MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL MAY
2, 2008

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 10:02 a.m., Friday, May 2, 2008, in the Council Chambers, 1500 Blowing Rock Road. Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason presided. Council Members present were Rennie Brantz, Stephen Phillips and Liz Aycock. Staff members present were Greg Young-Town Manager, Kimberly Brown-Deputy Town Clerk, Rick Miller-Public Utilities Director, Blake Brown-Public Works Director, and John Spear-Development Services Director. Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele was also present.

Representatives from the North Carolina Department of Transportation present were Dean Ledbetter-Division Traffic Engineer, Mike Pettyjohn-Division Engineer, Trent Beaver-Division Construction Engineer, Michael Poe-District Engineer, and Charles Rhinehardt-Division Maintenance Engineer.

The following persons were also in attendance: Dr. Loren Baumhover-Chief of Staff in Chancellor's Office ASU, Dr. Greg Lovins-Interim Vice-Chancellor for Business Affairs ASU, Barry Sauls-Director of Parking & Traffic ASU, North Carolina State Representative Cullie Tarlton, Larry Turnbow on behalf of North Carolina Senator Steve Goss, Phil Trew-High Country Council of Governments, Craig Hughes-High Country Council of Governments, Dan Meyer-President Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, Ranny Phillips-Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, Mike Hall-Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, Betty Farthing-Appalachian Auto Glass, Marvin Weant-Grace Lutheran Church, Kurt Fengler-Grace Lutheran Church, Steve Metcalf-The Policy Group, David Brewer-High Country Press, and Frank Ruggerio-Watauga Democrat.

Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. She stated that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss items of mutual interest, to receive updates on current and upcoming projects, to create alternatives to address issues, and to develop an action plan.

DISCUSSION OF HIGHWAY 105 ISSUES

Mike Pettyjohn began this discussion by presenting the following update on Highway 105: *"We have recently completed a study of this corridor with potential solutions. We met with Mayor Clawson and Chairman Deal last week and presented this information. We have asked them to consider the proposal, talk with the respective boards and if it is something that they can support, we will be glad to come and give the same presentation to each board. We believe that it is imperative that this issue to be looked at from a corridor standpoint, or we will compound problems instead of resolving problems. As for repaving/restriping, the District Office is hoping to have a contract in place in June for milling and filling the outside lanes, spot milling/full depth patching on the three inside lanes, and then a full width microsurface overlay on the entire section from Wilson Drive to the NC 105 Bypass."*

Representative Tarlton requested more information on the microsurface overlay and the effect of the use of a salt-brine solution on area roadways. Mr. Pettyjohn explained that the microsurface is 5/8 of an inch thick and helps to extend the life of the pavement. He stated that the use of a salt-brine solution has not affected the area road surfaces any more than the normal use of salt. Council Member Brantz asked about the decision-making process for highway corridors. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that many requests are received and considered for area roadways each year; however, the department has to consider the entire system and the effect of changes to mobility and safety. Council Member Aycock asked about the installation of a left-turn lane on Highway 105 at Poplar Hill Drive. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that the DOT is exploring placing some limited turning lanes at strategic points along the highway and that the DOT is considering prohibiting left turns at that particular intersection due to physical site restraints that prohibit placing a left-turn lane there. Council Member Aycock asked if the DOT had considered ingress and egress for residents when prohibiting left turns from a neighborhood. Mr. Pettyjohn answered that this issue was considered but prohibiting left turns actually improves mobility and traffic flow in many situations. Council Member Aycock inquired about improving pedestrian safety at the intersection of Highway 105 and Highway 321 (Wendy's Restaurant location). Also, Council Member Brantz questioned the use of audible pedestrian crosswalk signals for those who are

sight-impaired. Mr. Ledbetter stated that there are no plans to include a raised crosswalk or audible pedestrian at that particular intersection. He further explained that those types of items are not typically DOT standards but that the department would support such a project if it were the desire of a town. Mr. Ledbetter stated that those types of improvements are usually cost-prohibitive due to such issues as right-of-way acquisition and space constraints.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALKS

Mike Pettyjohn presented the following statement regarding crosswalks: *"We request that the Town identify problems at these locations, and we will be glad to investigate and make appropriate recommendations. Redesigning the traffic signals to install crosswalks and the deterioration of the operation of the signals should only be considered if crosswalks are the solution to an identifiable problem. Again, the intersections on the King Street project will be evaluated at the time signal plans are developed. Also, there is an approved project for installing markings and pedestrian signals at the 321/105 intersection."* Mayor Pro-Tem Mason began discussion regarding pedestrian crosswalks within the Town of Boone by stating that it is the desire of the Town Council and citizens of Boone to create safe alternatives to traveling around town. Ms. Mason informed the DOT officials that a walkability audit has been conducted and that it is the intent of the Council to work with the DOT to increase pedestrian safety. Mr. Pettyjohn agreed that pedestrian safety is important; however, he noted that most roads within Boone are major corridors and to redesign these major intersections would create a major impact on traffic flow. He suggested that the Town identify the intersections that are most critical and in need of pedestrian improvements. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that the DOT would then study these intersections and bring recommendations for improvements back before the Council. Mayor Pro-Tem Mason listed the intersection of Highway 105 and New Market Center as a critical area. She inquired as to any short-term remedy for improvements at the intersection of Highway 421 and Highway 105 Extension. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that bidding for the Highway 421 project is due to begin by April 2009, a time frame that does not allow for sufficient planning and implementing improvements to that intersection. Mayor Pro-Tem Mason initiated a discussion regarding a lack of crosswalks along the Highway 321 corridor. Mr. Ledbetter stated that the problem with Highway 321 is that there are no central pedestrian crossing areas. He offered that most people would not backtrack to get to a signalized intersection to access a pedestrian crosswalk. Representative Tarlton inquired about the use of recognized, dedicated crosswalks as in Chapel Hill. Mr. Ledbetter agreed that this type of crosswalk is practical in downtown areas where there is a more concentrated number of pedestrians and low-speed areas but not along a five-lane highway. He indicated that the DOT is not inclined to create unsignalized crosswalks on Highway 321. Mr. Pettyjohn suggested that the Town identify logical, signalized intersections for possible crosswalk placements for study by the DOT. Representative Tarlton suggested some type of signage to direct pedestrians to signalized crosswalks. Mr. Pettyjohn also agreed to review that suggestion. Council Member Brantz asked about the cost involved for creating a signalized crosswalk at the intersection of King and College Streets. Mr. Ledbetter stated that the cost would depend on the availability of space since that is a very compact intersection with a pre-timed traffic signal. He estimated approximately $10,000-15,000 for such a project. He also estimated the cost for the same type of installation on Highway 321 at approximately $30,000. He explained that the increase in cost is due to the traffic detectors at those intersections and because that corridor is part of a closed-loop computer system for traffic signalization that would have to be reprogrammed to include push-button crosswalks.

DISCUSSION OF KING STREET WIDENING PROJECT

Mike Pettyjohn began by bringing the group up to date about the status of the project. He stated that the project bidding date is April 21, 2009. He also stated that the completion of the area from the intersection of Highway 194 to Highway 105 is the first priority to coincide with the opening of the new high school by the year 2010. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that construction may occur during all hours of the day but consideration will be given to the impact on traffic during peak hours. He stated that there is currently no way to reroute traffic to alleviate congestion during construction.

STREET LIGHTING:
Mike Pettyjohn presented the following statement regarding the issue of street lighting for the entire project: *"Ornamental or decorative lighting can be provided at the cost of the*

municipality. The municipality would also be responsible for the power and maintenance cost. Lighting that meets ASSHTO guidelines would need to be evaluated to determine if it is warranted."

SIDEWALKS:
Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following information regarding sidewalks throughout the project: *"Sidewalk is included throughout the project on both sides. The Agreement for sidewalk was sent to the Town on April 2, 2008. The cost will be split 70/30%."*

BIKE LANES:
Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following statement concerning bike lanes: *"The outside lanes of King Street will be widened 2' (14' lanes) to accommodate bicycle traffic."* Representative Tarlton inquired about street markings for the bike lanes. Mr. Pettyjohn indicated that the issue of street markings for the project has not been discussed. Mayor Pro-Tem Mason stated that the issue will be discussed and that a recommendation for striping or signage will be made to the DOT.

