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CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, in the Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Futrelle presided. Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Dalton George, Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Edie Tugman (remote), and Eric Plaag. Town staff present included Town Manager Amy Davis, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon-Church, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Planning Director Jane Shook, Grants Coordinator/Communications Director Laney Wise, Commercial Zoning Administrator Amy Snider, Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager George Santucci, and Finance Director Guy Miller. Town Attorney Allison Meade was also in attendance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence was observed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Manager Davis announced that renovations to the Council Chambers would begin in mid-July and stated that staff were working to secure an alternate meeting site, starting with the second meeting in July.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Futrelle announced a housekeeping item regarding the agenda. He stated that the Resolution in Opposition to SB257, Consent Agenda item 8, sub-item 6, should be removed from the agenda with possible action later. Upon a motion by Councilmember Plaag, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem George, the agenda was approved unanimously as amended.

LISTENING SESSION FOR CONSTITUENT CONCERNS REGARDING THE CURRENT FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

Mayor Futrelle opened this session, reminding everyone that it was an opportunity for anyone who felt the need to express their concerns about the current federal administration to their local government. No one signed up to speak during this session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. and Mrs. Mukulski spoke remotely. Mr. Mukulski explained that they had been investigating a property owned by Boone for the past year. He inquired about the Council's intentions regarding a dilapidated property on the corner of Depot and Tremont. He described the property as having a distressed trailer that had been on Boone's books for 33 years. Mr. Mukulski mentioned they had spoken with Brandon Wise from the Planning Department about the property and expressed their intention to dismantle the existing structure and rebuild it exactly as it was, or potentially build a smaller version with some attic space. Mr. Mukulski asked if the Council would consider selling the property to them and putting it back on the tax rolls. He suggested that the Council could select an appraiser, for which the Mukulskis would pay the fee, to place a value on the property. Mayor Futrelle thanked the Mukulskis for bringing this matter to their attention and explained that during public comment, the Council's role was to listen rather than engage in conversation. Mayor Futrelle assured them that the Council would consider their proposal and discuss it further at a later date. Councilmember Plaag proposed amending the agenda to add a new item as the third matter under Council Matters to discuss this matter further. Mayor Pro-Tem George questioned whether the Council should move forward without debate, expressing disinterest in proceeding and concern about the precedent it could set regarding the disposal of Town property.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion to amend the agenda to include the request as an agenda item for discussion at that time. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Roseman and approved unanimously.

Councilmember Roseman noted that if the property were to be sold for top dollar, the funds could be directed into the affordable housing fund. Councilmember Plaag responded that if the structure on the property was deemed beyond repair and posed a liability, the Town should address the issue. However, he reiterated his opposition to selling any Town property except the Bolick property, as that site was particularly suitable for another housing trust project. Councilmember Tugman expressed agreement with not selling the property. Planning Director Shook expressed uncertainty regarding the trailer's location and suggested that a survey might be necessary to confirm whether it was situated on the subject parcel or an adjacent lot.

Mr. Mukulski asked for clarification on what constituted a housing trust project, and Mayor Futrelle provided a brief explanation. Mr. Mukulski then inquired whether private parties could participate in the initiative, to which Mayor Futrelle confirmed yes and encouraged discussion with the housing trust. Mr. Mukulski stated that he had over forty years of experience as a developer and builder and felt qualified to improve the property. He asked the Council to reconsider, suggesting that while the parcel was small, he was willing to work with an architect to create a unique design suited to Boone.

Mayor Futrelle thanked Mr. Mukulski for his willingness to assist with community improvement, but indicated that a conclusion had been reached. He recommended that the Mukulskis contact the housing trust directly. Councilmember Tugman identified herself as being involved with the housing trust and encouraged the Mukulskis to visit the organization's website for more information, providing them with contact details.

REQUESTED APPEARANCES

Marrena Greer - SAHA

Marrena Greer requested permission from the Council to construct a temporary seating section in the pit, directly in front of the stage, in the amphitheater for an upcoming immersive production. She explained that the original plan to have the production at the museum was no longer feasible due to ongoing construction. Ms. Greer proposed that temporary seating would be approximately 12 feet by 20 feet wide and 2 feet high, with railings. She added that this was necessary to bring the audience closer to the stage and accommodate the director's vision for the show.

Councilmember Roseman expressed frustration that the organization lacked sufficient funding. Councilmember Carter asked whether SAHA had considered renting bleachers. Ms. Greer responded that the cost to rent bleachers was too high. She then provided an overview of how the current situation had developed, including construction delays. Councilmember Plaag noted that architect Bill Dixon had been working closely with SAHA and believed that building contractor Skip Greene had also been involved, and questioned how the current issues had come as a surprise. Ms. Greer stated that she was unsure.

