

**MINUTES – WORKSHOP/RETREAT
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
June 4, 2018**

CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road. Mayor Rennie Brantz presided. Council Members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Loretta Clawson, Lynne Mason, Sam Furgiuele, Connie Ulmer and Marshall Ashcraft. Staff present were Town Manager John Ward, Assistant Town Manager Jim Byrne, Finance Director Amy Davis, Town Clerk Nicole Worley, Public Works Director Rick Miller, Deputy Public Works Director Josh Eller, Planning Director Jane Shook, Police Chief Dana Crawford, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs, Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta, Human Resources Director Dale Presnell and Town Intern Syrena Travis.

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

Dr. Harvard Ayers reminded Council that in 2015 the Town of Boone became the first in the country to approve a resolution to transition to 100% clean, renewable resources by the year 2050 and that the Town needed to start now if that goal was to become reality. Dr. Ayers proposed that by 2030 the Town should only utilize electric cars throughout their fleet and added that he would like to see the Town install enough solar panels to produce 7MW of energy.

DISCUSSION OF FY 2018/19 PROPOSED BUDGET

Town Manager John Ward presented Council with the FY 2018-2019 Budget Message, which included the following highlights:

- Maintains the current tax rate at \$.041
- Maintains current service levels
- Recommends a 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment for Employees
- Recommends the use of \$1,369,343 from Fund Balance to accomplish previously unfunded priority projects

Options were also provided for Council's consideration that were beyond the balanced budget and, if funded, would require a tax increase. A brief discussion of state tax relief received by the developers of the Standard due to being developed in a brownfield and the regulations surrounding remediation of the building site. Council Member Furgiuele expressed concern that the Town was not made aware that taxes would not be able to be collected for five years following the completion of construction and stated that zoning applicants should be required to disclose their intent to seek property tax relief. A discussion regarding the relationship between the Town and Watauga County pertaining to taxes followed, with Council Member Mason stating that Watauga County has expressed in the past their willingness to take a hybrid approach with sales tax and that she felt Council needed to pursue this option. Council Member Furgiuele added that Council had discussed requesting a meeting with the County in February and that he would like to discuss the request from Watauga County to waive permit fees for the new recreation center. Town Manager John Ward noted that he was able to reach out to the County Manager regarding a meeting, but due to scheduling conflicts a date was never scheduled. He asked that Council consider giving direction to the Mayor which could then be submitted in writing at a County Commissioner's meeting. Council Member Furgiuele stated that he believed Council should invite County Commissioners to a meeting with Council Members and that the agenda for such meeting should be broader than sales tax to include County usage of Town property and other topics. Council Member Mason added that she didn't believe the County should expect the Town to continue to assist them in the form of land usage since they took away tax funds. Council Member Furgiuele asked staff for a list of contributions the Town makes to the County and the value of the contributions including support to County parks, the Sheriff's Department and Fire Department. Police Chief Dana Crawford noted that the requests for mutual aid from the County were comparative to requests to the County from the Town. Discussion turned to funding for the Southern Appalachian Historical Association, with Council Member Furgiuele expressing concern that the organization did not request funding through the Outside Agency Funding process and that he was opposed to the organization getting preferential treatment by side-stepping the process. Mr. Ward stated that it had been the direction of Council over the past four years to allocate funds to SAHA and that he didn't feel he could remove the allocation without Council's direction. After reminding Council of their full control over the budget, Mr. Ward noted that as done last fiscal year, any occupancy tax funds collected in excess of \$450,000 would be used for improvements at Daniel Boone Park. Mr. Ward stated that once final estimates were received on the cost of a

