

**MINUTES – WORKSHOP/RETREAT
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
March 8, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order electronically at 9:03 a.m. on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. Mayor Tim Futrelle presided. Town Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Edie Tugman, Todd Carter, Dalton George, Virginia Roseman and Becca Nenow. Staff present included Town Manager John Ward, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Police Chief Andy Le Beau, Finance Director Amy Davis, Human Resources Director Dale Presnell, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs, Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed, Public Works Director Rick Miller, Deputy Public Works Director Todd Moody and Planning Director Jane Shook.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the annual budget workshop.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Ward gave a brief Covid-19 update, and indicated a decrease in cases locally.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police Chief Andy Le Beau reiterated the concerns of other department heads of retention and recruitment which he attributed to low salaries. He indicated that Boone was the lowest paid law enforcement agency in the area, and noted that telecommunicators and jailors at the County were paid more than Boone police officers. Vehicles were listed as another need, in addition to body cameras and stop sticks.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Presnell emphasized the recruitment and retention issues previously expressed by department heads. He stated that the last official Town of Boone pay study was performed in 2005, when typically, towns perform these every 4-5 years. When he was hired in 2018, Mr. Presnell indicated that he was directed by Council to perform an in-house study, and he found that the Town of Boone was lagging behind in pay. Over the last four years, Mr. Presnell stated that staff had been given cost of living raises and no merit raises, and in the previous year staff was given a one-time bonus and no raises. He added that neighboring agencies shifted their pay scales an average of 16.55% last year and most planned an additional 3% cost of living increase for employees this year. Ms. Roseman stated that her priorities were to pay staff appropriately and to fix Town relations with the County. Mr. Ward recommended a fifteen percent pay increase for all Town staff to become effective April 1 using leftover fund balance funds until the new fiscal year. He indicated that American Rescue Act funds would provide the funding for the 10% one-time bonuses agreed to by the previous Council. Mayor Futrelle, Mr. George and Mr. Carter spoke also in favor of funding staff pay increases.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Finance Director Amy Davis provided members with an explanation of the sales tax distribution method used in Watauga County, and the change that took place in FY2013/14 to the ad valorem method. She estimated that the Town lost between 2.7 and 3 million dollars per year due to this change in sales tax collection method. She then gave a brief rundown of the finance department and how it was tied to the utility billing department, before Mayor Futrelle called for a break at 11:35 a.m. Council reconvened at 11:45 a.m.

ADMINISTRATION/DBDA/SUSTAINABILITY

Mr. Ward explained the administration department, as well as the wellness card benefit and the fact that the Town of Boone is self-insured. He then presented the FY20/21 DBDA budget and explained the municipal service district to members. The sustainability budget was the discussed briefly before members decided to break for lunch.

LUNCH

Mayor Futrelle declared a break at 12:41 p.m. Council reconvened at 1:33 p.m.

TOWN COUNCIL IDEAS & PRIORITIES

Mayor Futrelle stepped out of the meeting at 2:27 p.m. Mr. George was supportive of funding the municipal complex and salary increases. He also expressed an interest in funding affordable housing projects, and stream bank

restoration. His priorities in terms of staff needs were the items presented by planning and cultural resources staff. Mr. Carter's top priority was staff pay increases. Mayor Futrelle returned to the meeting at 2:59 p.m. Mayor Pro-Tem Tugman indicated that her top priorities were a digital table for planning, comprehensive planning, and bathroom restoration at the Horn in the West. Mr. Ward suggested that members consider blending the 2030 Plan and the Comprehensive Plan into one updated document. Mr. Carter reiterated that his priorities were staff pay increases, followed by the municipal complex, planning needs, and a downtown pride event. Ms. Roseman's priorities were staff pay and police department needs. Mayor Futrelle stated that his priorities were staff pay and police needs.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:54 p.m.

Nicole Harmon, Town Clerk

Tim Futrelle, Mayor