Public Works Director Moody acknowledged that sidewalk construction had initially been scheduled for completion before the event, but weather delays had occurred. He added that the restroom project was currently out for bid, though it was unlikely to receive three bids, and would need to be re-advertised. This would likely push the construction start date into August.

Councilmember Carter stated that Cook Rentals offered bleacher sections for $795 per week, each holding approximately 40 people. He suggested that if the Town partnered to rent three sections, the total would be roughly $6,000 for four weeks. Manager Davis indicated that this would not be a budgetary issue if Council wished to assist.

Councilmember Roseman raised additional concerns, noting that the land might require leveling and that the area may not be accessible to individuals with disabilities. She made a motion for the Town to meet with SAHA to understand their needs and, if applicable and possible, to make a platform for stadium seating if necessary. This motion died due to a lack of a second. Councilmember Plaag expressed concern about the costs, asking whether delivery and other fees were included. He shared his sympathy for SAHA's situation, noting that weather delays were beyond their control, but also voiced concern

about potential public criticism if money was spent and attendance was low. Ms. Greer added that SAHA could potentially cover any cost difference. Councilmember Plaag suggested placing a cap on the Town's financial commitment.

Councilmember Carter noted there were only nine days remaining before the event and questioned whether there was enough time to plan and implement the changes. Public Works Director Moody stated that the parade and fireworks would have his staff too busy to construct anything in such a short amount of time.

Mayor Futrelle asked what the backup plan would be if bleachers were not secured. Ms. Greer responded that benches and blankets could be used as alternatives. Councilmember Plaag suggested that performances using a thrust stage seating model, such as the Folger production model, could create a more appealing experience for the audience. Councilmember Carter then made a motion to allow for the rental of one set of bleachers for four weeks from Cook Rentals, with the Town covering costs of up to $4,000 at the Town Manager's discretion. Mayor Pro-Tem George seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mayor Futrelle declared a break at 6:57 p.m. Council reconvened at 7:04 p.m.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Futrelle expressed pride in the grants included in the consent agenda, noting the progress made in grant writing since Grants Coordinator Laney Wise took her position a few years ago.

Attorney Meade requested that the First Citizens loan package be approved with the condition of a couple of annual changes she typically makes.

Mayor Pro-Tem George highlighted several items on the consent agenda:

1. Grants related to trail work and the work at the river's house
2. The Vision Zero piece related to pedestrian safety
3. The budget, which included a one-cent tax increase to pay for three additional firefighters

He emphasized the financial stewardship demonstrated in the budget, especially in comparison to other municipalities in Western North Carolina that have had to make significant cuts or rate increases due to Hurricane Helene.

Mayor Futrelle added context to the budget discussion, noting that when the current board came into office, they cut taxes by 8 cents, and since then, there has only been a 4-cent increase. Despite this net decrease in taxes, he indicated that they had managed to increase services and opportunities throughout the town.

Councilmember Carter thanked Attorney Meade for her collaboration on the discrimination complaint form.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

1. Grant Contract between the Town of Boone and the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the Recreational Trails Program Grant
2. Contract Between the Town of Boone and Nature Trails, LLC for the Construction of the Southern Terminus of the Northern Peaks Trail/Rivers House Park Trail
3. Lease Agreement Addendum - 321 E. King Street (Public Works Building)
4. Resolution Supporting Vision Zero
5. Resolution Opposing SB205
6. FY2025/25 Budget Ordinance
7. Contract - Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A.
8. Budget Amendments
    a. Connect and Protect Social Work Program
    b. Howard Street
    c. System Development Fees
    d. Year-End Runouts
    e. Tax Collections
    f. FEMA Reimbursements
9. Finance Proposal
10. Approval of Minutes
    a. May 14, 2025 Town Council Regular Meeting
    b. May 22, 2025 Town Council Special Meeting
    c. May 28, 2025 Town Council Regular Meeting
    d. June 11, 2025 Town Council Regular Meeting
11. Complaint of Discrimination Form

Councilmember Carter seconded the motion. Councilmember Plaag amended his motion to acknowledge the changes that would be made to the load package by the Town Attorney. Councilmember Carter accepted the amendment, and the motion passed unanimously.

PLANNING MATTERS

Consideration of Petition for Annexation - HC Mountain Properties, LLC

Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise presented the above case and noted that Police Department staff had expressed concerns. Mayor Pro-Tem George asked whether this property and other satellite annexations presented potential challenges related to emergency response. Police Chief Duckworth clarified that while response times would

not be an issue in emergency situations, the property might not receive the same level of routine attention as properties within the city center.