LANDSCAPED MEDIANS:
Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following information regarding landscaped medians for the project: *"A 17.5' median is included in the final plans between stations 25-33. This is the only feasible location due to turn lanes and tapers. Landscaping can be provided in accordance with the Guidelines for Planing within Highway right-of-way. Depending on the level of planting, the municipality may be required to share in the cost of landscaping. The municipality will be responsible for maintenance."* Mr. Pettyjohn stated that if the Town desires landscaped medians in other areas, a recommendation can be made for further study by the DOT.

RETAINING WALLS:
Mr. Pettyjohn issued the following information regarding retaining walls that incorporate native stone: *"The Department can provide retaining walls that incorporate natural materials, but the additional cost of the natural material will be the responsibility of the municipality. Otherwise the Department plans to provide architectural surface-treated retaining wall faces. The stone pattern and color of the architectural surface treatment can be chosen to match local stone."* He stated that the plans offer two options: a concrete wall with design or a laid-stone option. He noted that if the Town chooses the laid-stone option, it must absorb part of the cost. He stated that the DOT can send some informative brochures regarding the design options for retaining walls for consideration. Dan Meyer questioned if retaining wall shelves can be landscaped. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that is possible but that there are safety and maintenance issues to consider.

Discussion ensued concerning the plans for the project along the property owned by the Grace Lutheran Church. Marvin Weant and Kurt Fengler, representatives from the Grace Lutheran Church, posed questions regarding the existing retaining wall, utility issues, and right-of-way issues along that section. Officials from the DOT offered to meet with Mr. Weant and Mr. Fengler following the meeting to discuss these specific issues.

In regard to utility issues, Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason stated the desire of the Town to have all overhead utilities buried. Mr. Pettyjohn suggested setting a meeting with Town and DOT officials and the local utility provider to further discuss this issue.

WATER & SEWER UPGRADES:
Mr. Pettyjohn issued the following statement regarding proposed water and sewer upgrades: *"Utilities that conflict with the roadway construction will be handled per the Departments standard procedures."* Public Utilities Director Rick Miller stated that the Town is planning to relocate utility lines and upgrade a few lines during the project.

CONTROLLED CROSSOVER:
Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following statement regarding a controlled crossover: *"At least one controlled crossover along the section of road from NC 105 Extension to Hardin Street, preferably at the Town of Boone Public Works Center. Due to minimum spacing requirement between median crossovers, the Department will not be able to provide left-turn access at this location."* He asked that the Town review the plans for this crosswalk to determine if they meet the needs of the Town.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION:
Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following information regarding property acquisition: *"Appraisals have begun coming in and are being reviewed. The Department should begin contacting property owners next week to advise them of appraisals and begin the negotiation process."* He noted that the minimum time allowed to vacate a premises is 90 days. He stated that appraisals, settlements, filed suits, and construction progress could be a factor in the relocation of businesses being displaced by the project. Mayor Pro-Tem Mason stated that the Town would encourage flexibility in the relocation efforts. She also indicated that the Town would use consideration with displaced businesses in meeting Town regulations at new locations. Mr. Pettyjohn stated the DOT would help with relocation efforts as much as possible.

Dan Meyer asked about the probability of increased traffic and congestion along Bamboo Road, Wilson Ridge Road, and Deerfield Road once the project is started. Mr. Ledbetter stated that a study is currently being conducted for that corridor but that there is no time for design and to implement improvements to that corridor before this project begins. He pointed out such issues that would complicate the placement of a traffic signal or turn lane in that area such as acquisition of rights-of-way, the grade of the road, and visibility issues.

Council Member Aycock asked if the DOT would study the Highway 421 North corridor just outside of the city limits. She stated that she frequently sees students walking along the roadway since there are no sidewalks along that stretch of road. She suggested that the DOT make improvements to the roadway shoulder to improve pedestrian safety.

