



MINUTES – TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 24, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, in 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, Virginia Roseman, Adrian Tait, Anne Pruitt, and Anitra Ball. Town Staff present included Interim Town Manager/Human Resources Director Dale Presnell, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Grants Coordinator/Communications Laney Wise, Water Conservation Program Coordinator Victoria O'Connor, Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, Advanced Planning Specialist Jessica Mitchell, Planning Director Jane Shook (remote), Finance Director Guy Miller, Parking Manager Reta Jackson, and Town Attorney Allison Meade.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A brief moment of silence was observed.

WORK SESSION

Public Works Director Todd Moody informed Council that, pursuant to the Town's Water Shortage Response Ordinance, Stage Two water restrictions would take effect on July 1. He explained that the Town had met the ordinance's triggering criteria, including water levels below 7.6 feet at the wet well and streamflow at the U.S. Geological Survey gauge remaining below 150 cubic feet per second for four consecutive days. He noted that the State was monitoring conditions and that an updated drought map would be released the following day. Mr. Moody stated that the current streamflow was approximately 135 cubic feet per second, compared to approximately 150 cubic feet per second on June 20, and explained that the declining water table was causing recent rainfall to be absorbed into the ground rather than replenishing streams.

Mr. Moody reviewed the Stage Two restrictions, noting that outdoor plant watering would be permitted only between 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. He also advised that commercial food service establishments would be required to serve water only upon request and would be encouraged to utilize reusable utensils and dishware, although reusable service items would not become mandatory until a later stage. He stated that

enforcement would be complaint-driven and emphasized that no Council action was required, as the ordinance had been adopted in 2011. He noted that, despite the Town having a significantly larger water supply than when the ordinance was adopted, staff continued to encourage year-round water conservation and effectively treated the Town as if it were always operating under Stage One conservation practices.

Mr. Moody advised that staff would issue a press release, distribute information through social media and other communication channels, and develop a frequently asked questions document for the Town's website. He noted that water bills would not be an effective means of notifying customers due to timing. Council Member Tait suggested coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce to help notify restaurants of the new restrictions. Mayor George stated that he had already spoken with Chamber representatives and requested that staff follow up with them. Council Member Pruitt indicated that she would also announce the restrictions during the Downtown Boone Development Association meeting on Tuesday.

Council Member Roseman asked whether the Town anticipated reaching Stage Three water restrictions. Mr. Moody responded that Stage Three would not be triggered until streamflow dropped below 50 cubic feet per second and stated that staff expected Stage Two restrictions to remain in effect for several months. In response to additional discussion, Mr. Moody stated that staff would further evaluate whether local car washes reclaimed water as part of their operations.

Next, Mayor George led a discussion regarding the short-term vision for the Town-owned WYN property, noting that Andy Hill with the Watauga Riverkeepers had toured the building earlier in the day to explore its potential use as a resiliency hub, living classroom, laboratory space, and aquarium. He also noted that Council Member Tait had previously suggested the building could serve as shared space for organizations such as the Watauga Arts Council. Mayor George stated that having occupants in the building would help with its upkeep and asked Council whether they viewed these as appropriate interim uses.

Council Member Tait expressed support for identifying potential tenants and stated that he would like to see the building utilized in some capacity. He suggested issuing a Request for Information (RFI) or Request for Proposals (RFP) to gauge interest from nonprofit and community organizations. Council Member Pruitt agreed, stating that leasing the building in the short term could generate revenue while helping prevent deterioration of the historic structure. She emphasized that any future use should preserve the building's historic character.

Mayor George added that the space could also be made available to the Junaluska community and other neighborhood organizations, with specific uses to be defined through the planning process. He suggested involving the Town Attorney and Planning Department in future discussions. Council Member Pruitt agreed that Planning staff should be involved, and Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise noted that the building could function as office space and that he would discuss the concept further with staff.

Council Member Roseman suggested exploring the possibility of offering discounted coworking office space, noting that she knew individuals currently renting similar spaces. Mayor George responded that coworking spaces were often underutilized and generally required additional amenities such as kitchen facilities, wireless internet, and other shared services. Council Member Tait expressed support for the coworking concept, stating that it could accommodate multiple users. Mayor George concluded by stating

that staff would further develop the concept, incorporate input from the surrounding neighborhood, and return the matter to Council as a future agenda item.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter requested clarification regarding the status of the Bamboo Road multi-use path project. Mr. Moody reported that staff remained in a holding pattern while awaiting action from the North Carolina Department of Transportation. He clarified that the proposed path extends from U.S. 421 through Brookhollow Drive to Wilson's Ridge, rather than ending at Brookhollow Drive as previously understood. Mr. Moody explained that NCDOT was currently unable to execute the necessary agreement due to software issues, but anticipated providing both the agreement and project plans to the Town in the near future.

