

**MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
APRIL 7, 2006**

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 8:32 a.m., Friday, April 7, 2006, in the Jefferson Room at the ASU Broyhill Inn and Conference Center. Mayor Loretta Clawson presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason, Bunk Spann, Dempsey Wilcox, Rennie Brantz, and Janet Pepin. Staff members present were Town Manager Greg Young, Town Clerk Freida Van Allen, Deputy Town Clerk Kim Tester, Special Assistant to the Manager Jim Byrne, Finance Director Amy Davis, Human Resources Director Peri Moretz, Public Works Director Blake Brown, Police Chief Bill Post, Public Utilities Director Rick Miller, Development Services Director John Spear, and Fire Chief Reggie Hassler. Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele was also present. Representatives from the media present were David Brewer-High Country Media; Christy James-Aisling Broadcasting; and Frank Ruggerio-Watauga Democrat. Others present were Dan Meyer from the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and Lorin Baumhover from Appalachian State University.

The purpose of this meeting was the Council's annual retreat.

DEPARTMENTAL NEEDS

Town Manager Greg Young presented the following departmental needs:

§ *Space needs*

Mr. Young pointed out that space needs top the list of department priorities again this year. He stated that he will be meeting with a representative from the firm of Hayes, Seay, Mattern & Mattern to begin the procedures for a space needs analysis.

§ *Additional Personnel*

Mr. Young indicated the need for additional personnel in various departments particularly highlighting the future needs of the Police Department. He referred to a memorandum from Police Chief Bill Post citing several police officers in position to retire within the next five years. Development Services Director John Spear also noted a need for a Level III qualified building code official within his department.

§ *Pay Study*

Mr. Young recommended approval for a pay study to be completed in the immediate future. He stated that the Town has not had a pay study in six years. Upon a motion by Council member Spann, seconded by Council member Mason, Council moved to authorize a pay study be performed, paying particular attention to the discrepancy of pay for building code officials; funds for this study may be incorporated in the fiscal year 06/07 budget.

VOTE: Aye - All
 Nay - None

§ *Personnel Policy*

Mr. Young informed the Council that the Town personnel policy has been reviewed and updated by Human Resources Director Peri Moretz and Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele. It was the consensus of the Council for the newly updated personnel policy be placed on the agenda for the Council meeting in June 2006.

Development Services Director John Spear asked if the Council prefers to place the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update on the agenda for the May meeting or a special meeting. It was the consensus of the Council to hold a public hearing on that item during the budget public hearings in May.

DISCUSSION OF STORMWATER PROPOSALS

In regard to the stormwater proposal from Watershed Concepts, Town Manager Greg Young stated that \$75,000 has been appropriated in the budget for the first four tasks necessary for the implementation of NPDES Phase II. Special Assistant to the Manager Jim Byrne stated that an estimated amount of \$85,000 will be needed for the implementation of the first four tasks. He explained that there may be a price difference since the proposal was drafted in November 2005. Mr. Byrne stated that an updated cost estimate would be provided to the Council at the next regular meeting. Council members Wilcox and Spann agreed that the Town needs to proceed with this matter. Upon a motion by Council member Brantz, seconded by Council member Mason, Council moved to authorize proceeding with the following tasks:

1. Task 1 - Collection and Review of Existing Data
2. Task 2 - Evaluation of Land Development Practices
3. Task 3 - Assessment of Stormwater Maintenance Issues
4. Task 4 - Research Low Impact Development and other Stormwater Best Management Practices

VOTE: Aye - All

Nay - None

The Council briefly discussed the retention requirements for single-family lots in a subdivision and agreed that this matter requires further study.

Mayor Clawson declared a break at 10:05 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:25 a.m.

STEEP SLOPE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council discussed the following recommendations from the Steep Slope & Multi-Family Housing Task Force:

§ *Open Space, Parks, and Greenways*

The Task Force has recommended that \$50,000 be earmarked annually for the creation of long-term funding sources for pedestrian and bicycle paths, parks, and conservation easements. Council member Wilcox stated that conservation easements should be a top priority. Council member Mason offered that voluntary participation should be encouraged and the Town should not always be expected to provide direct monetary compensation. It was the consensus of the Council to earmark \$50,000 annually in the budget in a separate fund for this purpose.