REVALUATION OF SPEED LIMITS ON ALL DOT-MAINTAINED ROADS (INCLUDING NEIGHBORHOODS)

Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following statement regarding this issue: *"Due to the volume of roads that we have to evaluate throughout the Division, we request that the Town give us a specific list of roads and the issues that make them candidates for a reduced speed limit. Also, we would be glad to discuss turning the neighborhood roads over to the Town, or any other roads contained inside the city limits."* Mayor Pro-Tem Mason listed as examples: Junaluska Road, Kellwood Drive, and Fairway Drive.

OLD EAST KING STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Pettyjohn issued the following update regarding this issue: *NCDOT's involvement with this project has been mostly with Watauga County. In Spring of 2007, the Town of Boone's Development Services Department recommended to the Town Council that sidewalks and bike lanes be included with other planned improvements to Old East King Street. At a meeting on 5/25/07, County project officials were made aware that a minimum pavement width of 28 feet would be necessary in order to include bike lanes. NCDOT proceeded with a design including sidewalks and bike lanes and obtained some preliminary ROW estimates. Bike lanes were eliminated due to constructability issues adjacent to the cemetery and due to excessive right-of-way requirements in other locations. The total right-of-way cost was then estimated at $351k for inclusion of bike lanes and sidewalks (it was thought that the row could be reduced to approx. $175k without bike lanes and sidewalks). DOT officials met with the County's High School Committee on 8/22/07 to discuss preliminary plans and right-of-way costs. On 9/24/07, District Engineer Michael Poe received a call from the County Manager requesting that NCDOT proceed with the design of this project that would require the least amount of right-of-way. This would include what is necessary for the turn lane onto US421 at new Market, the turn lanes into the new school site, and any widening that may be necessary at the intersection with US421 opposite of Industrial Park Drive. NCDOT has since proceeded in this direction. Currently, the design is nearing design completion and we have just received updated right-of-way estimates and need to get a reimbursable agreement in place with the County. Plans are to complete right-of-way in 2008 and let a contract for construction in early 2009."* Council Member Aycock emphasized the need for sidewalks and bike lanes along this road which will be used by students at the new high school. She reiterated that safety must remain the priority in this matter. Public Works Director Blake Brown presented information regarding the amount of right-of-way available along that stretch of roadway. Mayor Pro-Tem Mason stated that the Town is willing to meet with both DOT and Watauga County officials to further explore this need.

ELECTRONIC BILLBOARDS

Mr. Pettyjohn presented the following information regarding electronic billboards: *"The District Office approved an electronic billboard in December of 2007 for Lamar Outdoor Advertising on Old US 421. The sign was a replacement of an existing billboard and it meets all federal, state and county requirements, but it is visible from the new US 421 (a scenic highway). Old 421 is still an ODA-controlled route and the location is a grandfathered site and since it was a replacement, we had no authority to deny it. This sign was approved so that the view of this sign was no greater than the billboard previously erected at this location."*

OTHER MATTERS

Mayor Pro-Tem Mason inquired about improving crosswalk and street markings within the Town. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that the DOT is limited in both funding and adequate personnel. Mr. Ledbetter explained that DOT crews are currently performing this type of maintenance work and do so by areas of high priority such as high-speed roads. Mr. Pettyjohn agreed that the DOT can discuss this issue and coordinate efforts with the Town Public Works Department so that efforts are not duplicated. Discussion ensued about improving crosswalks in the downtown area along King Street. In regard to the King Street/Grand Boulevard intersection, Mr. Ledbetter stated that placing a crosswalk there might result in the loss of some parking spaces in order to comply with ADA standards. He noted that installing pedestrian signals in established crosswalks may be a possibility but could cause longer cycle lengths, thereby increasing pedestrian wait-time. Mr. Pettyjohn stated that the DOT can study this issue and better determine the effect of such a change on traffic flow, pedestrian accessibility, and parking.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason briefly summarized the meeting discussion and with no further matters for consideration, adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

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Deputy Town Clerk

Mayor Pro-Tem