Council Member Roseman inquired about the status of the restrooms at the Horn in the West facility. Mr. Moody reported that the facilities would be open beginning Friday evening. Council Member Roseman noted that the ribbon-cutting ceremony would also take place on Friday evening.

Council Member Pruitt requested a discussion regarding Council liaison positions. The following positions were agreed upon:

Member	Board/Commission
Dalton George	• HCCOG Executive Board • Watauga EDC • Sustainability Committee • ABC Board • DBDA
Adrian Tait	• HCCOG RPO RTAC • Watauga EDC • Watauga Parks & Recreation
Anitra Ball	• Human Relations Commission • Cultural Resources Advisory Board
Anne Pruitt	• DBDA • Sustainability Committee
Todd Carter	• AppalCart • Human Relations Commission • Tourism Development Authority
Virginia Roseman	• Historic Preservation Commission • Cultural Resources Advisory Board

Regarding Town of Boone citizen liaisons to the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Board, Mayor George stated that, based on the conduct of one of the applicants, he could not support that individual's appointment. He expressed support for nominating Katie Eppey for reappointment, stating that he believed the other applicant had demonstrated an inability to separate personal feelings from official

responsibilities and that such conduct did not reflect well on the Town of Boone. Council Member Roseman acknowledged that Ms. Underdown-Collins had performed her duties well, while Mayor Pro-Tem Carter agreed with Mayor George's concerns. Council members agreed to recommend the appointment of Katie Eppley and request that the County submit a different nominee for the remaining position.

Regarding the proposed land conservation bond, Interim Town Manager Dale Presnell requested Council's direction on whether to continue pursuing the proposed general obligation bond initiative in partnership with the Trust for Public Land (TPL). He reported that TPL believed the Town could continue through the preliminary stages of the process without immediate approval from the Local Government Commission (LGC). He stated that he had contacted the LGC for guidance regarding the Town's audit but had not yet received a response. Mr. Presnell also expressed concern about the overall timing and feasibility of the proposal, noting that the Town was simultaneously pursuing the sale of property expected to generate approximately \$5 million while considering a separate \$5 million bond issuance. He further stated that the Town needed a clear plan for the proposed projects before moving forward.

Mayor George provided background on the initiative, explaining that TPL assists local governments with conservation and public land bond campaigns by conducting polling, gathering information, and helping educate the public. He noted that a donor in western North Carolina had offered to fund TPL's services and that Council had adopted a letter of support for exploring the process in December. He stated that the proposed bond would result in an estimated four-cent property tax increase to generate approximately \$5.5 million for parks, greenways, land conservation, and related projects. Mayor George acknowledged that the process had been challenging and noted staff's concerns regarding limited organizational capacity and uncertainty over whether the LGC would support a bond request given the Town's current audit circumstances. He asked Council members whether they were comfortable asking staff to continue pursuing the initiative, given the significant workload already facing Town staff.

Council Member Tait agreed that the Town needed a comprehensive plan before proceeding and stated that additional funding would also be needed to improve and enhance the parks system. While recognizing the need for improvements, he noted that the Town faced a limited window to place the bond referendum on the ballot and suggested that the opportunity could be lost if action was delayed.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter stated that he would like to see the Town further develop its vision for a parks department and expressed concern about allowing the opportunity to pass, given the favorable public polling results. He stated that, if feasible, he believed the Town should continue pursuing the initiative. Council Member Roseman expressed concern that parks ranked near the bottom of the priorities identified in polling conducted as part of the bond process. Council Member Pruitt stated that she was concerned the Town was "putting the cart before the horse" by considering the bond before developing a comprehensive plan. Mayor George concluded the discussion by noting the many potential projects and land acquisition opportunities that could benefit from the funding and indicated that the matter would be revisited after additional information was received from the Local Government Commission.

Mayor George declared a break at 5:51 p.m. Council reconvened at 6:01 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Presentation of Waterwise Citizen Award

Every Drop Counts Program Coordinator Victoria O'Connor presented the Waterwise Citizen Award to Mr. Harold Tilley.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Jackson of the Boone Chamber of Commerce encouraged Council to keep local businesses in mind throughout the budget development process. He presented economic and business statistics, thanked Town staff for their support and coordination of recent local events, and emphasized that the Town's continued investment in and support for community events were vital to the success of small businesses in Boone.

