

**MINUTES – BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 22, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 5:03 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, in the Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Pro-Tem Todd Carter presided. Council members present included Virginia Roseman, Anne Pruitt, and Adrian Tait. Staff members present included Interim Town Manager/Human Resources Director Dale Presnell, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Grants Coordinator/Communications Laney Wise, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Planning Director Jane Shook, Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise, Finance Director Guy Miller, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager George Santucci, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs (Remote), Advanced Planning Specialist Jessica Mitchell, and Town Attorney Allison Meade.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A brief moment of silence was observed.

WORK SESSION

Councilmember Tait asked for consideration of a request from the Daniel Boone Native Gardens (DBNG) to install fencing along Horn in the West Drive. It was noted that DBNG had previously been approved to proceed with the installation, but that a decision regarding funding had not been made. Councilmember Tait reported that the proposed fence would be a black chain link design, with a total project cost of \$12,850. DBNG proposed contributing one-half of the cost and requested that the Town fund the remaining balance. Mr. Presnell noted that sufficient funds were available within the Council projects budget line to accommodate the request.

Councilmember Roseman stated that she did not support the fence, noting that the Gardens are located within a natural habitat and that the presence of deer should be expected. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed support for the project, citing the organization's ongoing efforts to cultivate and maintain plantings and to provide educational opportunities to the public. Councilmember Pruitt also voiced support, emphasizing the importance of protecting the Gardens' plantings from wildlife damage.

Following a brief discussion, Councilmember Tait moved to provide funding for the DBNG fencing project in the amount of \$6,425, representing the Town's one-half share of the total project cost. Councilmember Pruitt seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Tait, Pruitt, Carter
 Nay: Roseman
 Absent: George

Next, Public Works Director Todd Moody presented an item for discussion regarding the remaining funding for Horn in the West received from the North Carolina General Assembly. Mr. Moody advised that there may be surplus funds remaining and that staff had identified additional eligible improvements, including installation of a safety rail and repairs to the concession stand, which could be completed within the required timeframe. He noted that a change order would be brought forward for Council consideration in May, and that the project must be completed by June, or any unused funds would be returned to the State. Ms. Meade confirmed that the proposed improvements were consistent with the original funding authorization. Councilmember Roseman supported bringing the item back in May and emphasized the importance of addressing safety concerns. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter indicated support for the proposed improvements.

Mr. Moody also provided an update on the Bamboo Road improvement project, noting that NCDOT plans to include a multi-use path along Brookhollow Road. He advised that NCDOT would not assume maintenance responsibility for the path and indicated that, if the Town declined to maintain it, the path would be removed from the project scope. Mr. Moody stated that there would be no upfront cost to the Town, but that the Town would be responsible for ongoing maintenance and future repaving. He further noted that Watauga County had declined to assume responsibility for maintenance. Ms. Meade inquired whether maintenance responsibilities or costs could be split based on jurisdictional boundaries, to which Mr. Moody responded that he was uncertain but could discuss the matter with NCDOT and inquire whether the County would be willing to maintain its portion. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter suggested coordinating with the County Manager, and Mr. Moody agreed to initiate those discussions, noting that the matter required timely consideration, though no formal deadline had been provided.

Additional discussion included the possibility of engaging nearby residents, including those involved with the Harmony Lanes organization, to provide input to the County. Councilmember Roseman inquired whether the property could be annexed. Council members also discussed whether there were existing examples of shared maintenance responsibilities for greenway segments, with Mr. Moody noting that he was not aware of any. In response to a question regarding another NCDOT-installed greenway segment near New Market Center, Mr. Moody confirmed that the Town would also be responsible for maintaining that section.

Councilmember Pruitt presented a proposed scoring sheet for use in evaluating Outside Agency Funding (OAF) applications. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed support for the tool, noting concerns following recent training that some applicants may misunderstand

OAF as a discretionary or unrestricted funding source. He emphasized that funding must be awarded in accordance with applicable statutory and constitutional requirements. Councilmember Roseman agreed, stating that the scoring sheet would help ensure a fair and consistent process and reduce the perception of awards being based on popularity.

