



**MINUTES – TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING – BUDGET WORKSHOP
JUNE 5, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Boone Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock in Boone. Mayor Dalton George presided. Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Todd Carter (remote), Virginia Roseman (entered the meeting at 9:05 a.m.), Anne Pruitt, Adrian Tait, and Anitra Ball. Staff present included Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Interim Town Manager/HR Director Dale Presnell, Grants Coordinator/Communications Laney Wise, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs, Finance Director Guy Miller, Parking Manager Reta Jackson, and Downtown Boone Development Director Lane Moody. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a budget workshop.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Pruitt, seconded by Councilmember Tait, Council voted unanimously to amend the agenda to allow a public comment period.

PUBLIC COMMENT

James Milner of Boone spoke as a property owner and constituent. He expressed appreciation for the Town's attempts at transparency and acknowledged being nearly twenty years into residency in Boone, during which time he has witnessed significant change. Mr. Milner noted concerns regarding the increasing separation of services traditionally funded through property taxes into individual user fees. Referencing his water and sewer bills, he stated his average monthly bill increased from approximately \$42 in 2022 to \$61 in 2025, representing a substantial increase over that period, including the addition of the solid waste fee. He observed that the proposed tax increase would have a smaller personal financial impact than the cumulative increases in utility and service fees. Mr. Milner stated that he has historically supported raising the tax rate to ensure the Town can provide necessary services but expressed concern that ancillary fees have become increasingly difficult for residents to absorb. He requested greater transparency regarding the Republic Services contract, noting that even as someone who closely follows Town operations, he finds it difficult to understand the associated costs and changes. While acknowledging challenges with the vendor and commending Town staff for their excellent work and deserving compensation adjustments, he noted that his own wages have not kept pace with inflation and rising household expenses. Mr. Milner encouraged Council to find ways to better control fee increases and emphasized the need to carefully balance tax rate increases, service fees, and the impacts of property revaluation.

DISCUSSION REGARDING FY2026/2026 BUDGET EXPENDITURES

Mayor George recapped discussions held regarding Council priorities following the initial budget discussions. He noted concerns raised by the Downtown Boone Development Association regarding the proposed increase in parking violation fines and recommended reducing the proposed fine from \$50 to \$40. He also noted that funds had been allocated for replacement of parking meters and that reserve funds were being utilized to reduce the proposed tax increase to approximately four cents, resulting in a tax rate of \$0.44. Councilmember Pruitt asked whether parking violation revenue would continue to be recovered through the new meter system. Mr. Presnell explained that the Town would be changing meter vendors and that meter operations would be separate from the collections process. Ms. Jackson reported that approximately 80 meters are currently inoperable. Mr. Presnell stated that staff would establish a committee to evaluate replacement options and would earmark funds within the budget pending Council direction. Mayor George emphasized that addressing the parking meter issues should be a major priority. Mr. Presnell stated staff would first consult with several vendors regarding the Town's needs before issuing a Request for Proposals. Mayor George emphasized that the Town is not attempting to generate revenue through ancillary fees and noted that parking meters have not been comprehensively discussed in several years. Councilmember Roseman commented that motorists should not receive citations when a meter is completely inoperable. Ms. Jackson noted that staff is ordering additional bags to cover non-functioning meters and that citation appeals are routinely granted when meter malfunctions are verified. Councilmembers Pruitt and Tait voiced no objections to the proposed approach regarding parking fees and the lowered tax rate.

Councilmember Tait expressed concern regarding simultaneous increases in water, sewer, and electric rates and the cumulative impact on residents. He asked whether the Town has flexibility to shift or stagger future increases. Mr. Miller referenced recommendations from the Raftelis rate study, noting that utility rate increases should remain sufficient to cover the costs of operating those services. Mayor George agreed that residents are facing rising costs across the board and suggested discussing whether some fees could be consolidated into the tax rate in future years, while acknowledging statutory limitations related to water and sewer services. Councilmember Pruitt noted that the Republic Services contract will be up for renewal next year and suggested the timing may be appropriate for that discussion. Councilmember Roseman asked how much of the current utility bill is attributable to solid waste collection. Mr. Miller stated the fee will be \$13.25 this year. Councilmember Roseman questioned whether residents would prefer higher taxes or higher fees and suggested potentially rolling trash pick-up fees into the tax rate. She added that she would prefer paying for services through taxes rather than monthly fees. Councilmember Pruitt commented that the current fee structure requires everyone to pay the same amount regardless of property value, which she viewed favorably. Councilmember Tait disagreed with consolidating these fees into the tax rate, stating he preferred the transparency of seeing the charge each month. Councilmember Roseman noted that households generate different amounts of waste and should be charged accordingly. Councilmember Pruitt suggested the Town explore negotiating a pay-per-stop structure during the next Republic Services contract discussions.

Next, Mr. Miller discussed bank service charges and noted that the School of Government has advised that the Town is not legally required to absorb all transaction fees. He stated staff is exploring the possibility of

implementing a flat convenience fee to help offset those costs. Councilmember Pruitt emphasized the need to better educate residents about payment options such as direct draft and credit card processing fees.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter clarified for the record that Council members had previously discussed increasing parking rates but that the current proposal only addresses parking violation penalties and does not increase parking rates themselves. Mayor George also reiterated that the Town intends to fully finance the new Public Works facility in the upcoming budget year regardless of whether outside funding assistance is received.

Ms. Jackson asked whether any parking violations beyond overtime parking would be increased, indicating that it had been many years since other fees had been increased. Mayor George responded that fines for illegal parking should be higher. Ms. Jackson suggested increasing fines at Howard Street and also increasing parking passes at Daniel Boone Park to \$800. Councilmember Pruitt suggested a rate of \$750 and noted that current penalties remain below those imposed by private entities and Appalachian State University. Other Council members were in agreement.

Councilmembers Roseman and Pruitt requested additional detail regarding contracted services line items within departmental budgets. Chief Isaacs explained that many departments use those funds for engineering and other professional services on an as-needed basis and that the accounts often serve as budgetary buffers for unforeseen needs. Councilmember Pruitt requested that future budget documents more clearly identify those intended uses. Councilmember Roseman emphasized the importance of providing greater transparency regarding how those funds are spent and why reserves are maintained. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter left the meeting at 9:51 a.m.

With no further discussion and no objection, Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

Nicole Harmon, Clerk

Dalton George, Mayor