

TOWN OF BOONE PLANNING RETREAT
Friday, January 9, 2026

Town Council members in attendance: Dalton George-Mayor, Todd Carter-Mayor Pro Tem, Eric Plaag, Virginia Roseman, and Adrian Tait

Town Staff in attendance: Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Brandon Wise-Deputy Director, Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Luis Aguilar-Zoning Enforcement Official, and Dale Presnell-Interim Town Manager

Legal Counsel in attendance: Allison Meade-Town Attorney

Call to Order

Mayor George called the meeting in Town Council Chambers, located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road, to order at 9:11 a.m.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Year-In-Review

Jane Shook, Director of Planning & Inspections, reviewed the organizational structure of the Planning & Inspections Department and noted that the Environmental Specialist position had been filled by Jonathan Yates.

Ms. Shook stated that permit activity was down this year. She directed Council members to the Staff Highlights, pointing out various activities and accomplishments of the staff. She noted that the Board of Adjustment had three vacancies that needed to be filled.

Council Member Plaag asked whether the stipends provided to board members had helped with membership and attendance. Ms. Shook felt they helped, but may not have had as big an impact as intended. She noted that several members of the various boards and commissions had opted out of the stipend. Council Member Roseman stated that there were members of the Board of Adjustment and the Historic Preservation Commission who were serving their third term. She asked if members had to take a year off the board when their terms expired. Ms. Shook explained that board members were allowed to continue serving until their position was filled. If their position was never filled, they could continue to serve for the year that they were technically supposed to be off the board. Ms. Shook stated that the Town attorney had expressed some concern with that practice. Member Roseman noted that other Town boards, such as the TDA, were not allowed to continue serving. Council Member Plaag worried that the departure of long-time board members would create a vacuum and cause a loss of momentum for the remaining membership. Ms. Meade felt that the statutory planning boards were easily distinguished from other boards or committees because they required particular expertise that other boards did not. She added that she was comfortable with the way things were. Council Member Plaag suggested limiting the number of terms that a board member could serve as Chair or Vice-Chair. Ms. Meade suggested that the

Town Council should simply police its boards more diligently and address any issues that might arise. Council Member Roseman asked if the Chair/Vice-Chair application requested the number of years a member had served as Chair or Vice-Chair. Ms. Shook replied that she did not believe so, but that information could be provided to Town Council with the application consideration.

Board & Commission Updates

Ms. Shook directed Council members to the board activity shown in the meeting packet. She commended the Planning Commission for its work on Boone Next.

Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist, presented the Historic Preservation Commission's work plan. She noted the tasks the HPC had completed over the last year, including the installation of the Boone Cemetery interpretative panels. Additionally, in working with Digital Watauga and Dr. Plaag, the architectural survey and photo library of the Downtown Boone Local Historic District were completed. Ms. Mitchell explained that they had worked with Digital Watauga to create the photo library so that historical data would be accessible to Planning staff when needed for Certificate of Appropriateness cases. Digital Watauga would update the photo library if any new images or collections were received.

Council Member Plaag stated that there were also photos of buildings in the downtown historic district that had been surveyed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and were public record, without any fee or permission requirement to display. He suggested that someone from Digital Watauga could look through those files and pull images to add to their corresponding downtown historic properties. He added that Digital Watauga had few collections from the 80s and 90s because people did not consider those years old yet. He mentioned that Digital Watauga could also add these to the photo library. Council Member Plaag felt it might be helpful to keep track of changes from that timeframe. Brandon Wise, Deputy Director, replied that it would be helpful to fill that gap whenever possible.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the HPC was currently working on the Jones House Local Historic Landmark report, Stoneman's Raid interpretative panel, and the Boone/Kraut Creek Historic Marker. She noted the pending items on the Work Plan and asked for direction from Town Council.

Mayor George and Council Member Plaag advised that the proposed Clawson Burnley Park marker should be an interpretative panel introducing Boone's two female mayors, explaining why the park was named for them, and outlining their accomplishments.