§ *Hire a Consulting Firm*

The Task Force has recommended that the Town hire a well-recognized town planning firm to develop a long-range illustrated and written vision for the built future and potentially eliminate the current Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in favor of “form-based” or “smart” codes. Development Services Director John Spear pointed out the estimated cost of hiring such a firm to be between \$100,000 to \$150,000. Mr. Spear indicated that it would require a significant amount of time and money to implement this change. He suggested that the staff of the Development Services Department could further study the differences in employing “form-based” or “smart” codes versus the ordinances currently contained in the UDO. Council member Spann suggested that the Development Services Department plan a workshop to be attended by the members of the Town Council and Planning Commission, who would further study this matter.

§ *Require a Performance Bond for Large Multi-Family Developments*

The Task Force has recommended requiring bonds to assure the public and town government that projects will be completed without delay due to lack of developer resources and provide a

level of guarantee that projects will be completed in accordance with town specifications and approved permit requirements. It was the consensus of the Council to gather further information on this matter.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOWARD STREET PROJECT

Council member Wilcox stated that the next step in this project is to hire a bond council and to set a date for a public hearing. Town Manager Greg Young discussed the process for a bond referendum. He stated that an active committee will be needed to promote such a referendum. Council member Mason stated the benefits of a bond referendum to the average tax payer and community should be clearly defined.

ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOWN POLICIES, SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES, AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Council agreed that this issue had been explored in earlier discussion, and again, that a workshop for learning more about the relationships between these issues would be extremely beneficial.

WATER CONSERVATION RATE STRUCTURE POLICY

Council member Spann that stated the Water Study Sub-Committee had met on April 5, 2006 and agreed to continue aggressively pursuing voluntary conservation measures. He further stated that the sub-committee agreed to the following measures:

- § To review water use policies in order to promote water conservation.
- § To perform a water audit on accounts exceeding 10,000 gallons of water use per month.
- § To study how the current town staff would accommodate a rate structure change.

Council member Pepin suggested that staff should determine more creative ways of encouraging water conservation.

RENEWAL OF FUNDING FOR FARE-FREE APPALCART

Council member Spann informed the Council that both ridership and the diversity of riders have increased in recent months. Council member Mason voiced a concern with a reduction in service when ASU is out of session and the effect of such on persons using the service to go to work. Council member Pepin asked to see a plan for expanding routes. It was the consensus of the Council that this is a worthwhile venture.

TOWN PARTICIPATION IN BIO-DIESEL PROGRAM

Public Works Director Blake Brown stated that most of the fleet of town vehicles are diesel-fueled. He pointed out that the closest bio-diesel plants are in Alabama and Virginia and that the closest distributor is in Asheville, NC. Mr. Brown indicated that AppalCART is currently experimenting with the use of bio-diesel in some of its buses. The Council agreed that the use of bio-diesel is environmentally advantageous and that the Town should pursue a joint effort with both Watauga County and ASU in participating in this program.

ABANDONED BIG-BOX STORE REGULATIONS

Council member Spann advised that the Council should endorse a policy for the abandonment of big-box retail buildings. It was the consensus of the Council to pursue the following regulations suggested by the Development Services Department:

1. Create a definition of what constitutes a “big-box” retailer in Boone.
2. Investigate the prohibition of non-compete clauses.
3. Investigate continued leasing after tenant vacates the premises.
4. Require economic and community impact analysis.
5. Limit new commercial development to existing commercially zoned property.

6. Limit the size of new single-use commercial developments.
7. Limit the size of outdoor storage or display of retail goods.
8. Negotiate reuse of vacated buildings.
9. Review current nuisance ordinance standards.

Mayor Clawson declared a break at 12:20 p.m. Council reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

IN-TOWN PARK LAND/GREENSPACE PROGRAM

Council agreed that this issue had been discussed extensively earlier in the meeting.

COUNCIL VISIT TO DAVIDSON, NC TO OBSERVE/DISCUSS SMART-GROWTH PROJECT

It was the consensus of the Council to plan a joint trip with representatives from Watauga County, ASU, and other interested parties, such as developers. Council directed staff to determine a possible date and schedule this activity.