Council members discussed whether limitations should be placed on the number of years an organization may receive funding. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter noted that such considerations must remain consistent with statutory authority. Councilmember Pruitt indicated that the relevant considerations had already been incorporated into the proposed scoring criteria. Ms. Meade advised that the Town may not make funding commitments beyond a single fiscal year. In response to a question from Councilmember Roseman regarding transparency, Ms. Meade noted that applicants are not required to be informed of the scoring methodology. Councilmember Pruitt stated that the scoring sheet should be used as a guiding tool rather than a strict formula. Council members expressed appreciation for Ms. Pruitt's work in developing the document. Ms. Meade further clarified that OAF decisions remain within Council's legislative discretion, and while a scoring tool may be helpful, each Council member retains the authority to evaluate applications independently.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter reported that he and Mayor George have discussed implementing a Town-wide AI policy. He noted that they had met with Mr. Presnell to draft a policy on AI usage.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter declared a break at 5:51 p.m. Council reconvened at 6:01 p.m.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

Councilmember Roseman made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilmember Tait seconded, and the motion carried.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Tait, Pruitt, Carter
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Councilmember Roseman read the following resolution into the record and expressed thanks to the Human Relations Commission for its help in drafting the document:

Sexual Assault Awareness Month Resolution

WHEREAS, since 2001, April has been federally observed as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), calling attention to the facts that sexual violence is widespread and impacts all persons in one fashion or another, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Boone and its Council, the Mayor, employees, and citizens alike stand in solidarity to support all individuals who have experienced sexual assault of all kinds; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the people who have suffered criminal assaults, not limited to: rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual advancement, and sexual exploitations are currently at the statistics reported by National Sexual Violence Recovery Center (NSVRC 2023) 53% women, 29% men, 32.9% adults with intellectual disabilities, and 47% of transgender and non-binary people have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives; and

WHEREAS, child sexual abuse is a reality of the world. More than (NSVRC 2018) 20% of the world's children will experience one form or another of sexual abuse by the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, young people, ages twelve to seventeen, experience a heightened rate of sexual assault at the hands of adults or older peers that they know; and

WHEREAS, online cyberbullying and harassment are becoming an increasingly used form of sexual assault and violence for all people across every spectrum, causing instant and widespread mental and emotional damage to its victims; and

NOW, THEREFORE, We, the Town of Boone government officials, will help reinforce our community support groups for sexual assault victims: Boone Police Department, OASIS, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), and Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART), and others.

It is hereby resolved that April 2026 is observed as Sexual Assault Awareness Month by the Town of Boone Council and its Mayor, and we call on all of our fellow citizens to speak out against all forms of sexual assault and to help support our community in assisting victims of these crimes and help provide healing.

Adopted by vote of the Town Council on the 22nd day of April, 2026.

Dalton George, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____(SEAL)

Nicole Harmon, Clerk

Councilmember Tait read the following proclamation into the record:

**PROCLAMATION
TOURETTE SYNDROME AWARENESS DAY**

WHEREAS, Tourette Syndrome is an inherited neurological disorder that is characterized by involuntary physical and vocal tics that occur many times a day; and

WHEREAS, Tourette Syndrome is often accompanied by other mental health disorders such as attention deficit and obsessive-compulsive disorder, learning disabilities, and anxiety; and

WHEREAS, Tourette's syndrome and persistent tic disorders affect 1 in 50 children. More than 22,871 school-age children in the State of North Carolina alone are dealing with Tourette Syndrome, and although some of these cases are aided by medication, there is no standard treatment or known cure for the disorder; and

WHEREAS, there is an important need for more professional help with interest and expertise to identify, counsel, and treat people with Tourette Syndrome, a disorder that is often misdiagnosed and misunderstood; and

WHEREAS, positive actions to assist children and families living with Tourette Syndrome would result from a broadening of public and professional knowledge and acceptance of Tourette Syndrome; and

WHEREAS, the Tourette Association of America is actively providing services to families, educating medical professionals and teachers, and supporting research to better understand the signs and treatments of TS;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that June 4, 2026, will be recognized as "Tourette Syndrome Awareness Day" in Boone, North Carolina, as a special day to promote understanding, compassion, and acceptance for all of our fellow citizens who deserve and need our support to break the stigma that surrounds Tourette Syndrome.

This the 22nd day of April, 2026.

Dalton George, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____(SEAL)
Nicole Harmon, Clerk

Councilmember Roseman made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Pruitt, to approve the following:

- Resolution – Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- Proclamation – Tourette Syndrome Awareness Day

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Pruitt, Carter, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter read the public comment rules about emailed comments and asked speakers to limit comments to three minutes each.

