MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
October 10, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL (DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL FUTURE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT WITH UNC SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT)

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was held on Wednesday, October 10, 2018 at 6:00 p.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, Marshall Ashcraft and Connie Ulmer. Staff present included Town Manager John Ward, Town Clerk Nicole Worley, Downtown Boone Development Coordinator Lane Weiss and Cultural Resources Director Pilar Fotta. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential future downtown development with the UNC School of Government.

Town Manager John Ward began the meeting by presenting Council with photos taken in the downtown area in order to create a visual of what the intent of the DFI project was to be. He noted the current remodeling of the PNC Bank building and added that with the help of the Historic Preservation Commission, the builders were able to enhance the building's facade and create a look that was more consistent with the original appearance of the building. Mr. Ward noted that with Council's support and direction, Howard Street could look similar to King Street in the future. Mr. Ward turned the meeting over to Andrew Trump with the UNC School of Government who presented Council with a slide show to update them on the progress of the project. Highlights of the slide show included potential development opportunities and the next steps to keep the project moving. Mr. Trump reminded Council that scope of services for the DFI project included the identification of development opportunities, site specific pre-development services for properties under Town control, analyzing public involvement options and attracting private investors. He presented a time line of the Howard Street project and stated that three opportunity sites had been identified and that some alternative project areas had also been explored. Discussion turned to the public interests of the Town and included compatibility with historic preservation and sustainable design principles. Mr. Trump noted that these points of interest would be used to measure any potential project. Mr. Trump stated that Town Hall had been identified as an opportunity site and suggested that the site could be used as a boutique hotel and that since there was another hotel that was planned for downtown it would indicate the market was good for this type of project. He stated that parking needed to be addressed downtown, so the use of the Town Hall site as a parking deck was also explored. Mr. Trump added that the space would provide critical parking and potentially retail along Howard Street. Two challenges were noted with the potential use of the Town Hall site, including the difficult grade of the site, as well as the fact that a parking deck would not directly link patrons to Howard Street. At the conclusion of the slide show, Mr. Trump offered to answer questions and asked for feedback from Council. Mr. Ward noted that the Goodnight and Southern States properties had been demolished and that the Marketplace and King and College demolition permits had been issued. Mr. Furgiuele noted that the Town had already given away a portion of the Town Hall parking lot to the Appalachian Theatre and mentioned that the New River Conservancy had proposed that the Town partner with ASU to build a parking deck in the Peacock lot with measures being taken to mitigate stormwater issues. Ms. Mason stated that parking in the downtown area needed to be addressed and that she believed a partnership with ASU would be beneficial. Mr. Ward stated that the most frequent comment he heard from business owners that would aid in their success was for the Town to provide additional parking. Ms. Mason inquired whether more parking could be incorporated at the Queen Street parking lot with a double-level parking deck similar to decks in Blowing Rock and Hickory. Ms. Clawson stated that she believed that parking was the right direction for moving forward with the DFI project. Ms. Mason noted that residential was an important part of downtowns and asked that this be taken into consideration as well. Mr. Furgiuele stated that if the TDA passed their resolution to allocate funding to the Howard Street project that it would be able to move forward and that he did not see a need for the Town to take on more projects than the Howard Street project. He added that he didn't disagree with the suggestion of a parking deck on Queen Street, but that stormwater should be top priority for the Town. Mayor Brantz asked how many spaces a parking deck would have to have in order to make it economically feasible to which Mr. Trump replied that he did not have the answer to that question, but reminded members that a parking deck would be expensive to construct. Discussion ensued regarding the recent sale of a commercial property on Howard Street. Mr. Furgiuele stated he believed if the Town did engage ASU in conversation about a parking deck, the idea should be presented as part of a larger picture including the daylighting of the creek and the greening of the area. He added that grant funds and organization support should be explored also. Mr. Ward noted the recent study of the MSD completed by staff and specifically noted that there were several parcels in the area which could be

