

**MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
MARCH 11, 2013**

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 8:40 a.m., Monday, March 11, 2013, in the Council Chambers, 1500 Blowing Rock Road. Mayor Loretta Clawson presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Jamie Leigh, Andy Ball, Lynne Mason, Rennie Brantz and Allan Scherlen. Staff members present were Town Manager Greg Young, Town Clerk Kim Brown, Deputy Town Clerk Christine Pope, Finance Director Amy Davis, Human Resources Director Peri Moretz, Facilities Maintenance Superintendent Eric Gustaveson, Planning Director Bill Bailey, Public Utilities Director Rick Miller, Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs, Police Chief Dana Crawford, Downtown Development Coordinator Virginia Falck and Public Works Director Blake Brown (arrived at 10:04 a.m.). Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele was also in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the Town's Annual Retreat. Mayor Clawson welcomed all in attendance.

APPROVAL OF FY 2013/202014 AUDIT CONTRACT

Upon a motion by Council Member Brantz, seconded by Council Member Mason, Council moved to approve the Contract to Audit Accounts with Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C. for fiscal year 2013/2014.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

- **Cultural Resources Department/Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA)**

Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta presented the annual reports for the Cultural Resources Department and the DBDA. **(Copy of reports permanently on file in the 2013 Annual Town Council Retreat packet.)** Ms. Fotta indicated that it is difficult for the Cultural Resources Advisory Board to make recommendations for the SAHA-leased property since the lease with SAHA is up at the end of 2013. Discussion ensued regarding SAHA's current financial situation. Mayor Clawson and Council Member Brantz were in agreement that more community support is needed for SAHA. Ms. Fotta pointed out that SAHA receives an average of \$33,000 per year from the Town through in-kind services, not including the revenue made through subleasing the Town property. Council Member Mason requested from Ms. Fotta written numbers outlining the in-kind services SAHA has received from the Town.

Discussion ensued regarding lighting, parking meters, pay stations and other parts of the streetscape plan for downtown Boone. Public Utilities Director Rick Miller pointed out that there may be a cost to the Town if underground utilities have to be fixed when doing renovations. Council Member Mason requested that the town manager provide more direction so the DBDA can move forward with the streetscape plan.

- **Finance Department**

Finance Director Amy Davis presented the Finance Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Brief discussion ensued regarding the status of the town's Web site initiative and which documents Council would like to have available online. Council Member Ball expressed his support to have public wireless Internet access available at the Council Chambers.

- **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs presented the Fire Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Brief discussion

ensued regarding the insurance coverage more closely matching the values of the properties at risk.

- **Human Resources**

Human Resources Director Peri Moretz presented the Human Resources Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Discussion ensued regarding the recent morale survey at ASU. Ms. Moretz stated she believed the morale is good overall for the town and turnover is low.

- **Planning and Inspections Department**

Planning Director Bill Bailey presented the Planning and Inspections Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Mr. Bailey noted that, overall, fees are increasing to cover associated costs.

- **Police Department**

Police Chief Dana Crawford presented the Police Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Chief Crawford noted that in a recent discussion with Watauga County Sheriff Hagaman, the requirement to have two dispatchers on duty at all times is considered unconstitutional and could not be required, but that aiming to do so will enhance the services to the citizens of Boone. Discussion ensued regarding possible 911 consolidation with the county. Chief Crawford stated a list of questions about 911 consolidation was sent to the county, and Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs and he are currently reviewing the county's answers to those questions. Council Member Mason requested that Council receive an evaluation of the 911 consolidation plan and for whether or not to consolidate prior to approval of the FY2013/2014 budget.

- **Public Utilities Department**

Public Utilities Director Rick Miller presented the Public Utilities Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)**

- **Public Works Department**

Facilities Maintenance Superintendent Eric Gustaveson presented the Public Works Department Annual Report. **(Copy of report permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat packet.)** Discussion ensued regarding ways to get more people recycling and the possibility of a public restroom facility at the Clawson-Burnley Park. Mr. Gustaveson noted it would cost approximately \$200,000 for the facilities, and there is the possibility of splitting the cost with Watauga County Parks and Recreation. Mayor Clawson suggested the town's matching funds be through in-kind services. Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta pointed out that maintenance and security of the restrooms will be an added cost and need to be part of the conversation.