REQUESTED APPEARANCES

Kim Brown, a property owner on Woodpecker Lane in Boone, addressed the Council regarding the expiration of the short-term rental certificate for her family's property. She explained that she serves on the Taylorsville Town Council and operates several short-term rental properties, but inadvertently failed to renew the Town of Boone certificate after her father's death while dealing with insurance-related matters. She stated that Planning and Inspections staff had been helpful throughout the process, but that she was informed the certificate could not be renewed because the application was submitted after the deadline. Ms. Brown noted that Boone was the only municipality where she owned property that required such a certificate and asked Council to consider allowing the property to continue operating as a short-term rental, explaining that the rental income was an important source of financial support for her mother.

Mr. Wise provided background on the Town's short-term rental regulations, explaining that when the ordinance was originally adopted, homestays were permitted throughout Town while vacation rentals in the R-1, R-2, R-3, and RA zoning districts were discontinued but allowed to continue under a grandfather provision. He noted that the grandfathered certificate for the property had expired in January. Mayor George asked whether Council would have to amend the ordinance to grant the request. Ms. Meade explained that staff attempts to remind property owners of renewal requirements when possible as a courtesy, but that it is the property owner's legal responsibility to maintain required permits. She stated that staff did not have the authority to make an exception to the UDO provisions and that Council would have to amend the ordinance to eliminate or modify the grandfather provision. Council Member Pruitt asked whether such a change could be made on a limited basis, and Ms. Meade responded that removing

the grandfather limitation had to be generally-applicable and likely would affect all previously grandfathered vacation rentals in the applicable residential zoning districts.

Mr. Presnell and Council Member Roseman noted that the property could still be used as a long-term rental, providing an alternative source of income. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed sympathy for the family's circumstances but stated that he could not support amending the ordinance. He emphasized Council's longstanding efforts to preserve neighborhood character and housing affordability for year-round residents, noting that the Town already had a substantial supply of lodging accommodations and that limiting vacation rentals had been an important community priority. Council Member Roseman agreed. Mayor George stated that public sentiment had consistently supported Boone's restrictive approach to vacation rentals and that the current ordinance reflected the community's expectations, while also expressing sympathy for the family's situation.

CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION

Council Member Pruitt made a motion to adopt the following items on the consent agenda:

- FY2026/27 Budget Ordinance
- Finance Proposal
- Budget Amendments

Police Department:

TO:	Social Work Program	010-500-300-577113	\$123,511.74
FROM:	Department of Justice (Fed. Funds)	010-000-000-448033	(\$123,511.74)

Explanation: Federal grant reimbursement for Social Work/Peer Response Program.

Public Works:

TO:	Howard Street Project	010-411-000-549124	\$1,500,000.00
	Transfer to General Fund	030-700-890-598010	\$1,500,000.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance	030-000-000-499900	\$1,500,000.00
	Transfer from W/S Fund	010-000-000-498030	\$1,500,000.00

Explanation: Additional interim financing for the Howard Street Project.

TO:	Capital Outlay - Hunting Hills Bridge	010-600-403-574201	\$701,108.00
FROM:	NCDOT	010-000-000-448025	\$701,108.00

Explanation: North Carolina Department of Transportation reimbursement for Hunting Hills Bridge, Pay App 3.

Finance:

TO:	Hurricane Helene Response	010-411-000-549143	\$1,476,081.33
FROM:	FEMA Reimbursement	010-000-000-448030	\$1,476,081

Explanation: Appropriated FEMA reimbursement received through June 24, 2026.

TO:	Collections of Taxes-General Fund	010-403-000-5771100	\$15,000.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance	010-000-000-499900	\$15,000.00

Explanation: To appropriate funds to finish FY 25/26 tax collection fees.

TO:	Professional Services-Legal	010-404-000-509100	\$15,000.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance-General Funds	010-000-000-499900	\$15,000.00

Explanation: Appropriate additional funds to cover additional costs incurred.

TO:	NCHIP	035-430-000-535412	\$300,000.00
FROM:	Appropriated Fund Balance	035-430-000-499900	\$135,000.00
	Ins. Revenue-General Fund Transfer	035-430-000-450003	\$164,000.00

Explanation: To appropriate funds to cover expense through year end.

