serve as Board of Adjustment Chair and Benjamin Ray to serve as Vice-Chair. Council Member Tait seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **Consideration of Case A26-0073 Satellite Annexation Petition – Town of Boone**

Ms. Shook presented the Town of Boone's request for satellite annexation of 15.523 acres on Highway 421 for the new Public Works facility. Council Member Plaag inquired about any existing nonconformities to which Ms. Shook responded that the property is currently vacant.

Council Member Roseman made a motion to move forward with approval of the Resolution of Intent as presented and to annex property as a B3 zoning district. Council Member Plaag seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **COUNCIL MATTERS**

### **Continued Discussion Regarding Town Manager Hiring Process**

Dr. Patricia Mitchell was present while Ms. Meade introduced a proposed contract for professional services related to the Town Manager search and stated that the agreement had been reviewed by Dr. Mitchell. Ms. Meade explained that the contract outlined the scope of services to be provided, including management of the recruitment process, recommendations regarding appropriate job posting sites, responsibility for posting the position, and engagement in additional independent advertising efforts.

Ms. Meade further noted that Dr. Mitchell had expressed her intent to donate the \$35,000 contract amount to Appalachian State University. The agreement provided that the contract would be at-will and could be terminated by either party.

Council Member Roseman made a motion to approve the contract between the Town and Dr. Mitchell for Town Manager search services as presented. Council Member Tait seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mayor George suggested issuing a press release announcing the formal approval of the contract and the kick-off of the search for Town Manager.

Dr. Mitchell stated that once the position was officially posted, she would begin contacting members of her professional network in Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina, including outreach to former students and colleagues. She stated that she would then develop a proposed calendar outlining anticipated interview dates. She indicated that the position would remain posted for at least six weeks or until filled.

### **Discussion Regarding Data Center Moratorium**

Mayor George presented a request for discussion regarding a moratorium on data centers. He noted that the intent was to be proactive in addressing the potential impacts such facilities could have on the community and environment. He referenced the Town of Canton's recently adopted moratorium on data centers as an example. Andy Hill from MountainTrue was invited to speak.

Andy Hill, representing MountainTrue, expressed concern regarding the impacts of data centers and stated that such facilities provide no direct benefit to the local community. He thanked Council for considering preventative measures and offered MountainTrue's assistance in evaluating potential impacts and developing regulations.

Council Member Plaag stated that he was astonished by the amount of farmland in other areas being converted to other uses in recent years and expressed concern regarding the significant water consumption associated with data centers. He noted that some facilities use coolant systems rather than water and questioned how such coolants are disposed of at the end of their lifecycle.

Mr. Hill responded that data centers require tremendous amounts of electricity and water. He stated that chemical cooling systems are neither fiscally nor environmentally sustainable solutions, explaining that such chemicals are often mixed with water and can pollute groundwater and eventually reach surface waters. He emphasized that the region's clean, cool water resources make it particularly vulnerable. He further noted that discharge from data centers can include superheated water, which could negatively impact aquatic ecosystems, recreational fishing, tourism, and the local brewing industry. He stated that Boone's economy is robust and diverse and that the Town should prioritize protecting the natural resources that form the foundation of that economy.

Council Member Roseman noted that Canton had adopted a twelve-month moratorium and asked whether a longer moratorium would be permissible. Mayor George stated that he would support pursuing a one-year moratorium.

Ms. Shook clarified that data centers are not currently defined within the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). She explained that a temporary moratorium would provide time to study the

issue, prepare draft ordinance amendments, and conduct the required statutorily noticed public hearing.

Ms. Meade stated that data centers are presently permitted as manufacturing uses within the M-1 zoning district. She further explained that, due to legislation enacted by the General Assembly in the previous year, staff would not be able to propose eliminating the use from the M-1, as that would constitute prohibited down-zoning. However, the Town could adopt additional standards and regulations governing the use, which currently do not exist. She stated that the moratorium process would provide an opportunity to develop those standards thoughtfully.

Council Member Plaag made a motion to direct staff to begin the process of researching and preparing a proposed one-year moratorium, with a public hearing tentatively scheduled for March 23, to allow further study by staff and the Town Attorney, and to develop appropriate standards for the use. Council Member Roseman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mayor George thanked Council for its consideration and expressed appreciation to staff for their research efforts.

Council Member Pruitt inquired whether there had been any conversations with Watauga County regarding the matter. Mayor George responded that the County had been exploring related infrastructure issues and indicated that the County would likely proceed with similar action if the Town did so. He stated that the County recognized the same concerns expressed by Council.

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

Upon a motion by Council Member Plaag, seconded by Council Member Roseman, Council voted unanimously to enter into closed session at 7:31 p.m. pursuant to the following:

1. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(1), to review, approve, and seal closed session minutes from Council's prior closed session(s).
2. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(3), to consult with the Town Attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the Town Council, and obtain legal advice, consider, and/or give instructions to the attorney concerning one or more potential legal claims.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Without objection, Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

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Nicole Harmon, Town Clerk

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Dalton George, Mayor