Upon a motion by Mayor Pro-Tem George, seconded by Councilmember Carter, the Council voted unanimously to move the petition forward to a public hearing on August 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Consideration of Petition for Annexation - Tyler and Lara Jones

Councilmember Plaag raised concerns about establishing a zoning classification that could become an isolated "island" requiring rezoning later as surrounding parcels develop. Deputy Director Wise acknowledged the potential for such a scenario but also noted that some residential families remained in the vicinity. Additionally, he indicated that the property currently lacked access to sewer services and needed to hook up to Town services. Upon a motion by Councilmember Plaag, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem George, Council voted unanimously to move the petition forward to a public hearing on August 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Consideration of Cases from the May 19, 2025, Public Hearing.

Commercial Zoning Administrator Amy Snider presented case PL25-0118 (The Summit Pickleball). Ms. Snider noted that the planning commission had made a condition for bike parking, but did not include a condition regarding outdoor speakers, which was discussed during the public hearing.

Council members debated whether to include a condition prohibiting outdoor speakers, considering potential noise issues for surrounding residential properties. They discussed the existing noise ordinance and its applicability to this situation.

After some debate, members took a straw poll on whether to include the outdoor speaker condition. Council members Roseman, Tugman, and Plaag were in favor of the restriction, while Council member Carter and Mayor Pro-Tem George were opposed to it.

Attorney Meade clarified that the noise ordinance was contingent on complaints and offered her assistance if officers had any questions regarding enforcement. She advised that, as written, it would be applicable to this case. Councilmember Plaag then made a motion that the proposed amendment to the Town’s zoning map is consistent with the Town’s comprehensive plan and any other adopted plans of the Town that are applicable because of:

Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.1.1 Economic Development

A. The Town shall protect and enhance a high quality of life, image, cultural amenities, and natural beauty as the most effective, long-term component of an economic development strategy.

C. The Town shall encourage the development of a well-balanced tourism trade as a primary element of the area's economic future. Investments in services, facilities, and proper growth management shall be employed in furtherance of this objective.

D. Economic development efforts shall encourage the revitalization and reuse of currently unused or underutilized structures, sites, and infrastructure in appropriately located areas.

Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.3.2 Community Character

E. New development, redevelopment and rehabilitation of structures and sites shall occur in a manner which is consistent with the neighborhood and architectural context of the immediate area, and supportive, whenever possible, of Boone's original community character as a High Country small town.

The approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Where there is a conflict between the application information and the plans (dated received on April 15, 2025), the plans shall control. Insignificant deviations may be permitted to comply with the requirements of the UDO.

2. Any commitments and representations concerning the proposed development made by the applicant or her representatives at the public hearing shall also become a condition of the permit, and a basis for a stop work order and/or permit revocation if violated.

3. The applicant shall submit the necessary applications, plans, details and specifications which meet the requirements of the Town Code, UDO, Building Code and any other applicable codes for review and approval necessary to issue Zoning and Building Permits.

4. Bicycle parking shall be installed.

Councilmember Carter seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Councilmember Carter made a second motion to approve Ordinance A25-0018, stating that it is reasonable and in the public interest because it enhances facilities for global business and utilizes otherwise limited portions of business operations, thereby helping to grow and expand both recognition opportunities and businesses in the area. Mayor Pro-Tem George seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Consideration of Case A25-0426 Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future (Comprehensive Plan)

Planning Director Jane Shook presented the final case for consideration, the new comprehensive plan titled "Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future."

Director Shook noted that while most errors identified earlier had been corrected, some additional minor errors remained in the document. She assured the Council that these were not substantive errors and did not affect the overall content.

Council members expressed their gratitude and admiration for the work done by Director Shook and her team on the new comprehensive plan.

There was a brief discussion about the procedural aspects of adopting the new plan, including whether it was necessary to explicitly repeal the 2006 comprehensive plan. Director Shook noted that the resolution had been worded accordingly.

Councilmember Roseman made a motion that Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future, with the changes as discussed at the public hearing, is consistent with the Town's current comprehensive plan and any other adopted plans of the Town that are applicable because of:

2.1.1 Economic Development

A. The Town shall protect and enhance a high quality of life, image, cultural amenities, and natural beauty as the most effective, long term component of an economic development strategy.

2.3 THE COMMUNITY

A. Urban type development within the Urban Growth Area shall meet appropriate Town standards.

2.3.4 Public Involvement

A. Public involvement shall be encouraged in decisions concerning land use and development by making the public aware of proposed developments at the earliest opportunity, as well as fostering communication among developers, the Town, the County, the University, and the general public.

B. Neighborhood and special area planning shall be encouraged to foster public involvement in the production of closely tailored, action oriented special area plans and programs.

D. Special committees, advisory panels, educational forums, public workshops, leadership seminars, town meetings and media contacts shall be encouraged and fostered to enhance the effectiveness of citizen involvement in community planning and action.