Kelly Reid-Ashcraft, Executive Director of the Watauga Housing Council, addressed the Council regarding housing conditions in Watauga County. Mrs. Ashcraft stated that the organization's mission is to increase the supply of housing and spoke in support of proposed income-restricted housing developments currently under consideration. She presented data indicating that, as of 2026, approximately 66 percent of renters in Watauga County are considered cost-burdened. Mrs. Ashcraft noted a significant lack of available housing options for both renters and prospective homebuyers. She explained that affordability and availability remain the most critical housing challenges in the community, and that while these issues existed prior to Hurricane Helene, the storm has further exacerbated existing conditions. She further referenced a recent study indicating that Watauga County ranks as the least affordable county for housing in North Carolina.

Liz Mason, who resides in Blowing Rock but owns a home adjacent to the proposed site, stated that she has owned the property for approximately 12 years and that it borders the development on two sides. She noted that the property was zoned R-1 at the time of purchase, which was an important factor in her decision. While expressing support for the need for affordable housing, she indicated that she believes the

proposed project is not appropriate for the location. She stated that the surrounding neighborhood is residential in character, primarily consisting of single-story homes, and expressed concern that the proposed four-story development would significantly alter the area's character. She expressed additional concerns, including impacts on privacy, livability, and property values, as well as potential light pollution, increased traffic, and activity in parking areas. She urged Council to consider requiring the preservation of a natural buffer of mature trees, reducing the scale of the development, or identifying alternative locations for affordable housing.

Sean Morris, a Town of Boone resident, member of the Human Relations Commission, and Emergency Shelter Coordinator for Hospitality House, addressed Council in support of the proposed affordable housing development for 55+ residents. Mr. Morris highlighted the community's ongoing need for affordable housing, particularly for low-income elderly residents. He acknowledged concerns related to construction and changes in neighborhood character but noted that the community has historically struggled to meet its housing needs. He further stated that Wynnefield Properties has been a dependable development partner in previous projects he has been involved in and expressed support for moving the project forward.

Carolyn Ward, resident of Chestnut Drive, spoke in opposition to the proposed Chestnut Drive development, noting that she and others in the area have consistently voiced concerns since the project's initial presentation. She urged Council to carefully consider the scale of the project and its impact on the existing R-1 single-family neighborhood, which she described as modest and worth protecting.

Ms. Ward stated that the proposed building would be significantly larger than nearby structures, noting it would exceed the size of the Pinnacle Storage building by approximately 20,000 square feet and rise to over 53 feet in height at four stories. She expressed concern that the building's placement on elevated terrain would cause it to tower over adjacent homes, negatively impact viewsheds, and alter the visual character of the area. Her additional concerns included the proximity of the structure to neighboring homes, the scale and elevation of the associated parking area, and the overall effect of multiple large buildings in close proximity at a prominent entrance to the town.

Ms. Ward further expressed dissatisfaction with the developer's approach, stating that there had been little effort to revise the project to better align with the surrounding neighborhood and to include residents in the planning process. She referenced prior site disturbance, including tree removal, and indicated that remediation efforts had been minimal. While emphasizing that the neighborhood is welcoming and not opposed to affordable or age-restricted housing, she reiterated opposition to the scope and scale of the proposed development and what she described as a lack of responsiveness from the developer.

Ms. Ward suggested that the property could instead be rezoned or developed with smaller-scale residential uses, such as duplexes, townhomes, or one- to two-story structures, which would be more compatible with the surrounding area while still adding to the town's housing supply. She offered to participate in the planning process and encouraged Council to utilize the conditional zoning process as an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and refinement of the proposal. Ms. Ward concluded by urging Council to protect existing neighborhoods while continuing to pursue appropriate solutions to address housing needs.

Ava Gant, a social worker with Hospitality House, addressed Council in support of the proposed Wynnefield development. Ms. Gant emphasized the importance of fair and accessible housing, stating that the project would help address the community's housing crisis. She shared that a significant portion of the individuals she serves at the shelter would meet the eligibility criteria for the proposed housing.

Ms. Gant explained that many of her clients, particularly older adults, face increasing housing instability as they age, often due to the loss of support systems or the onset of health issues that limit their ability to maintain housing. She further noted that federal housing programs, including those administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), often prioritize families with children for housing vouchers, leaving many single adults and elderly individuals with limited options and reliant on shelter services.

