

**MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RETREAT
THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2007 4 P.M.
CHETOLA RESORT
NORTH MAIN STREET, BLOWING ROCK, NC**

Boone Town Council: Mayor Loretta Clawson, Lynne Mason-Mayor Pro-Tem, Bunk Spann, Dempsey Wilcox, Janet Pepin

Boone Town Staff: Greg Young-Town Manager, Kimberly Tester-Deputy Town Clerk, Rick Miller-Public Utilities Director, John Spear-Development Services Director, Blake Brown-Public Works Director, Curtis Main-Police Captain, Sam Furgieuele-Town Attorney

Blowing Rock Town Council: Terry Lentz-Mayor Pro-Tem, Barbara Ball, Keith Tester, Rita Wiseman, Tommy Klutz

Blowing Rock Town Staff: Scott Hildebran-Town Manager, Sharon Greene-Town Clerk

Seven Devils Town Council: Mayor Bob Dodson, Richard DeMott-Mayor Pro-Tem, Kathy Copley

Watauga County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Jim Deal, Billy Ralph Winkler-Vice Chairman, John Cooper, Mary Moretz, Winston Kinsey

Watauga County Staff: Rocky Nelson-County Manager, Deron Geouque-Assistant County Manager, Anita Fogle-Clerk to the Board, Joe Furman-Planning and Inspections Director

Appalachian State University: Chancellor Kenneth Peacock, Dr. Loren Baumhover

Facilitator: Dr. Garry Cooper, Christy DeStefano

Mayor Loretta Clawson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. She welcomed all in attendance and turned the floor over to Council member Mason. Council member Mason stressed the need for cooperation among all of the entities present. She stated that this is a critical time for the high country region and that decisions made now will impact future generations. Council member Mason stated her goal is to leave the retreat with an action plan to work on major issues that affect the entire region. She invited Garry Cooper to begin facilitation.

Dr. Cooper began by posing the following two-part focus question to the group: “What issues of common concern are opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in addressing ways to accommodate regional growth and change over the next six to twelve months, and what should we do about these issues?” He asked all attendees to introduce themselves and list an issue of concern. Dr. Cooper then listed the following meeting guidelines: 1) Everyone should hear and be heard, 2) there are no wrong answers, 3) everyone has wisdom, 4) the use of wisdom results in the wisest outcome, 5) there are creative ways to solve issues. Dr. Cooper listed the following items of concern and invited a brief explanation of each issue:

1. **ZERO WASTE**

Chairman Deal stated that this issue encompasses both environmental and economic impacts. Council member Mason voiced a concern with the current county landfill and stated a joint endeavor is needed to resolve this issue. County Manager Rocky Nelson stated that all entities need to take action to deal with this issue. Council member Spann stated that use of composting and other zero waste measures will save costs including the cost of using fuel to transport waste to other facilities. Jasmine Shoshanna stated that a closed circle system is needed at the current landfill site.

2. **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Mayor Clawson stressed the use of the Appalacart system as a way to reduce the use of cars. Council member Mason stated the need for alternative transportation means, such as greenways.

Council member Pepin stated that this issue has an effect on parking issues.

3. WATER AND SEWER

Council member DeMott pointed out the effect of pollution on our rivers and streams and the many septic systems throughout the county, both public and private. Chairman Deal stated this is a very critical issue and has a major effect on the affordable housing market. Council member Pepin compared the need for water to the increase in growth and development. Council member Spann stated the Town of Boone is seeking an interconnection agreement for water.

4. GREENWAYS/RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Chairman Deal stated he feels that interest exists for an interconnected trail for all communities and that this issue affects tourism and the local job market.

5. PRESERVATION OF OUR HERITAGE

Mayor Clawson voiced the need to preserve our local history and historical sites. Council member Pepin informed the group of the recent activation of the Boone Historical Commission whose first priority is to inventory local historical sites. Council member Spann mentioned the recent situation with the Appalachian Historical Museum.

6. REGIONAL HEALTHCARE

Council member Tester listed the following challenges for healthcare: small community hospitals vs. regional healthcare systems, rising health care costs, and rapid growth. Commissioner Moretz voiced the need for more community care clinics to treat area poor.