Attorney Meade stated that it did not make sense to approve the new plan based on consistency with the old plan. Councilmember Roseman rescinded her motion.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion to approve Boone Next: Our Town, Our Future with changes as discussed at the public hearing and contingent on the corrections of Scribner's errors and that it is consistent with any other applicable adopted plans of the Town; and through this motion, the 2006 Comprehensive Plan is repealed. Councilmember Carter seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Councilmember Carter then made a second motion to approve Ordinance A25-0425, and believes approval is reasonable and in the public interest because Boone Next is amazing, is a vision for the future, and a lot of work has gone into this; because it is laying the groundwork for where we want them to go for the next several years. Councilmember Plaag seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Plaag, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem George, Council voted unanimously to add a third item under Council Matters to discuss the Bolick Property Appraisal.

Councilmember Tugman requested to be excused from the meeting because she could not hear the proceedings well due to technical difficulties. She was excused by consensus and left the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

COUNCIL MATTERS

Discussion Regarding Parking Lot for Rivers Park Trail

Councilmember Plaag presented a proposal for improvements to the Rivers House parking lot. Public Works Director Todd Moody indicated that staff had looked at improvements to the parking area, including a 60x60 asphalt surface with bioswales for stormwater management and lighting. The estimated cost for pavement was $67,500, while a gravel option, requiring all labor to be performed by staff, was estimated at approximately $65,000. Director Moody expressed concerns about long-term maintenance issues associated with gravel. Mayor Pro-Tem George noted that the parking lot would eventually be part of a planned 14-mile recreational loop and expressed concerns regarding challenges related to monitoring parking durations and enforcement, particularly regarding visitors potentially leaving the area to dine elsewhere.

Director Moody indicated work could begin by late July or August. Town Manager Davis stated that a parks and green space fund with just over $100,000 was available and

appropriate for the project. Councilmember Roseman supported using gravel but acknowledged that asphalt might be preferable for easier maintenance. Mayor Pro-Tem George agreed the funding and timeline were suitable and suggested the idea of a temporary kiosk to help monitor the parking lot. Director Moody reminded the group that the project would need approval from the Historic Preservation Commission, which could delay progress.

Councilmember Carter made a motion to proceed with the asphalt option; Councilmember Plaag seconded the motion and noted that the driveway to the Rivers House was in poor condition, suggesting that it be repaved as part of the project. Director Moody confirmed that the quoted price included the parking lot only and estimated an additional $10,000–$15,000 to repave the driveway and area up to the house and garage, depending on the condition of the base. Councilmember Plaag proposed amending the motion to include the project cost of $80,000 to cover the full scope of work. Councilmember Carter accepted the amendment.

VOTE: Aye: Plaag, Carter, Roseman, George
Nay: None
Absent: Tugman

Councilmember Plaag emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on completing the broader vision for the trail. He recommended that he and Mayor Pro-Tem George meet with Jordan Sellers to discuss extending the trail through downtown, Church Street, and near the water tower by Howard's Knob. Mayor Pro-Tem George confirmed he had already met with Jordan and Downtown Coordinator Lane Moody regarding a potential downtown trail mural, and noted that Jordan had referenced the same trail connection in earlier conversations. Councilmember Plaag requested additional discussion of parking logistics at the October Council meeting.

Appointment to Board of Adjustment

Mayor Pro-Tem George nominated Mr. Ray for reappointment to the Board of Adjustment. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor Futrelle called for a vote.

VOTE: Aye: Plaag, Carter, Roseman, George
Nay: None
Absent: Tugman

Mr. Ray's term will expire on June 30, 2028.

Discussion Regarding Bolick Property Appraisal

Town Manager Davis indicated that she had received the updated appraisal for the Bolick property earlier in the week, which came in at $6,627,000.00. She noted that this appraisal pertained to 20.392 acres of property and excluded the conservation easement area and the space reserved for Fire Station 4. Manager Davis requested Council's permission to post the property for sale on the Town of Boone website and to alert two interested parties who have already contacted her. She noted that even with these carve-outs, the Town would still make a profit if the property were listed and sold at the appraised value. Councilmember Plaag made a motion to proceed with listing the property for sale on the Town of Boone website and for Manager Davis to work with the Town Attorney to list as described. Councilmember Carter seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Plaag, Roseman, Carter
Nay: George
Absent: Tugman

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Pro-Tem George made a motion to enter into closed session at 8:05 p.m. pursuant to the following:

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(1), to review, approve, and seal closed session minutes from Council's prior closed session(s).

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(3), to consult with the Town Attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the Town Council, and obtain legal advice, consider, and/or give instructions to the attorney concerning one or more legal claims.

Councilmember Carter seconded the motion.

VOTE: Aye: Plaag, Roseman, Carter, George
Nay: None
Absent: Tugman

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Councilmember Roseman, seconded by Councilmember Plaag, Council voted to adjourn the meeting 8:25 p.m.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Plaag, Carter, George
Nay: None
Absent: Tugman

Mayor Futrelle adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

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