While acknowledging community concerns related to development impacts, Ms. Gant stressed that the Chestnut Drive project represents a meaningful opportunity to provide stable housing for some of the community's most vulnerable residents and urged Council to consider its importance in addressing unmet housing needs.

Casey Maslow, OASIS Housing Program Manager, addressed Council in support of the proposed Wynnefield development. Ms. Maslow emphasized that the project represents more than a building, but rather an opportunity to provide stable housing for individuals seeking to remain within their existing community support systems.

Ms. Maslow shared that, over the past year, approximately 37 clients served through OASIS would have qualified for the proposed housing, with the majority experiencing a clear need for stable housing. It was noted that OASIS currently has only five apartments available to serve clients, highlighting the limited availability of resources.

In response to concerns that the development may serve individuals from outside the area, Ms. Maslow stated that there is sufficient local need within Boone to fully occupy the units. She concluded by noting that the project would serve a demographic that is

often overlooked and would provide meaningful benefits to vulnerable members of the community.

Joanne Puliatti, a resident of Chestnut Drive, addressed Council in opposition to the proposed development on her street. Ms. Puliatti stated that she believes the project is not appropriate for the location or the current time. She expressed concern that the proposed housing does not align with local income levels, noting that projected qualifying incomes exceed what many Boone residents earn. She urged Council to consider alternative uses for the property that would be more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Sophia DeCamera, a graduating student at AppState, addressed Council in support of the proposed affordable housing developments. Ms. DeCamera stated that through her work with two housing-focused organizations, she has observed increasing difficulty for individuals to remain in the Boone community due to rising housing costs. She noted that many long-term residents are being priced out of the area despite their contributions to the community.

Ms. DeCamera referenced supporting data and emphasized that developments of this nature provide opportunities for individuals to remain in Watauga County and maintain community ties. She urged Council to consider the needs of vulnerable populations and to support the proposed projects.

Adelia Daly, representing Digital Watauga, addressed Council regarding the organization's work and impact. Ms. Daly explained that her responsibilities include scanning and rehousing archival materials, as well as managing the organization's website and social media platforms. She noted that these efforts have provided significant value to the community by preserving and increasing access to local historical resources.

Ms. Daly stated that Digital Watauga's collections are utilized by a wide range of users, including local businesses, writers, and private individuals seeking historical images and information. She emphasized that the project's impact has been substantial and continues to serve as an important resource for the community.

Ralph Lentz II, Vice President of the Watauga County Historical Society and a member of the Appalachian State University history faculty, addressed Council in support of the Digital Watauga staffing proposal. Mr. Lentz expressed appreciation to the Town of Boone for its continued support of both the Historical Society and Digital Watauga. He also thanked former Councilmember Plaag for his service to the community.

Bettie Bond addressed Council in support of Digital Watauga. Ms. Bond emphasized the importance of the project, noting that much of downtown Boone's revitalization and

cultural uplift has been supported by the availability of its historical resources. She stated that the work is ongoing and continues to provide value to the community, and expressed appreciation for the project's new location at the Post Office.

Virginia Williams, a resident of Chestnut Drive located across from the proposed development, addressed Council in opposition to the project. Ms. Williams stated that she supports the need for affordable housing in Boone, but believes this proposal is not appropriate for the location. She explained that she and her neighbors purchased or constructed their homes with the understanding that the area was zoned R-1 with associated deed restrictions, and that no commercial or large-scale developments would be introduced.

Ms. Williams expressed concern that the proposed four-story building would be incompatible with the surrounding one-story homes and would significantly alter the character of the neighborhood. She indicated that residents feel misled and disheartened by the scale and nature of the proposal. Ms. Williams urged Council to vote against the project based on its incompatibility with the neighborhood, rather than opposition to affordable or age-restricted housing in general.

Camille Zimmerman, a resident of Chestnut Drive, addressed Council virtually in opposition to the proposed development. Ms. Zimmerman expressed frustration with some of the characterization of neighborhood concerns, stating that her opposition is not rooted in wealth or aesthetics, but in practical impacts. She shared that she is unable to work due to health issues, resides with her mother, and expressed concern that the height and scale of the proposed building could block sunlight to her mother's home.