7. ALTERNATIVE/SAVING ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES

Mayor Clawson stated that the Town of Boone was recently designated as a “Cool City” and has been experimenting with the use of biodiesel fuel in town trucks and equipment. Commissioner Kinsey stated that ways need to be developed to save traditional energy sources, as well as alternative energy sources. Council member Pepin suggested that ASU should play a key role in the development of energy-saving industry in this region. Chancellor Peacock stated that ASU is moving toward more sustainable development within the campus.

8. DOT PROPOSAL/HIGHWAY 421

Council member Mason stated this project is a major priority and that all entities need to be focused on ensuring that details such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and landscaped medians are part of the project plan.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL AND VIEWSHED PROTECTION

Mayor Clawson stated that the Boone Town Council recently imposed a moratorium on steep-slope development and created new regulations governing development on steep-slopes as the result of public outcry over the apartment complex located above the Boone Wal-Mart.

10. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Chairman Deal asked how local government can deal with all of these various issues and create and maintain affordable housing.

11. CONSOLIDATION OF COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

County Manager Rocky Nelson relayed that the Watauga County Emergency Management Services Committee has recommended consolidating the three current dispatch centers into one emergency communications center, stating that this move would provide better service to citizens and save money. Commissioner Kinsey stated that fire protection and safety issues also need to be discussed.

12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

It was the consensus of the group that comments pertaining to this issue have been discussed with the previous issues.

13. SMART GROWTH

Council member Spann stated that smart growth principles such as those used in Davidson, NC can be applied county-wide. Council member Mason noted that the Town of Boone will perform a smart growth audit on Town buildings this summer. County Manager Nelson stated a chance to use smart-growth principles could possibly be during the construction of the new high school.

14. BOONE BYPASS

Commissioner Cooper stated that the need for a Boone bypass grows daily and costs also increase with a delay of the project.

15. UNIVERSITY GROWTH

Chairman Deal stated the key issues are where and how the university grows.

Commissioner Billy Ralph Winkler suggested replacing the issue of regional healthcare with the issue of public education including the issue of the new Watauga High School campus.

Dr. Cooper asked each participant to list the following items as part of a “pop-corn brainstorming” technique:

1. Root issues
2. Blocks/obstacles
3. Key players/stakeholders
4. Interests.

It was the consensus of the group that the following issues are time-sensitive: the DOT/Highway 421 project, public education, and university growth. Dr. Cooper pointed out that several of the issues listed closely relate to others. The catalytic issues are as follow: water/sewer, university growth, economic development, affordable housing, and the Highway 421 project. He asked the group to prioritize the list of issues from the most urgent to those of lessor priority. Most of the group agreed that university growth, water/sewer issues, and public education are most urgent while, although important, alternative energy, consolidation of a communication center, and preserving heritage are not urgent priorities.

Dr. Cooper stated the final step in the process is deciding what to do and creating an action plan. After a brief discussion of this step, the group decided to meet again to discuss and create an action plan for the two top issues: public education and the DOT/Highway 421 project. It was the consensus of the Boone Town Council, Blowing Rock Town Council, the Watauga County Board of Commissioners, Seven Devils Town Council, and ASU officials to meet on Thursday, June 7, 2007, from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. at the Watauga County Administration Commissioner Boardroom to discuss and formulate an action plan to focus on public education and the DOT/Highway 421 project.

Upon a motion by Council member Wilcox, seconded by Council member Pepin, the Boone Town Council moved to enter a joint closed session at 8:02 p.m. with the Blowing Rock Town Council and the Watauga County Board of Commissioners to discuss economic development pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11a)4).

VOTE: Aye - All
 Nay - None

Upon a motion by Council member Pepin, seconded by Council member Mason, Council moved to exit closed session at 8:49 p.m.

VOTE: Aye - All

Nay - None

Upon a motion by Council member Pepin, seconded by Council member Mason, Council moved to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.

VOTE: Aye - All
 Nay - None

Deputy Clerk

Mayor