The Winkler's Creek Dam site was discussed. Mayor George felt that the property should remain town property, with the town maintaining it long-term as some type of recreational use. He felt that the marker for this property should be moved to the end of HPC's Work Plan and placed on hold until there was a clear path from the town's perspective on the use for that site. Council members agreed.

Council Member Plaag stated that he had agreed to help work on the Ice House Alley marker, but noted that it would be, at the earliest, the end of the year before he could commit that time.

Ms. Mitchell felt that the Boone/Kraut Creek marker would take some time to complete. She suggested that, after this task, the HPC could focus on the Clawson Burnley Park marker, then move to the Ice House Alley marker. Council members agreed with this suggestion.

Council Member Plaag asked for an update on the Jones House Local Historic Landmark Report. Ms. Mitchell explained that former HPC member Riley Ziegler was continuing to work on the report. She

reached out to Ms. Ziegler while she was finishing graduate school and moving to a position out west. Ms. Mitchell said she had not heard from Ms. Ziegler since then, so at this point all she could do was go back to the last iteration of the report, incorporate the staff changes, and then move forward with the landmark designation process. She explained that the report would go to the HPC for review, then to Town Council, then to SHPO.

Council Member Plaag provided a reminder that part of the vision of the position discussed by Town Council in November for the Town Historian/Digital Watauga Coordinator was that it would be a mixed position, with it being half town historian, half doing Digital Watauga-related things. The intent was to have someone who was a trained historian, able to write reports in months rather than years, which would make the HPC's work plan move much faster.

Ms. Mitchell stated that there had been past discussion about some kind of signage for the historic district, such as light-pole banners in downtown. She explained that this item was put on hold due to the town's rebranding and suggested that, once the rebranding was finalized, it could be considered for funding.

Ms. Meade asked how the transitional zone and neighborhood conservation district changes had gone. Ms. Shook replied that their first test case was coming up with a project that Council had denied in the past. Due to ordinance changes, a version of the project would be allowed by right, and the new standards would apply, including the requirement to post signage before they could start. Ms. Shook explained that the project was backing up to an R1 neighborhood, so many interested residents had already reached out to staff. She felt that the greatest change had been in the number of conditional district cases. She anticipated 2026 to be heavy with conditional district requests, as well. Ms. Shook stated that the idea with conditional districts was to eventually make ordinance changes that would release some properties from them, because the new standards would be what the town wanted to achieve in terms of allowing more development by right. She added that, unless some focus was placed on that, the agendas would always be full of conditional districts. Ms. Shook stated that it was very important to identify priorities so that the Planning team could focus on making deadlines and producing quality work.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked whether it was feasible to consider ordinance changes before the deadlines for upcoming projects, given that they would have to compare the CD process to Boone Next. Ms. Shook suggested waiting until the end of the day to have this discussion so that all of the tasks could be prioritized.

Our State, Our Homes – Carolina Across 100 Update

Ms. Shook explained that the Town applied for and was selected to participate in a statewide program through Carolina Across 100. The Town participates on a team with Ashe County, Watauga County, and the High Country Council of Governments. Ms. Shook stated that they had been through four forums, each tailored to different items. She referred to the information and links provided in the meeting packet. Ms. Shook noted that teams had to pick a project, and it would be funded through the program. Their team chose to do a regional housing assessment, with the NC Lead intern from the COG taking the lead. She stated that this would be a regional plan that might help the town access grant funding in the future. She felt that working more with the Housing Trust could be helpful. Ms. Shook added that no single solution would fix affordable housing, noting that the town had implemented flag lots and residential cluster subdivisions.

Ms. Shook stated that there was a presentation by the School of Government and DFI on the entitlement

process, the gaps developers face, why items were not affordable, and what had to be done to make projects affordable. She suggested that they could bring DFI back before Council for that particular conversation, if they would like.

Ms. Shook noted that once land was purchased, financing or investors were acquired, and construction costs were considered, there were benefits to inclusionary zoning, as well as concerns. However, there was no affordable housing without subsidy, whether that came from the local, state, or federal government. Ms. Shook stated that when a private developer came in, it was important to understand the impact of our requests on that developer. She felt the town would need to work with the local housing authority and consider other local and state programs, and how to leverage all of those programs together.