Ms. Zimmerman also questioned the income assumptions associated with the development, noting that the projected qualifying income levels do not reflect the financial realities of many elderly or disabled individuals in the community. She urged Council to consider these factors in evaluating the proposal.

REQUESTED APPEARANCES

Dr. Eric Plaag, Chairperson of the Digital Watauga Project, gave a brief presentation requesting funding to support the project's ongoing operations and to expand its coordination role.

For FY 2026–2027, the request totals \$30,000 and includes two components, including the continuation of \$6,000 in recurring support (previously provided since FY 2018–2019) to offset waived image fees and provide limited historical research for the Town, and \$24,000 to fund approximately 19 weeks of a senior technician to perform Digital Watauga Coordinator duties, including research support.

Dr. Plaag indicated that this request follows prior discussions of a hybrid Town Historian/Digital Watauga Coordinator position. He noted that after Ms. Meade determined that the position could not be structured as a Town employee, Digital Watauga was encouraged to submit a funding request through the Historical Society. He announced that the organization anticipates requesting funding in FY 2027–2028 for a full-time Historian/Coordinator position employed by the Historical Society, with an estimated annual cost of approximately \$75,000.

In addition to the funding request, Dr. Plaag stated that Digital Watauga will complete several projects at no cost to the Town during FY 2026–2027, including the Downtown Boone Walking Tour app and draft historic reports related to Daniel Boone Park and Ice House Alley.

Dr. Plaag reported that potential funding sources would include support from the Tourism Development Authority, adjustments to parking rates and residential permit fees, and contributions from Downtown Boone Development Association MSD funds.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed support for the organization's work and inquired about contributions from other local governments. Dr. Plaag indicated that the current request is focused solely on work performed for the Town of Boone, noting that he has not been approached by other municipalities and does not have the capacity to expand services at this time. He explained that approximately 60–70 percent of Digital Watauga's work is Town-related, and that while the organization's mission is countywide, the proposed coordinator position would primarily support Town needs. He added that if other jurisdictions wished to participate, an additional position would likely be required.

Dr. Plaag noted that Digital Watauga has previously requested funding from Watauga County without success, though the County has recently contributed to other historical initiatives. In response to questions regarding funding structure, he confirmed that the recurring \$6,000 request is effectively in lieu of services provided to the Town, and that while Digital Watauga has not recently done work for other municipalities, it does charge private entities for certain uses. He added that the Blowing Rock Historical Society has provided financial support, and that the organization otherwise relies on private donations and grant funding.

Councilmember Pruitt inquired whether the Town is the sole governmental funding source, to which Dr. Plaag confirmed that it is. Councilmember Tait noted the difficulty of assigning a monetary value to the organization's contributions but acknowledged their benefit to the community, particularly given the loss of other volunteer-based efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilmember Roseman commented on the importance of Digital Watauga and the Historic Preservation Commission in maintaining

the Town’s historical identity, while also expressing uncertainty about prioritizing the full request within the budget. She indicated comfort with the \$6,000 recurring request and the \$24,000 for the current fiscal year, but noted reservations about long-term funding commitments.

Dr. Plaag clarified that the request was not intended for immediate action and should be considered as part of the upcoming budget process. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter noted that the presentation had shifted his perspective and distinguished the \$24,000 request from other staffing considerations. Ms. Meade advised that any proposed funding sources discussed would need to be reviewed for legal compliance prior to implementation.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA

Upon a motion by Councilmember Roseman and seconded by Councilmember Pruitt, Council voted to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

1. Resolution – Endangered Species Day
2. Budget Amendments
3. Minutes
 - a. Town Council Special Meeting January 9, 2026 (Planning Retreat)
 - b. Town Council Regular Meeting April 8, 2026

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Pruitt, Carter, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

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RESOLUTION Designating May 15, 2025, as “Endangered Species Day”

Whereas, plants and wildlife provide incalculable services for humankind, including health, cultural, economic, recreational, and spiritual benefits, among others;
Whereas, in the United States and around the world, thousands of species are recognized as at risk of extinction now or in the foreseeable future, and many more are experiencing declines in populations and future viability;
Whereas, the United States has prioritized the conservation and recovery of imperiled species by enacting the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and other landmark conservation statutes;
Whereas, conservation and protection efforts implemented under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 have successfully prevented the extinction of 99 percent of species designated as threatened or endangered;
Whereas, this year’s theme for Endangered Species Day is "Celebrating America’s Wildlife Comeback Stories," with iconic species like the Bald Eagle benefiting from recovery due to the ESA;