Discussion ensued regarding the state of the public works building. Public Works Director Blake Brown noted that they are in dire need of a building with the current one falling apart. He added that a realtor is looking at a piece of property for the location of a new department building, and that he could come back to Council with ideas and proposals.

Mayor Clawson noted that on April 12, 2013, at 12 p.m. there will be a Lunch and Learn at the Council Chambers.

Mayor Clawson declared a break at 10:10 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:25 a.m.

PRESENTATION OF CAPITAL PROJECT/BUDGET REVIEW

Town Manager Greg Young began a PowerPoint presentation **(copy of presentation permanently on file in the 2013 Town Council Annual Retreat file)** and presented information regarding the following issues:

- Property Tax Collections as of Feb. 2013
- Tax Exempt Property Map
- Current and Prior Year Sales Tax Collection
- Budget Issues for Fiscal Year 2013/2014
 - Town Manager Greg Young noted the revaluation has been postponed until 2014.
- NC DOT U-4020 Project
 - Council members Leigh and Mason noted that several lights have not been working. Council directed Town Manager Greg Young to review the contract and see if a warranty applies to have the lights fixed and provide an update at the March regular meeting. Mr. Young noted that if not covered under warranty, the Town is responsible for fixing any issues that have occurred after either the date of completion or the date in which the engineers signed off on the “punch list” items.
- USPS – King Street Building Restoration
- Greenway Expansion – Wilson Drive
- College Street
- Fire Station #3
 - Town Manager Greg Young stated the property was acquired, renovations are underway, and it is being funded by the rural fire board with their fire service district money.
- Aerial Fire Truck Purchase
 - The first \$150,000 from ASU was received in December, and delivery date is expected to be April 2013.
- Water Intake Project
- FEMA Reimbursement for 2009 Ice Storm
 - Project closed Jan. 10, 2013 with payment totaling \$799,657.
- Tourism Supported Expenditure Priorities
 - Town Manager Greg Young indicated that recommended priorities need to be submitted to the TDA Board for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Town of Boone Fund Balance Data
 - Town Manager Greg Young stated over \$2.5 million is remaining to be appropriated, and recommended that Council put some aside for the brown building and to wait for actions of the General Assembly regarding funding.
- NC Local Government Commission – Fund Balance as of 6/30/2011
 - Council requested a list of what other North Carolina towns in our range are holding back in regard to funding before making a decision on continuing to aim for 35% or to aim for more, since the current average is 49.53%.

COUNCIL ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Discussion of Town Support for Southern Appalachian Historical Association (SAHA) and Creation of a Town Position for SAHA Director**

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the current financial situation of SAHA. Council Member Brantz indicated he did not believe SAHA currently has sufficient funding to have Horn in the West performances this summer. Council Member Ball stated he felt that before the Town could consider helping SAHA, Council should look at their budget and finances to see what has been done and what they need. Several Council members voiced agreement that there needs to be reorganization. Council Member Leigh felt that she could not support putting money into SAHA until SAHA internally makes a change, adding that this is a permanent request for support, not a temporary one. Mayor Clawson and Council Member Brantz agreed that it might be wise for them to take a year off to re-evaluate.

- **Discussion of Matching Funds for Historic Properties Survey**

Council Member Scherlen stated he is working with Planner Christy Turner to establish historical districts. He added that they could get a grant, but would need matching funds as well, which would be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 (the Town’s portion) for research. Planning Director Bill Bailey suggested that Council choose to start with the downtown area then branch out to the entire town through individual neighborhoods. Council was in agreement that the windshield survey first completed should include the Junaluska and Grand Boulevard neighborhoods and downtown Boone.

- **Discussion of Town Support for Watauga Public Library Children’s Literacy Materials and Other Funding Needs**

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of funding the Watauga County Public Library without them going through the outside agency funding process. Council Member Mason voiced her support for the library, its community values and what the library does. Council Member Leigh stated that Council should wait until after the Outside Agency Funding Review Committee makes their recommendation to Council regarding revisions to the funding process before seeing how this fits in. She added that doing this before the committee makes their recommendation is premature and suggests that the library is more special than other non-profit organizations in Boone. Council Member Brantz agreed that the Council should wait, adding that he supports the library as a valuable resource for the community.