Council Member Roseman asked whether a roadmap could be provided to assist those interested in creating an affordable housing project. Ms. Shook replied that it could be complicated. She stated that she had raised the issue at many meetings of how difficult it was for rural areas to qualify for LIHTC financing and had advocated for a review of the standards and their application to smaller or rural jurisdictions.

Council Member Plaag mentioned the town-owned property above the Hospitality House and asked if it could potentially qualify for LIHTC funding if it were affordable senior housing. Mayor Pro Tem Carter noted that the majority of people they had trouble finding housing for were seniors.

Ms. Shook stated that Hendersonville just purchased property for a housing development. She suggested that they follow Hendersonville's progress on this endeavor as it might be a good learning opportunity. Ms. Meade asked if they were doing the project with bond funds. Ms. Shook did not know but stated she would try to add this topic to their upcoming final forum to learn about the legal aspects and whether private or public partnerships were being used. Mayor George noted that he had a friend on the Hendersonville City Council whom he was happy to contact.

Mayor George referred to inclusionary zoning. He stated that he thought there was potential and would like the Town Council to discuss it. Whether the number was 5% or 10%, he felt that having it on the front end, rather than during the negotiation period, might work better. Ms. Meade agreed that it would be easier to defend if there were a set standard. Mayor George stated that it would be beneficial to offer density credits to developments that incorporate 5% or 10% of affordable units.

Council Member Plaag stated that the conversation with the developers of the IRC property was interesting, as they admitted that renting by the bedroom drove up rents. He asked if it was correct that there was nothing that said they could not discriminate against students. If so, he asked whether they could create an inclusionary zoning policy that allowed rent-by-the-bedroom student housing in specific areas of town but prohibited it elsewhere. Ms. Meade replied that she had advocated for that, although it might be tested. She stated that it was perfectly clear that you could discriminate against students because they were not a protected class. Ms. Meade noted that, as long as there were areas where student housing was allowed and even encouraged, she saw no problem. However, enforcing not renting by the bedroom would be easier than enforcing no students.

Council Member Tait asked if there could be a tax incentive for developers to incentivize inclusionary housing. Ms. Meade replied that she thought tax incentives were only for bringing employers to town. She stated that if the town had clear, more dense development options, it would be adequate. Going

through a CD process or a hearing before the Board of Adjustment was a major problem. Ms. Meade argued that the lack of clear standards was also a major problem. She mentioned voluntary overlay districts where someone could voluntarily opt in, with different standards and more dense development allowed, but also a requirement for inclusionary units yet to be defined.

Council Member Plaag asked for the rationale behind the requirement for garages or carports in the multi-family standards. Ms. Shook stated that for a long time, multi-family developments were presented as four beds, four baths, or three beds, three baths, and were rented by the bedroom. This type of setup was designed for student housing only. So, the Affordable Housing Task Force created standards they believed would force a design that would attract renters other than students. Based on the end product, those standards have not worked as anticipated. Council Member Plaag stated that the intentional inclusionary concept should be researched and considered as a more positive alternative.

Council Member Plaag stated that the town owned several vacant pieces of property in residential areas. He asked whether a list could be compiled of other such vacant or dilapidated properties that could have a potential for partnerships with the Housing Trust. Ms. Shook felt that such a list might already exist, and she would check into it. Mayor Pro Tem Carter added that one of the Housing Council's tasks was to identify uninhabited or dilapidated homes and vacant lots in the county.

Good Neighbor Program

Ms. Shook began the discussion regarding neighborhood preservation. New development standards were created. The effectiveness of neighborhood conservation districts was reviewed and found not to be achieving the original intent, which was to reduce occupancy in dwellings that had historically been over-occupied in certain areas. Ms. Shook stated that occupancy compliance was no greater in the neighborhood conservation districts than in other parts of town. The issue then became noncompliance with the required parking stickers for the districts, which were intended to help regulate occupancy.

Ms. Shook explained that the Neighborhood Conservation District program would be transformed into the Good Neighbor Program. To be successful in the Good Neighbor Program, more people than just the Planning and Inspections Department would need to be involved. Public Works, the Police Department, and the Town Council would also need to be involved. Ms. Shook referred to a sample letter in the meeting packet, which she suggested be signed by all Council members and sent to residents.