Whereas, North Carolina is home to a number of endangered and threatened species, all of which deserve to thrive in their native habitats;

Whereas Boone has been heavily invested in the restoration of waterways and conservation efforts, preserving habitat for threatened species like the Eastern Hellbender;

Whereas the protection and recovery of species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 is a remarkable success that should be celebrated;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Town of Boone designates May 15th, 2026, as Endangered Species Day and encourages the Town and its citizens to work towards the conservation of endangered and threatened species everywhere;

Be it further resolved that the Town of Boone sends a copy to our U.S House Representative, Dr. Foxx, and Senators Tillis and Budd, showing appreciation for the federal tools provided for conservation;

Adopted by vote of the Town Council on the 22nd day of April, 2026.

Dalton George, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____(SEAL)
Nicole Harmon, Clerk

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Cultural Resources:

TO:	CR Boonerang	010-418-000-549139	\$167,578
FROM:	Boonerang-Contributions/Donations	010-000-000-482206	\$167,578

Explanation: Sponsorship money for Boonerang Music & Arts Festival.

Public Works:

TO:	Capital Outlay-Hunting Hills Bridge	010-600-403-574201	\$576,349.00
FROM:	NCDOT	010-000-000-448025	\$576,349.00

Explanation: North Carolina Department of Transportation reimbursement for Hunting Hills Bridge, Pay App 2.

Fire Department:

TO:	Capital Outlay-Large Trucks	051-451-000-573300	\$1,373,136.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance	051-451-000-499900	\$1,373,136.00

Explanation: Fire truck for Station 4.

Fire Department:

TO:	Station 4	010-411-000-575023	\$500,000.00
	Transfer to General Fund (Rural Fire)	051-451-000-598010	\$500,000.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance	051-451-000-499900	(\$500,000.00)
	Transfer from Rural Fire Tax	010-000-000-498051	(\$500,000.00)

Explanation: Transfer to cover expenditures for Station construction.

PLANNING MATTERS

Case A26-0066 Wynnefield Forward, LLC – The Villas at South Fork Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise presented the above case and noted that the Planning Commission did not recommend approval. He provided clarification regarding vested rights associated with the previously approved development plan on the site. He explained that, pursuant to North Carolina Session Law 2025-97, any development approval that was valid as of September 25, 2024, is automatically granted a 12-month extension beyond its original expiration date. Mr. Wise advised that the prior plan for this site, approved in May 2024, met these criteria and would have otherwise expired in May of this year. As a result of the statutory extension, the vested rights for that approval now extend through May of 2027. He noted that this extension is based upon earlier legislation adopted in response to Hurricane Helene-related impacts.

Ms. Meade further clarified that this extension does not directly affect Council's decision on the current proposal under consideration. However, if the revised project is denied, the developer retains the right to proceed with the previously approved development during the extended vesting period. She noted that moving forward with the prior approval would primarily require obtaining building permits, which is a routine process.

Councilmember Roseman stated she was disheartened by suggestions that opposition to the project meant that she was opposed to affordable housing. She reaffirmed her support for affordable and age-restricted housing but emphasized her responsibility to protect established neighborhoods and the expectations of residents who purchased homes under existing zoning. She indicated her intent to vote against the proposal on that basis.

Councilmember Tait noted that while single-family housing has traditionally been prioritized, housing affordability has shifted, making homeownership increasingly unattainable for many. He acknowledged the site as a transitional area where residential development is appropriate but expressed concern that the revised four-story proposal was too large in scale relative to adjacent single-family homes. He stated he would vote against the current version but would have supported the previously approved, smaller-scale design.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter requested clarification from the developer regarding changes and constraints related to Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funding. The developer explained that the height difference between the three- and four-story versions was less than nine feet and that the revised plan reduced overall site disturbance, including approximately 2,500 fewer truckloads of soil removal, lower construction costs, reduced retaining walls, and preservation of approximately one-half acre of undisturbed land. Additional changes included the relocation of dumpsters, increased buffering, and improved visibility from Chestnut Drive. The developer stated that reverting to a three-story design would increase site disturbance and reduce preserved natural areas. He added that funding had been secured and that he planned to move forward.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed strong support for the project, stating that a vote against it would effectively be a vote against affordable housing. He noted that the Town has not approved a comparable affordable housing project in many years and emphasized the importance of providing housing for residents who contribute to the community but cannot afford homeownership. He stated his intent to vote in favor of the proposal, indicating that the relatively minor height difference did not outweigh the project's benefits.