parking deck next to Town Hall, staff would begin to look into USDA funding, but that more than 1.5 million dollars would initially be needed to approach the USDA for funding. Mayor Brantz declared a break at 10:46 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:57 a.m. Mr. Ward noted that there were no water and sewer rate increases included in the budget, but that a decision would be made on system development fees at the June Council meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of the Town taking over parking services in the future in order to give employees a living wage and to possibly change the way things are operated. Council Member Furguele asked for an update on whether the Town Attorney had determined whether the Town could create a new Municipal Service District within the main corridor in Town to help pay for projects such as the stormwater project that had been the topic of recent discussions with the Army Corps of Engineers. Council Member Furguele asked that when the attorney reports back on this subject, that she also explain what led her to her determination. Discussion ensued regarding the determination of parking violation penalty revenues. Council Member Furguele noted that he had spoken to David Jackson with the Chamber of Commerce who said there was technology available for the Town meters that would allow people to remotely feed their meters, and that he believed the Town should offer this service at a premium price. Mr. Ward stated that he believed the meters had the capability, but that the option had not been pursued due to the fear that students would abuse it. Mayor Brantz declared a break at 12:03 p.m. Council reconvened at 12:40 p.m. Mr. Ward continued discussions by announcing a 2.5% cost of living adjustment for staff that would also be given to Council. Council Member Furguele stated that he believed the adjustment should not apply to Council and that he felt giving a raise to Council would send a bad signal to the public. Council Member Ashcraft added that he had mixed feelings about Council receiving the increase in pay, but that keeping Council pay increases tied to employees' salaries could act as a cap for Council salaries. Council Member Mason added that Council compensation was on the low end compared with other municipalities in the state. Mr. Ward noted that Watauga County provided their employees with a 4% raise, which may have impacts on retaining police officers as well as employees in other departments. Council Member Furguele stated that in the future, he would like to see incentives created for Town employees to live within Town limits. Mr. Ward continued through the budget for Administration and noted that \$20,000 was allocated in the budget to cover the cost of permit fees for the County Recreation Center and \$12,000 for special event permits. Council Member Furguele asked that the \$20,000 for permit fees for the County Recreation Center be removed until discussions continued with the County regarding sale tax. Council Members Clawson, Mason and Ulmer were in agreement. Discussion ensued regarding the application for special event permits, with Council Member Furguele stating that he did not believe applications should have to be approved by Council if the event was a repeat and asked that staff only bring before Council if there are significant changes to the event. Discussion turned to the move of the Downtown Boone Development Coordinator position from Cultural Resources to Administration and the negative effect that move had on the Cultural Resources department in terms of staffing. Mr. Ward noted that the move from Cultural Resources to Administration came at the request from the DBDA board and to help with parking citizen complaints coming from the new parking meters. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the duties of the Downtown Boone Development Coordinator and the staffing needs of the Cultural Resources department, concerns with the usage of Town staff time and parking. The need for a pay study was discussed, with Council opting to remove \$25,000 budgeted for a pay study and use information from the North Carolina League of Municipalities and other sources to compile their own data and have staff come back to Council with recommendations. Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find and retain quality employees at the current pay rate. Council Member Furguele stated that he would like to see a mandate within the Personnel Policy that would allow for hiring from within, to which Chief Isaacs noted that the Fire Department typically advertised job openings in-house first to allow volunteers a chance to be considered. Discussion moved to plans for the new municipal complex and the possibility of constructing a second ABC store on the property. Mayor Brantz called for a break at 2:39 p.m. Council reconvened at 2:56 p.m. Brief discussion regarding the need for a dedicated information technologies staff person and that at an estimated cost of over \$100,000, a tax increase would be needed to fund this position and any other new positions. The need to hire for open positions was discussed, with Council directing staff to fill the current vacancy in the Finance department and to begin advertising for the Assistant Director position in Public Works. Council Member Furguele expressed concern with the amount of funds budgeted for legal fees and added that he believed that a full-time, in-house attorney could be hired at a comparative cost. Assistant Town Manager Jim Byrne noted that the high cost of legal fees in the past could be attributed to the attorney's work on the water intake project. Council was in agreement to decrease the amount of funding for legal fees and to look into creating a full-time, in-house attorney position in the future. Discussion ensued regarding the repairs needed at Fire Station One and the poor condition of the Public Works building. Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta stated that she planned to have a handicap ramp constructed at the Jones House to make the location more accessible. Council Member Furguele asked whether concessions could be sold during Jones House events. Ms. Fotta explained that staff had looked into that possibility in the past,

noting that limits revolved around alcohol. She added that if local vendors were invited to sell concessions at Jones House events, a rotation system would need to be put into place in order to be fair. Council Member Furgiuele added that he would like to see only businesses within the Municipal Service District be invited to sell concessions. Brief discussion was held regarding the progress on the Howard Street project and increased programming at the Jones House and an update was given by Chief Crawford on the status of hiring for the department's four open positions. He noted that it was difficult to find quality applicants due to a crisis across the nation, with Council Member Mason noting difficulties in Charlotte causing the police department to reevaluate their pay scale for officers. Human Resources Director Dale Presnell noted that pay was always a contributing factor when employees decide to move to other places of employment. Brief discussion of the Communications department ensued, along with discussion of the removal of two remaining structures on the Bolick property which would cost an estimated \$20,000. It was the consensus of Council to delay a decision on the fate of the structures on the Bolick property until Wednesday, June 6th.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Council Member Clawson, seconded by Council Member Ulmer, Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

VOTE:	Aye:	All
	Nay:	None

Nicole Worley, Town Clerk

Rennie Brantz, Mayor