Council Member Plaag suggested a wording change to the second sentence in the second paragraph of the letter to remove "To better serve all residents" and replace it with "To extend these protections to all low-density residential neighborhoods." He felt that the wording could help residents feel they were not losing anything with the elimination of the Neighborhood Conservation Districts. Ms. Shook agreed with the modification.

Ms. Shook stated that there was a misperception of what a Neighborhood Conservation District was because the word "Conservation" seemed to imply greater protections than were actually offered. She explained that the only thing an NCD did was require parking stickers for renters living within the district.

Ms. Meade suggested removing the second paragraph entirely, noting that an explanation of the NCD program's failure was unnecessary. Mayor George agreed that removing the second paragraph could help the program get off to a better start. Ms. Shook cited transparency and communication as reasons to include the dissolution of the Neighborhood Conservation District overlay.

Ms. Shook stated that a large-scale map amendment would be required to remove the Neighborhood Conservation District overlays. In lieu of sending individual notices to property owners, a half-page advertisement in the newspaper could be used instead. Ms. Shook noted that the standards had not been removed from the UDO. It had previously been agreed that no enforcement of parking sticker violations would be conducted during the transition to the Good Neighbor Program in early 2026.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter felt the letter should be 100% pro-Good Neighbor, and everyone should be notified.

Council Member Plaag suggested including in the letter to those affected by the dissolution of the NCD program what the program actually consisted of, and explaining why the Good Neighbor Program would offer more protections for the neighborhoods. He suggested adding language explaining that the NCD program granted only parking stickers, which were largely ignored and difficult to enforce, whereas the Good Neighbor program would be more effective in securing protections expected of the NCD.

Council Member Roseman asked if the letters could be hand-delivered during a neighborhood walk. Ms. Shook replied that the weather might be a factor, as they wanted to begin the Good Neighbor Program in early 2026. Council Member Roseman felt it would be a productive way to introduce the program and answer citizens' questions.

Mr. Wise mentioned the plan for, instead of neighborhood walks, neighborhood potlucks that would allow conversation about both programs at various neighborhood locations and dates.

Ms. Meade asked whether the letter could be signed "Sincerely" instead of "Respectfully."

Ms. Shook stated that every department would have to focus on its participation in the program, with communication being key. She provided a draft booklet intended to introduce residents to how the town operates, provide department information, include contact information, and outline standards that neighborhoods might want to know about. Ms. Shook stated that the intent was to provide information in a warm, inviting, and friendly manner rather than in regulatory language.

Council Member Roseman liked the QR codes.

Ms. Shook stated that the Good Neighbor Program would require a proactive approach from Planning and Inspections. She noted that once the rebranding was complete, she would return to Council with a more specific proposal for the look of the program materials and the placement of neighborhood signage (first street entering the neighborhood). Ms. Shook asked if Council would like to have the booklet printed in-house or have it professionally printed. Ms. Meade asked if it was correct that these booklets would not be sent out every year. Ms. Shook replied that after the initial mailings the first year, they would be given to new homeowners with their permit or CO. Council Member Roseman stated that information in the booklet would change, so printing too many copies could be wasteful. Ms. Shook assured Council Member Roseman that Planning and Inspections would be responsible stewards of the monetary value. She added that a digital version of this booklet would be made available on the town's website.

Ms. Shook stated that branding designs for the enforcement vehicle were being researched, but could cost more than originally anticipated.

Providing some type of swag at the Good Neighbor events was discussed. Council members liked the idea of developing a Town of Boone bag to consolidate the bags used by Public Works and Sustainability and promote the Town as a whole. Also mentioned was having a drawing for gift baskets containing items

from local businesses. Each event should offer food. Ms. Shook stated that she did not have funds in her budget to cover all the costs associated with these items.

Ms. Shook stated she would take all this information and come back with suggested dates and locations. She noted that Good Neighbor focused on education, engagement, and enforcement through a proactive approach.