Council next discussed potential design modifications, including the possibility of a flat roof to reduce overall height and adjustments to building orientation, buffering, and

parking placement. The developer indicated willingness to consider certain changes, including a flat roof design that would reduce the building height to near that of the previously proposed version, increased buffering, and further site adjustments to minimize impacts to neighboring properties.

Councilmember Pruitt reiterated that the decision before Council was not whether development would occur, but which version would proceed, noting that the developer retains the right to construct the previously approved project if the current proposal is denied.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter reopened public comment to hear from Carolyn Ward, who requested additional mitigation measures, including reduced height, enhanced landscaping, and improved compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, stating that earlier versions of the project were more acceptable. The developer responded by outlining efforts made throughout the process to address community concerns, including relocating access away from Chestnut Drive at significant cost, increasing buffers, adjusting site layout, and incorporating feedback from staff and stakeholders.

Councilmember Roseman made a motion that the proposed development is not consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan and any other adopted plan(s) of the Town that are applicable because of the following from Boone Next:

- Planning Principle 7: Support the town's established neighborhoods and new residential developments through neighborhood-level engagement and planning.
- Policy 1.2.1: Support Income-Restricted Housing: 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 the right of first refusal to purchase homes for affordable housing partners.
- Policy 1.2.5: Use Appropriate Transitions Between Different Scales and Intensities: Use appropriate transitions between different building uses and intensities by stepping down building heights and scale from areas allowing taller buildings to primarily residential neighborhoods.

This motion died for lack of a second.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter made a motion that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning map is consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan and any other adopted plan(s) of the Town that are applicable because of the following from Boone Next:

- Planning Principle 7: Support the town's established neighborhoods and new residential developments through neighborhood-level engagement and planning.
- Policy 1.2.1: Support Income-Restricted Housing: 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 the right of first refusal to purchase homes for affordable housing partners.
- Conditions including: flat roof, extra buffering, and larger trees as defined in the ordinance to buffer the site line along the entire Chestnut Street boundary, with the exception of ingress and egress.

The developers expressed agreement with the proposed conditions. Councilmember Tait seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Carter, Tait, Pruitt
 Nay: Roseman
 Absent: George

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter made a motion to approve Ordinance 26-0066, including the above conditions, and that approval is reasonable and in the public interest because Boone needs affordable housing options so that people who want to live here can and so that older people can stay in their hometown instead of having to move away. Councilmember Pruitt seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Carter, Pruitt, Tait
 Nay: None
 Abstain: Roseman
 Absent: George

Case A26-0067 Hemlock Ridge Trace Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

Councilmember Roseman stated that this type of affordable housing is the kind she would like to support, noting that the location offers strong connections to the community, including proximity to existing businesses and access to the greenway.

Mr. Wise noted that the applicant requested a 4-year vesting period rather than 2 years and that the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Councilmember Roseman 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, including the 4-year vesting period, because of the following from Boone Next:

- 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 the 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.
- Policy 1.2.1: Build the Town for People: To the extent possible, the built environment should be human-scale and pedestrian-oriented rather than large-scale and auto-oriented. There are urban design characteristics that transcend eras, styles, and typologies that help to explain why Boone's beloved downtown makes human beings comfortable. Human-scale development is not defined by density, but instead by urban design that makes human beings comfortable and happy navigating streets, activity centers, and neighborhoods on foot. Human-scale built environments might consider terminating vistas at the end of streets or the width and frontage of new buildings.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Carter, Pruitt, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

Councilmember Roseman made a motion to approve Ordinance A26-0067 and believes approval is reasonable and in the public interest because it will allow income-based housing for multiple demographics in our community, which is a need in our town. Councilmember Pruitt seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Pruitt, Carter, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

Case A26-0073 Town of Boone (PW Facility) Satellite Annexation/Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment

Planning Director Jane Shook presented the above case and noted that the Planning Commission recommended approval. Ms. Shook noted a condition from the Planning Commission that had been placed in relation to the project's approval and added that the item did not need to be formally included as a condition of approval, as it would instead be treated as a deviation within the existing framework. Councilmember Roseman emphasized the importance of ensuring that a sidewalk is included as part of the project. Ms. Shook responded that NCDOT approval has not yet been obtained, and that installation may be deferred until a future project in the area moves forward.