- **Discussion of Town of Boone Space Needs – Municipal Services Complex/Government Center for Replacement of Brown Building and Fire Station**

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of creating a government complex to house most or all of the town departments in a timeline of potentially five years. Town Manager Greg Young reviewed the initial costs and process for such a building, adding that there are a limited number of parcels in town that could provide enough space. Council Member Mason stated she believed it appropriate to take to the voters whether or not to do this. Mr. Young indicated there is preliminary work that needs to be completed before being voted on, and Council may want to consider going ahead and acquiring property, which could cost a minimum of \$1.5- to \$2 million. He added that departments may still need to be split up if there is not a large enough tract of land within town limits, and the town would need to look at financing if wanting to complete this faster than 10 years. Council Member Ball stated he felt safety at the brown building and police department safety should be addressed in the short-term in a discussion soon.

Mayor Clawson declared a break for lunch at 12 p.m. Council reconvened at 1 p.m.

- **Discussion of Howard Street Downscaled Improvement Plan**

Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta advised Council that the consultant who completed the street in Asheville that was discussed has completed preliminary drawings of a downscaled plan for Howard Street using the rights-of-way the Town currently has. She added that it includes the option to make Appalachian and Howard streets and part of Depot Street one-way for vehicular traffic. Council directed Ms. Fotta to submit the consultant’s preliminary drawings to them. Ms. Fotta added the next step might be to get cost estimates once a street route plan is determined.

- **Discussion of Capital Improvement Projects/Plan:**

Public Works Needs – Storm Water, Street Needs, Sidewalks and Bike Lanes: Public Works Director Blake Brown advised Council that his department is on track to have three or four sidewalks completed this coming year. He added that the number of sidewalks that can be completed will depend on funding received and the length of the sidewalks. Council Member Mason requested an estimate for each sidewalk portion to be completed in order to better determine which ones to do each year. Mr. Brown added that he will be requesting funding in the upcoming budget to have an engineer complete a survey prioritizing streets that need resurfacing. He also advised Council that the storm water system under Daniel Boone Drive and Depot Street need to be replaced or rehabilitated. Council Member Ball stated he felt it might be time to establish a fund for bike lanes. Council Member Mason indicated that the NC Department of Transportation made a commitment to resurface their roads and add bike lanes.

Downtown – Streetscape and Sidewalks, Theatre, Parking Needs: Discussion ensued regarding the current downtown streetscape and sidewalk plan and DBDA partnering with the Town to cover the costs. Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta added that merchants are agreeable to the idea of having shorter-term parking closer to the businesses with longer-term parking farther away. Council Member Mason voiced her support for metered parking, adding that people expect to pay for parking, and it becomes easier to enforce. Ms. Mason added that Raleigh, N.C. offered to donate 400 meters that they are not using. Ms. Fotta also provided an update on the status of the Appalachian Theatre renovation.

Greenway Expansion and Green space Preservation: Town Manager Greg Young stated that the Wilson Drive portion of the Greenway Expansion is complete. Public Works Director Blake Brown added that they are working with the committee to update a focus map and incorporate the bike plan to create a combined alternative transportation plan.

Cultural Resources – Maintenance Issues for Town Properties, Rachel Rivers-Coffey Property, Horn in the West Property, Daniel Boone Native Gardens (Fencing): Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta stated she is trying to put together a process for what comes through the Cultural Resources Advisory Board and what goes directly to Town Council for consideration. She added that it would be helpful if outside organizations came to the advisory board once or twice a year to submit their requests rather than multiple times throughout the year. Council Member Leigh agreed with needing a process. Council Member Mason felt that if it is anything that has to do with the reuse of a property, it should first go to Council, and that staff was capable of handling many things without needing to go through the board or Council. Facilities Maintenance Superintendent Eric Gustaveson noted that the materials to repair the rock house on the Rivers property could cost more if it gains the National Register of Historic Places designation due to the original materials requirement. Ms. Fotta added that the SAHA lease renewal in December 2013 could impact the upcoming fiscal year budget for maintenance and other costs associated with that property. Ms. Fotta also stated that, in regard to fencing at the Daniel Boone Native Gardens, it was sent back to them to secure additional funding. Council Member Ball pointed out the possible need for fencing where the Powderhorn Theatre was to prevent children from getting close to where the property drops off.