Ms. Shook mentioned a newsletter that Ms. Meade had previously suggested. She asked whether it would be quarterly and noted that this newsletter would not be a product of just Planning and Inspections. Ms. Shook deferred to Dale Presnell, Interim Town Manager, for implementation of the newsletter. Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that the Town Council needed to figure out how to produce a quarterly newsletter as part of the overall marketing of Boone, because it was up to them to improve the Town and communicate effectively.

Boone Next – Implementation Actions

Ms. Shook stated that the implementation of Boone Next was now required. She noted that she had included all implementation steps in the meeting packet for the Council's consideration. Ms. Shook mentioned the Junaluska Neighborhood Plan. She noted concerns from the Junaluska community and explained that, during recent code changes that impacted the neighborhood, she and Mr. Wise met with the community. Ms. Shook stated that there was a very heated conversation, with distrust and anger over perceived actions by the town and the impacts the neighborhood currently feels. She added that the town needed to stabilize the community and provide residents with opportunities to be heard. Ms. Shook explained that part of the neighborhood used to receive water and sewer at in-town rates, but it was discovered that they were actually outside the town limits, so they were then charged double rates. The residents felt that the town had de-annexed them rather than communicating that the properties had never been part of the town. This discovery also meant that those residents no longer received trash service. Ms. Shook stated that there was a lot of anger that the condition of their roads and streets was not the same as the conditions in other areas. They also have concerns about the recent development that occurred in their neighborhood. She added that the neighborhood felt excluded from conversations, and that it was important and the Town's responsibility to ensure the neighborhood was included and heard.

Council Member Plaag stated that he lived in that neighborhood and their experience with DOT had been horrendous. He noted that the section of Boone serviced by Junaluska Road on the gravel portion was not snowplowed often, and residents feared that emergency traffic could not reach them in the winter. Council Member Plaag stated that Junaluska Road was not a town-maintained road and that he did not know what it would take to secure greater state buy-in to better protect the town's citizens. He agreed with the perception that this part of town was ignored by the town.

Ms. Shook stated that, professionally, that was the most difficult meeting she had ever attended. As a member of the Town staff, she was accused of being unethical, crooked, and mean.

Council Member Roseman asked whether it was possible to offer those residents who were affected by the double rates to annex at no cost, with the understanding that their tax rate would increase. Ms. Shook replied that she was not completely familiar with the history of how the situation happened. She noted that modifications to the annexation ordinance allowed people with certain incomes to have annexation fees waived, but that would not apply to everyone. Ms. Shook stated that not everyone would see a

benefit to annexation, because some might think that double water and sewer rates were cheaper.

There was a discussion about making Eastbrook Drive one-way. Ms. Shook cautioned Council members to include the Public Works Department in this type of conversation, noting that past neighborhood input had shown they opposed the idea. There was discussion to potentially return to this at a future work session.

Council Member Plaag stated that signs were erected prohibiting trucks from using Eastbrook and Westbrook Drives to get to the top of the mountain. This forced traffic onto Junaluska Road, leading residents to feel that the Town had protected the white neighborhoods over the historically black neighborhood.

Opt-In Districts

Ms. Shook stated that a long-standing goal of this Council had been to revise ordinance standards. There had been discussion in the past about whether an outside agency would review the ordinance and provide an objective review, or whether the work would be done in-house. She noted that public support for Boone Next had been strong, but the Town needed to identify what they wanted and create ways to make it easier to build. One of those ways was through opt-in districts. Ms. Shook explained that the first opt-in district project would be a trial, with an expectation that modifications might be needed if things did not go as expected.

Ms. Shook stated that the Council needed to decide which areas they wanted to see greater density in and what that would mean. For example, if they wanted all brick and rock for a building, it would raise the project's cost. Ms. Shook asked Council members whether they were comfortable with the areas designated as opt-in districts. Council Member Roseman replied that she was not comfortable with the properties along King Street being so excessive. She added that a cap of three stories should be implemented along King Street.

Ms. Shook stated that she would like general direction so that staff could sit down as a team with Ms. Meade and rough draft language to bring back to the Council for conceptual approval. The conceptual language would then be shared with the property owners in the impacted districts for their input.

