

**BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026, 5:00 PM
1500 BLOWING ROCK ROAD AND WEBEX**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Dalton George, Mayor Pro Tem Todd Carter, Eric Plaag, Anne Pruitt, Virginia Roseman (arrived at 5:05 p.m.), and Adrian Tait (arrived at 5:15 p.m.)

PLANNING & INSPECTIONS STAFF PRESENT: Brandon Wise-Deputy Director of Planning & Inspections, Amy Snider-Commercial Zoning Specialist, and Brenda Henson-Administrative Coordinator

OTHER TOWN STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Dale Presnell-Interim Town Manager, and Todd Moody-Public Works Director

Call to Order

Mayor George called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Case A26-0124 Moratoria on Cryptocurrency, Data Centers & Similar Uses

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 160D-107 and 160D-601, the Town of Boone is conducting a public hearing to consider a 12-month moratorium on cryptocurrency mining, data centers, and similar uses, during which 12-month period the Town would not accept or approve applications for development of such uses.

Brandon Wise introduced the request.

Mayor George clarified that the Town was not considering a data center coming to Boone. The purpose of this public hearing was to consider a moratorium on data centers and other similar uses. Mayor George explained that a moratorium would be a one-year ban on these uses. This would allow staff time to examine the ordinance to determine whether the proper mechanisms were in place to protect the community from the environmental concerns associated with data centers and similar uses, such as pressure on water systems and infrastructure. The Council brought this forward to be proactive in ensuring that the community would not be harmed before such a use came forward with a plan to locate in Boone.

Council Member Plaag added that one reason they were requesting this moratorium was that the current Unified Development Ordinance was silent on data centers, crypto mining, and other similar uses.

Mayor George invited public comment.

Andy Hill thanked the Council for bringing forward the moratorium and appreciated the time and research that would go into pre-empting data centers from locating in the community.

Richard Gray thanked the Council for taking this action. He stated that he very strongly supported a moratorium on data centers and crypto mining within the Town of Boone. Mr. Gray noted that data centers and crypto mining took enormous amounts of energy and water, and their backup generators would be a source of pollution. He stated that progress in designing and manufacturing the complex computer chips for both data centers and crypto mining was advancing rapidly, and advances in software and other efficiency measures would make data centers built today or at the end of this moratorium obsolete within a few years. Mr. Gray urged the Council to consider extending the moratorium until data centers could be built without enormous environmental impacts and energy requirements. He hoped

that this moratorium would encourage the Watauga County Commissioners and other town councils and county commissions in the area to adopt similar moratoria.

Dale Kirkley thanked the Council for the preemptive work. He stated that he represented the Blue Ridge group of the North Carolina Sierra Club, which strongly supported the moratorium. Mr. Kirkley felt it was important to provide a model and encouragement to other rural counties in the high country to preemptively consider this issue as well. He stated that he had a list of all the issues that would need to be addressed to create regulations. Council Member Plaag asked Mr. Kirkley to email the list to Council members because it could be helpful in the regulation process.

Rebecca Shaw echoed the other speakers' comments and urged the Council to extend the moratorium beyond one year.

Shane Watson did not speak.

Nancy Oliver did not speak.

Allison Blanks, an architect and resident of Watauga County, stated that she had experience in the design of data centers and supported the proposed moratorium. She felt that a moratorium would allow time to connect regionally with other jurisdictions that have passed similar moratoria to create cohesive regulations. Ms. Blanks stated that the moratorium would also allow time to prepare local emergency services for the complexity of these projects. She added that data centers primarily brought temporary construction jobs, but many data center systems were specialized and required specific subcontractors and vendors who would have to travel from regional metros and were not guaranteed to be sourced from local labor pools. Ms. Blanks stated that a moratorium would allow time to define locally how sustainability would be measured. Data Centers often consume twice as much power daily as the entire city of New Orleans. Ms. Blanks stated that a moratorium would allow time for critical thinking about the nature of data center work.

Marty Steele did not speak.

John Callahan, a retired geology professor, stated he had been fighting for clean air and clean water in Boone for over 50 years. He felt that a data center would take our precious water, and water and air were two of our most precious commodities. Mr. Callahan stated that he foresaw a countywide water system in the future and that water needed to be preserved because conditions would worsen with climate change.

Charlotte Revels did not speak.

Max Shirihjian did not speak.

Brianna Vanover stated that she came from Hickory and noted that four data centers are currently being built in Catawba County. Over a billion dollars was going into the construction, and the data centers were getting extreme tax cuts for locating there. Ms. Vanover stated that she did not want to see that happen to Boone, where it was so quiet and peaceful. She noted that the construction itself was loud, and that when the data centers were operating, they would disturb the wildlife and the peace that brings people to Boone.

Kate Houck asked why so many data centers were being built and what the implications were countrywide.

Annie Woodford stated that Ray Russell posted on Facebook that he knew of a very serious inquiry into a data center and a large manufacturing facility in rural Watauga County. She urged residents of Watauga County to attend a County Commissioners meeting and voice their concerns about data centers.

With nothing further, Mayor George closed the public comment period and thanked everyone for attending and for their comments.

VOTE

Council Member Plaag made a motion to adopt, as written, the moratorium on cryptocurrency mining, data centers, and similar uses, during which 12-month period the Town would not accept or approve applications for development of such uses. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Carter.

Vote: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Adjournment

With nothing further, Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 5:23 p.m.

Dalton George, Mayor

Brenda Henson, Administrative Coordinator