brought into the MSD to bring in additional revenue. Ms. Mason inquired what the vision for the Town Hall lot was when construction at the Theatre was completed. Mr. Ward suggested that the site could be explored for a lower intensity parking deck consisting of two levels. Ms. Mason suggested that the parking deck could incorporate space for the Downtown Police officer and TDA offices. Mr. Ward agreed with the suggestion regarding TDA office space and added that it could be part of the agreement with the TDA to commit funding for the Howard Street project. Ms. Mason suggested the addition of public restrooms and other amenities that would have an immediate impact on the area while the parking deck concept with ASU was being discussed. Ms. Ulmer noted flooding issues on campus at Duncan Hall and cautioned against moving too quickly for a temporary fix. Mr. Furgiuele suggested looking into the future expansion of Town Hall to include meeting space and noted the importance of town government maintaining a presence downtown. He added that he would be reluctant to support committing the upper part of the Town parking lot that did not incorporate this use. Ms. Mason added that this idea should be part of the bigger conversation regarding the new municipal complex on the Bolick property. In response to a question raised by Mr. Ashcraft regarding the need for parking downtown, Mr. Ward stated that the Queen Street parking lot was the most recent addition to parking downtown and that the lot had been completed twenty years ago. It was the consensus of Council to direct DFI and staff to explore options for a partnership with ASU for a parking deck. Mr. Trump stated that part of the DFI project was to make sure there was a direct connection with public and private development and that while additional parking would make development more attractive, it would still be risky. Mr. Ward suggested potentially expanding Town Hall on the side fronting King Street and tying it into privately funded development on the Howard Street side. Mr. Furgiuele stated that he was hesitant to explore this option until the potential for a partnership with ASU was explored and noted that if ASU was not in agreement to a partnership, he would be willing to explore options for Queen Street more in depth. Brief discussion continued regarding options for the Town Hall space, with Mr. Ward suggesting the possible extension of Appalachian Street to incorporate a connection to River Street. Mr. Furgiuele stated that he would support a partnership with ASU for a parking deck that exceeded the height limitations on Howard Street in order to provide the needed parking that would serve both ASU and Town needs so long as it was built next to the Peacock building and only if ASU agreed as part of the deal to daylight the creek and green the surface parking lot, similar to Durham Park. He added that only if both of those things happened first would he support a mixed-use development on the lower part of the Town Hall parking lot, and that his agreement would also be contingent upon the Town retaining the upper part of the Town Hall lot. Ms. Mason was in agreement with this and inquired as to what the next step should be. Mr. Trump stated that the first step would be to have staff speak with ASU to make sure they are onboard with the partnership, then focus should be turned back to the market analysis to think about the parking project to make sure its supportable, then the Town would need to hire an architect to confer with on the project. Discussion ensued regarding a space that was three stories fronting Howard Street, consisting of one of commercial and two residential and Town meeting space connected to Town Hall and green space in front. Mr. Ashcraft suggested the potential of adding owner occupied condominiums in the space, with Mr. Trump agreeing that the space could lend itself well to such. Mr. Trump added that the key to this project would be that a developer would need to pre-sell a certain number of units in order to obtain financing, but that he believed there to be demand for condos in the area. Mayor Brantz asked for feedback from Historic Preservation Commission Chair, Eric Plaag, who was in the audience. Mr. Plaag stated that he loved the concept that was coming together and though he had always disliked idea of parking garage on the Town lot since it seemed to be a waste of good space, that dividing it up into different uses would encourage further positive development on Howard Street and would solve pressing issues with meeting space. After brief discussion reiterating Council's direction to staff to continue to move forward with discussions with ASU regarding a partnership on a parking deck, Mr. Furgiuele made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. Mayor Pro-Tem Clawson seconded the motion. A copy of the slide show presented by the UNCSOG Development Finance Initiative group is available to view online at http://boonenc.iqm2.com/Citizens/Default.aspx .

VOTE: Aye: All
Nay: None

Nicole Worley, Town Clerk

Rennie Brantz, Mayor