Daniel Boone Park: Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta indicated that, if moving toward licensing use of the properties, this property could become sustainable by renting out the area, especially use of the amphitheatre.

- **Funding Options: Bonds, Loans**

Council Member Mason reiterated the need to determine funding options for the possibility of a governmental complex.

- **Staffing Needs: Assistant Town Manager, Housing Coordinator, EDC Coordinator, Public Relations, Other**

Town Manager Greg Young stated all positions will be difficult to fund, although he does believe some are needed. He added that Special Assistant to the Town Manager Jim Byrne is still an employee as his assistant and is involved with housing in Boone. Council Member Mason noted that the housing coordinator position could be shared between the town and county as a position to pursue affordable housing and look into grant options and initiatives. Council Member Leigh voiced her support for a public relations position. Council Member Ball agreed, adding that the position was established as a priority last year, but not funded. He added that he believed the town needed a spokesperson to handle press releases, online presence, content management and other items for different departments. Council Member Ball also stated he believed now is the time to partner with the county on the economic development commission.

- **Policy Enforcement: No Smoking on Town Properties Including Parks, Peddler's Licenses and Air Brakes**

Brief discussion ensued regarding air brakes and signs posted against them downtown. Public Works Director Blake Brown noted that the signs currently up about air brakes is not legal, but can be kept up for now according to the state. Town Manager Greg Young noted he has asked Officer Foley to enforce no smoking areas downtown. Discussion ensued regarding receiving a peddler's license and panhandling and ways to limit the areas where it can take place. Town Attorney Sam Furguele noted that panhandling is allowed if it is not aggressive, and it may be difficult to tighten the ordinance in a way to only allow it in some locations and not others.

- **Public Utilities – Water Intake, Capital Improvement Projects**

Public Utilities Director Rick Miller pointed out that the only issue they are encountering is the lead-free ruling by the federal government.

- **Outside Agency Funding**

Council Member Mason indicated a recent article stated non-profit organizations are in difficult times with the economy and are the last to recover. She added that, given their services, Council should look at increasing the funding allocation.

Mayor Clawson declared a break at 2:44 p.m. Council reconvened at 3:03 p.m.

- **Budget Line Items**

Council Member Leigh indicated she would like to have a better understanding of the budget and what is included under the regular operating budget. Town Manager Greg Young explained that there are three parts of the budget: personnel and associated costs, operational costs and capital outlay. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the process of having items placed as a recurring line item versus one-time funding through capital outlay and how this effects the budget overall. Mr. Young stated that he can take Council’s priorities and requests and find money to fund these on a recurring basis, but it will take more money to fund and typically reduces the amount left for capital outlay. Council Member Leigh stated she’d like to see some items on an ongoing basis—like a tree fund—but wasn’t sure how to request it, and felt that a better understanding of what is covered in the budget might allow Council to see what could be changed or reduced to make room for other requested funds. Finance Director Amy Davis added that Mr. Young has been enforcing tight restrictions on budget increases, including the budget for operational necessities. Council Member Mason mentioned last year’s discussion of “contracted services” and not knowing what that really entailed. Council Member Leigh requested a five-year revenue and expenditure history report.

SETTING OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES FOR FY2013/2014

Council members Ball and Mason agreed that they needed additional information before setting priorities. Council Member Mason indicated she would like more information on the sidewalk priority plan, Howard Street concept plan, downtown parking plan, downtown streetscape and meter plans and park restroom facilities estimates before deciding what to tackle this upcoming year. Council Member Ball added that the next discussion could include the downtown master tree plan, 4020 tree situation and toilet rebate program. Council Member Brantz stated he would meet with SAHA and report back to Council regarding their concerns. Town Manager Greg Young indicated that adding more staff will probably require a tax increase. Mayor Clawson voiced her disagreement with a tax increase being a necessity this year.

Finance Director Amy Davis advised Council that departmental budgets are due to the town manager by April 15. It was the consensus of Council to schedule a follow-up meeting for Monday, April 22, 2013, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Council Member Mason, seconded by Council Member Ball, Council moved to adjourn at 3:46 p.m.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

Christine Pope, Deputy Town Clerk

Loretta Clawson, Mayor