

**MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 22, 2010**

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, 814 West King Street, Boone, North Carolina. Mayor Loretta Clawson presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Lynne Mason, Andy Ball, Rennie Brantz, Jamie Leigh and Stephen Phillips. Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele was also present. Staff members present were Town Manager Greg Young, Town Clerk Freida Van Allen, Assistant to the Manager Jim Byrne and Public Works Director Blake Brown.

The purpose of the meeting was to meet with representatives of the Watauga County Board of County Commissioners and Watauga County Recreation Commission regarding parks and recreation issues.

DISCUSSION OF PARKS AND RECREATION ISSUES

Council member Phillips started discussion by reminding all in attendance that the Town of Boone had cut yearly funding to the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department in fiscal year 2008/2009. Parks and Recreation Director Stephen Poulos said that about 25 to 35% of parks and recreation participants are from the town of Boone. Mr. Poulos also commented that his department had increased fees by 10% after Town of Boone funding was eliminated. County Commission Chair Jim Deal said he hopes the Town and County will have, in the future, the same kind of collaboration that the County, ASU, and the High Country Soccer Association did on the new soccer park along the New River. Mr. Deal said the County plans to construct a greenway trail along the new Brookshire Park in hopes that it will, along with the newly planned Mountain Bike Park trails, one day connect with the Boone Greenway Trail system. Mr. Deal suggested that the County Commissioners adopt a resolution requesting that the NC Department of Transportation investigate construction of a trail underneath the Highway 421 bridge. Council member Mason commented that there have already been collaborative efforts between the Town and County regarding parks and recreation, citing how well the Town and County parks in the Hunting Hills area work together. Watauga County Recreation Commission member Denny Norris presented history regarding the parks and recreation department. Mr. Norris commented that the Town of Boone previously was responsible for parks and recreation until the early 1970's, when Watauga County assumed the operation. At that time, the Town of Boone allocated funding to Watauga County. Mr. Poulos said the Town of Boone allocated \$44,300 since 1991. Mr. Norris said it is a financial advantage to the Town of Boone to have most the parks and recreation facilities located within the town. Recreation Commission member Gene Swift agreed. County Manager Rocky Nelson commented that the Parks and Recreation Department is facing a 5% reduction or a flat budget for fiscal year 2010/2011. Council member Mason pointed out that the Town of Boone provides recreational space to Watauga County for \$1 per year and that the Town is faced with either expanding its own greenway trail system or funding parks and recreation. Council member Mason said she can support the Town funding recreation programs in which town of Boone citizens utilize more services; however, she continued the town of Boone's participation rate in the recreational programs is proportionate to its population, with the exception of the aquatics and tennis programs. Council member Mason said the Town will face expenditures in road maintenance in the upcoming fiscal year given the harsh winter conditions. Council member Leigh agreed and said the Town must face difficult choices during the upcoming budget process. Council member Brantz agreed also but said that parks and recreation should be a high priority given that it is a public health issue. Council member Brantz felt the Town should fund parks and recreation at some level. Council member Phillips agreed and asked if there is any other way the Town can help with parks and recreation. Council member Deal said the Town could assist with "force labor" and waiver of fees. For example, he continued, Watauga County must pay a \$25,000 availability fee for bathrooms at the new soccer park. Commissioner Deal said the Town could waive the fee so that money could be used toward the soccer park. County Manager Rocky Nelson reminded Council that approximately 10 years ago other municipalities in the County asked that the sales tax allocation be adjusted, an action which would have resulted in less revenue to the Town of Boone. Mr. Nelson said the County did not change the allocation because the Town contributed funds towards parks and recreation. Discussion ended on this matter.

DISCUSSION OF NEW COUNTY RECREATION CENTER

Commissioner Deal said the County is in the fact-finding mode regarding a new county-wide recreation center that will be located on the new high school property. Commissioner Deal said construction prices and the cost building materials are relatively low now and all previous studies have shown that both Town of Boone and Watauga County residents want a recreation center.

DISCUSSION OF GREENWAY TRAIL CONNECTOR

Council member Phillips said there is a foot path which extends from the Greenway Trail head at the Humane Society to the County's property known as the Hannah Building. Council member Phillips inquired if the County would be willing to donate property to the Town in order to make the Greenway Trail connector possible. Chairman Deal said that the County will closely cooperate with the Town on making that connector possible. Chairman Deal also pointed out that Southern Insecticide is the other property owner that will be involved with the connector.

There being no further business, on a motion by Council member Ball, seconded by Council member Brantz, Council moved to adjourn at 7:49 p.m.

VOTE: Aye-All
Nay-None

Town Clerk

Mayor