Council Member Plaag understood that the height limitations for the north side of King Street, across from where this opt-in overlay district was proposed, would still exist. He suggested that if there were a three-story building along the north side of King Street, one would probably never see a five-story building on the south side of King Street, because the three-story building on the north side would be in the way. Council Member Roseman completely disagreed. She stated that she wanted to protect the mountains and preserve a small-town feel along King Street.

Council Member Tait stated that, from a construction perspective, the foundation and roof were always the most expensive parts of the building, so adding stories in between reduced the per-square-foot cost. Council Member Plaag suggested varying height limits across a district to create a softening effect.

Mayor George stated that he would like to create other areas in town that would mean as much to people as the downtown does, and that would require intentional design.

Pitched and flat roofs were discussed. Ms. Shook stated that these were options to explore.

Mayor George stated there did not seem to be much opposition to creating an opt-in district for the Hardin

Street area that would reduce parking minimums and allow for increased density with four to five-story buildings. He suggested incorporating low-level mixed uses in keeping with King Street. Ms. Shook cautioned that mixed-use projects required design elements that multi-family projects did not, so things like loading and unloading would have to be considered.

Council Member Plaag suggested allowing some parking spaces at the Horn in the West lot to be used as metered public parking. This could provide some public parking for areas outside downtown. Council Member Roseman agreed that it could be beneficial. Council Member Tait asked about the feasibility of partnering with a developer to create a public parking lot in locations outside downtown.

Ms. Shook wanted to ensure that Council members agreed that the opt-in districts would focus on student housing. Mayor George suggested moving away from mixed-use on Hardin Street, adding that he would like to see the downtown grow.

Ms. Shook stated that staff would also be looking to change existing multi-family standards to create an opportunity for student housing elsewhere. She noted that there were some big items on Planning's plate that would take time to accomplish. Council Member Tait asked if members of the Planning Commission could help with some of the work. Ms. Shook replied that there were times when boards were given assignments and were really proud of the work they produced. Then they received a hand slap, and the staff did too, because the boards were seen as going off the rails. She added that sometimes tasking board members with this type of work created extra work for staff by requiring more meetings and the management of the board's work. Keeping board members in the loop and gathering feedback throughout the process were important steps that did not happen often enough. Ms. Shook stated that, with the staff's workload from the Conditional Districts, this would mean increasing the number of Planning Commission meetings.

Ms. Shook noted that she planned to discuss scheduling because she felt more meetings were needed to move text amendments through, outside of the CD cases. She stated that she was in favor of using town boards for more than just reviewing projects. Ms. Shook suggested having a Council liaison attend these Planning Commission meetings to ensure consistency in how things progress. The public hearing process worked well because the Town Council and Planning Commission met together and shared ideas. Ms. Shook felt that the Planning Commission needed to speak a bit more during public hearings, as they raised many questions after the Council members adjourned.

Ms. Meade suggested that a draft with a wide variety of options be brought back to the Council and Planning Commission for input. The discussion also included a third area for the opt-in districts: Faculty Street near the former Boonie's restaurant.

Council Member Tait referenced voluntary building codes, such as green building programs, that would allow someone to choose from a menu of options that did not follow a prescriptive path, but would still offer creativity and flexibility for projects and provide the town with what it wanted. Ms. Shook agreed with Council Member Tait and stated that appearance standards needed to be addressed both inside and outside the opt-in districts. She added that incentives for stormwater were needed.

Other Matters

Food Trucks

Ms. Shook stated that the invitation was sent out regarding the food truck meeting at the second Council

meeting in January. She asked that Council members be prepared to have a conversation with participants about the proposed food truck text.

Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Agreement

Mr. Wise stated that the Memorandum of Understanding was issued by the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission and authorized the town to operate its own erosion control program. The town received three reviews from the North Carolina Sanitation Control Commission. Mr. Wise stated that the document outlined the town's responsibilities under the local program. Ms. Meade explained that the Memorandum of Agreement followed the state statute, offering no discretion. Mr. Wise noted that he had placed the Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement on Town Council's agenda for an official vote on Wednesday, January 14, 2026. Ms. Meade noted that a separate memorandum of understanding with Appalachian State University addressed a statutory change made last year, under which they were no longer subject to the town's zoning regulations. However, there was direction for App State to consult with the town. Ms. Meade stated that she, Ms. Shook, Mr. Wise, and Mr. Presnell attended a meeting with the university at which App State presented a memorandum of understanding outlining its procedure for consulting with the town.