Councilmember Tait 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:

- Policy 4.2.1: Maintain and Improve Levels of Service: As the population grows, ensure high quality services and infrastructure are maintained or improved. Support improvements especially within areas of need through strategic planning, community benefits agreements, bonds, and the capital improvements program.
- Policy 1.5.2: Guide Utility Service Extensions and Annexations Using the Utility Service and Annexation Criteria: Use the Utility Service and Annexation Criteria of this chapter to evaluate applications for annexation of lands into the town and extension of public utilities to new areas. These criteria serve as the primary guide for making annexation and utility extension decisions. The criteria provide a framework for ensuring decisions are made consistently and in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. They are complemented by the Growth Management Tiers Map.
- 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.

Councilmember Roseman suggested a friendly amendment to include the following:

- The amendment is in alignment with the Growth Management Tiers map
- Planning Principle 1: Prioritize thoughtfully designed development of underutilized land within the town's existing built-upon areas over development of undeveloped land on the town's outer limits.
- Planning Principle 2: Emphasize quality design to create an attractive, inspiring public and private realm-architecture, streetscape, corridors, gateways, and edges-that is uniquely Boone.
- Planning Principle 3: Encourage compact, human-scale development that integrates a vertical mix of uses (residential, commercial, office, institutional, civic, etc.) and connects with existing developed areas.
- Policy 1.5.1: Manage Growth to Balance Protection of Community Character and Natural Areas While Directing Desired Growth to Identified Centers: The town will manage growth in a manner that balances the protection of community character and natural lands while accommodating future population. Change in the community will be carefully managed to protect critical natural lands, provide a variety of housing options for a diversity of households, support economic development, support fiscal balance, ensure adequate public safety services, and utilize growth patterns that support regional and local transit services. Lands within the town's current corporate limits are priorities for infill and redevelopment. New development areas contiguous with the town and in identified activity centers should be secondary priorities for development and ahead of areas outside centers.
- Goal 4.2: High Quality Public Services and Facilities: Boone will provide high quality public services and facilities that meet the needs of all Boone residents.

Councilmember Tait accepted this amendment, and Councilmember Roseman seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Tait, Roseman, Pruitt, Carter
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

Councilmember Tait made a motion to approve Ordinance A26-0074 and believes approval is reasonable and in the public interest because building a new Public Works facility in this location will help maintain and improve Town of Boone services. Councilmember Roseman seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Tait, Roseman, Pruitt, Carter
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

Councilmember Roseman made a motion to approve Ordinance 26-04 to extend the corporate limits of the Town of Boone – Town of Boone Satellite Voluntary Annexation. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Carter, Pruitt, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent: George

Case A26-0123 Signs, Phasing, Nonconformity – UDO Text Amendment

Councilmember Roseman made a motion that the proposed amendment to the Town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) 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:

- Planning Principle 7: Support the town's established neighborhoods and new residential developments through neighborhood-level engagement and planning.
- Planning Principle 10: Encourage appropriate development to meet the town's urgent need for housing or other specific community needs by means of density bonuses or other mechanisms.
- Goals & Policies o Goal 1.2: Development True to Boone's Vision: Boone's development and redevelopment will enhance the best of the town's existing built environment and reinforce the vision set forth in this plan.
- Policy 1.2.2: Infill Development Enhances the Town: Infill development is important because it directs growth away from natural areas, but it must be done well. Infill development shall enhance and not detract from the building character of the town by replicating key elements of Boone's cherished historic design features (like building scale, proportion, setbacks, character) with high quality, pedestrian-oriented design and providing public goods like plazas, wide sidewalks, public art, and affordable spaces for living, artists, and small businesses. Rules for new development should avoid financially incentivizing displacement of vulnerable populations.

Councilmember Pruitt seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Pruitt, Carter, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent:George

Councilmember Roseman made a motion to approve Ordinance A26-0123, and that approval is reasonable and in the public interest because the change will make the verbiage consistent with the Boone Next policy.

Councilmember Pruitt seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Pruitt, Carter, Tait
 Nay: None
 Absent:George

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m. without objection.

Nicole Harmon, Clerk

Todd Carter, Mayor Pro-Tem