- FY 2026/27 Outside Agency Funding Allocations:

Requesting Agency	Amount Received FY25/26	Amount Requested FY 26/27	Amount Received FY 26/27
Appalachian Theatre of the High Country	\$8,000 (1,200 from marketing to fund 2 films)	\$15,000	10,000
Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture	\$13,000	\$15,000	12,000
Children's Playhouse	\$5,500	\$6,000	5,000
FARM Café	\$19,500	\$25,000	15,000
Friends of the Watauga County Public Library	0	\$5,000	1,300
Hospitality House	\$25,000	\$30,000	(4,000 AH) 22,000
Hunger and Health Coalition	\$6,000	\$30,000	0 (personnel)
Mountain Alliance	\$7,500	\$10,000	7,500
OASIS	\$15,000	\$15,000	(4,000 AH) 12,000
SAHA	0	\$5,000	3,500
Transition Blue Ridge	0	\$1,000	1,000
WAMY	\$10,000	\$10,000	10,000
Watauga Housing Council	0	\$8,182	(4,000 AH) 5,000
Watauga Humane Society	\$4,500	\$10,000	5,000
Watauga Arts Council	\$4,500	\$20,000	12,000
Western Youth Network	\$10,000	\$20,000	10,000
TOTAL	\$128,500	\$225,182	131,300

- Ordinance Authorizing Funding for Part-time Town Historian/Digital Watauga Coordinator
- Minutes:
 - June 5, 2026, Special Meeting
 - June 10, 2026, Regular Meeting

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter seconded the motion.

Mayor George thanked staff for their extensive work throughout the budget development process and acknowledged the impact of the adopted tax increase on residents.

Council Member Pruitt expressed appreciation for the nonprofit organizations that applied for Outside Agency Funding, noting that even modest Town appropriations often help organizations leverage additional grant funding. She suggested highlighting the organizations receiving funding through a Town press release or social media campaign to increase public awareness of the community benefits they provide.

Council Member Roseman commended the Mayor's creative approach to reallocating affordable housing funds during the budget process. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter noted the importance of investing in capital reserves and allocating funding for the maintenance of Town facilities, stating that consistent investment in prior years may have prevented the current need for a new Public Works facility. Mayor George also highlighted the budget's inclusion of approximately \$600,000 for parking system improvements.

Council Member Tait observed that the Town was facing many of the same economic challenges affecting households and businesses. He stated that Council had carefully reviewed and reduced expenditures where possible, but ultimately concluded that additional revenue was necessary to maintain essential services and fund the Town's priorities.

The motion carried unanimously.

PLANNING MATTERS

Presentation of Good Neighbor Items

Mr. Wise and Ms. Mitchell presented several outreach materials included in the agenda packet, including a new webpage currently under development, informational pamphlets, vehicle wraps, and door hangers. Council Member Tait asked about the purpose of the initiative. Mr. Wise explained that the goal is to better educate neighborhoods about the Town's regulations and to distribute information more consistently and equitably throughout the community. He noted that the effort is an improved version of the Neighborhood Compatibility Development (NCD) outreach.

Discussion of Potential Changes to UDO

Mr. Wise stated that staff had previously discussed expanding accessory dwelling units into the R-1 zoning district and requested Council's direction before moving forward. Council Member Roseman noted that her street already has many grandfathered basement accessory apartments and expressed support for the proposal, stating that allowing homeowners an additional source of income is beneficial. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter commented that he believed Council had already approved the concept and voiced his support. Ms. Meade clarified that while Council had previously discussed the matter and provided direction, staff wanted to confirm that direction with the newly seated Council members. Council Member Tait stated that the

North Carolina General Assembly has made it clear that local governments should allow accessory uses and expressed support for the proposal.

COUNCIL MATTERS

Consideration of Changes to Downtown Employee Parking

Parking Manager Reta Jackson presented changes to the downtown employee parking spaces at Hippie Hill and Burrell Street. Mayor George expressed concern that the loss of parking spaces on Burrell Street would negatively impact nearby businesses. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter stated that he supported the proposal if concerns regarding Burrell Street could be addressed. Mayor George reported that he had met with the County Commission Chair, the Clerk of Court, and David Jackson of the Boone Chamber of Commerce to discuss parking and reiterated the Town's willingness to collaborate on a parking deck arrangement. He noted that Queen Street parking was also discussed, with the Chamber of Commerce and downtown businesses requesting that those spaces be returned to public parking. Mayor George added that the Commission Chair would discuss the matter with the County Manager, and that Interim Town Manager Presnell would also meet with the County Manager and Ms. Jackson regarding parking. Mayor George proposed retaining three public parking spaces on Burrell Street as a six-month trial period. Council Member Pruitt suggested following up with businesses after the trial to evaluate how the spaces are being utilized. Council reached consensus to relocate five employee parking spaces from Hippie Hill to the courthouse area, convert three Burrell Street spaces to public parking on a trial basis, and establish the parking permit fee at \$750 for the Horn in the West lot.