Staff Reports

Ms. Shook then addressed staff reports. She stated that the staff recently reviewed a variety of other staff reports across the state to determine how they could revise staff reports and utilize the town's long-range plans. Ms. Shook noted that the town's staff reports were like books compared to those of other municipalities. She felt that staff reports were not being read because they were too long, and asked Council members what they would like to see in the reports. Council Member Plaag suggested that, if updates or revisions were made to the packet information, a clear and detailed list of those changes be included in the staff report. He also requested a clear explanation of what standards were not being met and why.

Evening Meeting Schedule

Ms. Shook stated that the increase in Conditional District cases has left little time for text amendment cases. She reminded Council members of an agreement last fall to hold public hearings for internal text amendment cases on the fourth Monday of every other month, as needed, and stated that she would like to begin that process in February. Council members agreed to this schedule. Council Member Plaag suggested adding a work session between the Town Council and Planning Commission to the internal text amendment hearings to allow for dialogue and collaboration about the cases.

Other

Ms. Shook stated that the Good Neighbor Program, housing, and the opt-in districts were really a year's worth of work alone. However, adjustments could be made if Council members had other priorities that they considered more pressing.

Council Member Plaag noted that he and Mayor George had placed an item on next week's Town Council agenda regarding the technology in Council Chambers. He stated that at that meeting, he would like to hear from Planning and Inspections a frank and honest assessment of what did not work for them in the room. Council Member Plaag stated that while the room's appearance had been updated to the 21st century, the technology in the room seemed stuck in 1992. Mayor George added that they needed to

either stop pretending hybrid meetings were an option or take steps to fix the problems. He stated that the Town of Newland had better technology than the Town of Boone. Ms. Shook asked that other users, such as the Planning Commission, be considered when changes to the space are considered. Mayor Pro Tem Carter suggested an AV audit for Council Chambers.

Ms. Shook asked whether it was still accurate that staff could provide guidance to applicants during the CD process, that they could not meet individually with Council members, but could meet with them collectively for informal discussion. Council Member Plaag stated that he did not want to be contacted directly for individual meetings with applicants. Ms. Meade noted that there was no legal impediment to Council members meeting individually with applicants. Mayor George felt it should be up to each Council member to do what they felt comfortable with. Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that he was open to meeting individually with applicants. Mayor George felt it would be better for applicants to meet with the entire Council first under the informal discussion before any individual meetings. Ms. Shook stated that the staff just needed to have specific direction on how to inform applicants. Council members agreed with Mayor George that the entire Council should meet with applicants before any individual meetings.

Mayor George asked that System Development Fees be mentioned to applicants as early in the process as possible. Ms. Shook suggested providing applicants with a handout during their first interaction.

Council Member Plaag asked how the online permitting process was working. Ms. Shook replied that it was not without issues, but she was hopeful that some of those issues could be resolved by the software vendor.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked how the short-term rental tracking system was working. Mr. Wise noted that there had been a few issues. However, Ms. Shook stated that the investment in retaining Host Compliance had been worth it.

Recap: Priorities and Direction

Ms. Shook felt that there was clear direction for the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission.

Ms. Shook mentioned that the City of Charlotte was now allowing ADUs in all areas of town.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter stated that his top priority was to modify the ordinance for the CD process.

Mayor George stated that his top priority was to streamline inclusionary zoning principles.

Ms. Shook noted that since the adoption of Boone Next, text allowing flag lots and residential cluster subdivisions had been adopted and should be celebrated as a win. Council Member Tait agreed that it was important to highlight the wins of Boone Next within this next year.

Ms. Shook also added that before the summer, staff hoped to initiate the Good Neighbor program, along with the NCD removal.

Adjournment

Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Dalton George, Mayor

Jane Shook, Director

DRAFT