INCENTIVE TO ENCOURAGE SMART-GROWTH POLICIES

Council member Wilcox stated that such items as density, utilities, and infrastructure would benefit from encouraging smart-growth policies. Council member Pepin stated the Town should be more pro-active in attracting smart-growth developments.

SIDEWALK PRIORITIES

Public Works Director Blake Brown listed the following areas for sidewalks:

- \$ Shadowline Drive to Dale Street
- \$ Highway 105 to the 105 Bypass
- \$ Poplar Grove Road to Water Street
- \$ Deerfield Road to Blairmont Drive
- \$ Highway 421 North, South

He noted that his department is currently developing a process for citizens to petition for sidewalks. It was the consensus of the Council to prioritize the areas on the list.

NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CONCERNS

Council member Brantz asked that strategies currently used to monitor traffic speed and safety be implemented in other neighborhoods, such as along Daniel Boone Drive Extension. He also suggested designated pedestrian crossings on Highway 194 at Hardin Park School and on King Street at the First Baptist Church. Dan Meyer, of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, suggested a need for left-hand turn signals on traffic lights along the downtown stretch of King Street. Council member Pepin asked for decreasing the speed limit to 25 mph along Kellwood Drive. She further suggested that the speed limit for any state-maintained street within a residential neighborhood be decreased to 25 mph. Council member Spann suggested a left-hand turn lane on Deerfield Road at the intersection with Wilson Ridge Road. Council member Brantz also suggested addressing recessed manhole covers along area roadways. Public Works Director Blake Brown suggested drafting a letter to the Department of Transportation from Mayor Clawson outlining all of the aforementioned concerns. Council agreed to this approach.

FUTURE OF THE APPALACHIAN CULTURAL MUSEUM

Mayor Clawson informed the Council of her discussion with Lorin Baumhover of ASU. The discussion consisted of possibly relocating the Appalachian Cultural Museum to a site on the Horn in the West property. Council unanimously agreed to support this idea. Mayor Clawson stated that she will set up an initial meeting with Mr. Baumhover to further discuss this idea.

Mayor Clawson declared a break at 2:30 p.m. Council reconvened at 2:40 p.m.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OPPORTUNITIES IN BOONE

Council member Brantz offered that the Town should work to identify additional historic structures located within its limits. He also suggested a historical presentation of Boone should be created and made available to visitors at the Visitor Information Center and the Chamber of Commerce. Council member Mason suggested a walking tour of historical sites within the downtown area. It was the consensus of the Council that the establishment of a historical commission would be a worthwhile venture to promote Boone's rich history.

EXPANDING CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES IN BOONE

Council member Brantz suggested expanding cultural opportunities and activities possibly at the Jones House Community Center and by hosting a Boone Heritage Day or Cultural Festival.

ESTABLISHMENT OF VISION FOR BOONE

Mayor Clawson stated she would like to see the establishment of a committee to study the vision of the town and verify that goals and objectives of the vision for the town are being met. She suggested that the committee be made of citizens within the town limits and ETJ, business owners, and members of the Council.

STATUS OF WATAUGA HIGH SCHOOL

Council member Pepin asked what the role of the Town Council should be in the current debate over whether or not to renovate the current structure or to build a new high school. Development Services Director John Spear stated that an application for rezoning the current site may be filed by Watauga County officials to rezone the property from R-3, Multi-Family Residential, to B-3, General Business. He stated that a high school is a permissible use in either district. It was the consensus of the Council to address the rezoning request when brought before them, but to remain neutral in taking a stance on this issue.

OTHER MATTERS BY COUNCIL OR STAFF

Council member Wilcox asked Council to consider a possible joint effort by the Town of Boone and the Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA) to repair the facade of the historical downtown post office location. He stated that the DBDA may be able to procure a grant to help in repairing the facade. It was the consensus of the Council that this matter needs to be presented to our elected state representatives for action.

Council member Pepin suggested the town website be updated to make the homepage more informational and user friendly.

Development Services Director John Spear stated his office would like to pursue a fee schedule modification and present it to the Town Council. It was the consensus of the Council to allow Development Services staff to pursue this matter.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other items for consideration, Mayor Clawson adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Deputy Town Clerk

Mayor