Consideration and Approval of Offer to Purchase and Resolution Authorizing the Upset Bid Process – Bolick Property

Mayor George stated that there has been a lack of public understanding of the proposed sale, emphasizing that the transaction would preserve approximately 30 acres of land, secure the site for Fire Station No. 4, and transfer the remaining property to Blue Ridge Electric, a cooperative well respected in the community. He expressed disappointment with the public perception of the proposal, noting that the property is publicly owned and that preserving 30 acres would represent the largest expansion of the Town's park system in his lifetime. He added that the property would remain in public-serving ownership, moving from one public entity to another. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter remarked that the Town had also realized a financial benefit from the transaction.

Council Member Tait stated that he had not seen a map identifying the portion of the property proposed for sale. Ms. Meade explained that the plat was not included with the Offer to Purchase, but clarified that the property consists of two tracts, with only Tract Two being sold. Tract One contains the conservation easement and the Fire Station No. 4 site.

Ms. Meade reviewed the terms of the Offer to Purchase, explaining that the purchaser had requested an easement along the drive below the fire station. Ms. Meade had expressed concerns regarding traffic circulation, but Fire Chief Isaacs had stated to Ms. Meade that he was comfortable with the proposed configuration of two outbound lanes and one inbound lane. Ms. Meade added that staff also wished to retain an easement through the rear-middle portion of the property to preserve Town access to the

conservation easement. Ms. Meade noted that the purchaser had requested a 120-day inspection period and that the required upset bid publication process would be followed. Because of the extended inspection period, Ms. Meade requested an option fee, and the purchaser agreed to a \$5,000 option payment, which would be credited toward the purchase price at closing.

Council Member Pruitt expressed concern that the proposed \$5,000 option fee was too low and asked whether the property could remain on the market during the inspection period. Ms. Meade confirmed that it could. Council Member Roseman suggested increasing the option fee by an additional \$5,000 for every 20-day extension of the inspection period. Mayor George responded that such a provision would unnecessarily complicate the agreement. Council Member Roseman also asked whether aesthetic requirements could be imposed on future development of the property. Mayor George replied that while the Town could not dictate the purchaser's design preferences beyond applicable regulations, he believed Blue Ridge Electric's operating practices and the Town's development standards would result in an appropriate project.

Upon a motion by Council Member Roseman, seconded by Council Member Pruitt, Council unanimously approved the Offer to Purchase and Resolution Authorizing the Upset Bid Process as presented.

Request for Direction Regarding Land Conservation Bond

Council Member Tait stated that he would like representatives of the Trust for Public Land to appear before the Town Council to discuss the proposed project. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter indicated that he would be comfortable moving forward if the North Carolina Local Government Commission approved the transaction, given the current state of the audit. Council Member Pruitt agreed and suggested inviting the purchaser to present to Council at the July 8 meeting. Council Member Tait asked whether Council could approve the project contingent upon the Local Government Commission's approval. Ms. Meade noted that she wished to address the bond proposal with Council during the closed session.

Appointment to the Cultural Resources Advisory Board

Council Member Tait nominated Mr. Showman to serve on the Cultural Resources Advisory Board, and Council Member Pruitt nominated Mr. Furman. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor George called for a vote.

VOTE: Aye: All
Nay: None

Appointment of Town of Boone Representatives to Watauga County Parks & Recreation Board

Upon a motion by Council Member Pruitt, seconded by Council Member Tait, Council voted unanimously to recommend Katie Eppler for reappointment to the Watauga County Parks & Recreation Board as a Town of Boone liaison.

Appointment to Tourism Development Authority

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter nominated Mr. Robinson, Mr. Lamond (business representative seat), and Mr. Cottom (reappointment) to serve on the Tourism Development Authority. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor George called for a vote.

VOTE: Aye: All
Nay: None

Discussion of Board Liaison Appointments

Upon a motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, seconded by Council Member Roseman, Council voted unanimously to approve the following liaison appointments:

Member	Board/Commission
Dalton George	• HCCOG Executive Board • Watauga EDC • Sustainability Committee • ABC Board • DBDA
Adrian Tait	• HCCOG RPO RTAC • Watauga EDC • Watauga Parks & Recreation
Anitra Ball	• Human Relations Commission • Cultural Resources Advisory Board
Anne Pruitt	• DBDA • Sustainability Committee
Todd Carter	• AppalCart • Human Relations Commission • Tourism Development Authority
Virginia Roseman	• Historic Preservation Commission • Cultural Resources Advisory Board

CLOSED SESSION

Upon a motion by Council Member Roseman, seconded by Council Member Pruitt, Council voted unanimously to enter into closed session at 7:23 p.m. pursuant to:

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.

3. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(6), to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 9:49 p.m.

Nicole Harmon, Clerk

Dalton George, Mayor