MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
JULY 9, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 9, 2025, in the Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Tim Futrelle presided. Town Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Dalton George, Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, and Eric Plaag. Staff present included Town Manager Amy Davis, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon-Church, Planning Director Jane Shook, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Deputy Public Works Director Justin Stines, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager George Santucci, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed, Human Resources Director Dale Presnell (remote), and Town Attorney Allison Meade.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence was observed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Futrelle announced the following board vacancies:

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
One regular position, three alternate positions

DOWNTOWN BOONE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
Four Council-appointed positions

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Three regular positions

PLANNING COMMISSION
One regular position

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
One regular position, three student positions

Councilmember Plaag indicated that he had recently run into Donna Breitenstein, who inquired about the members' availability to participate in an event to unveil a quilt honoring the country's 250th anniversary. He noted that he was unable to attend the event, but invited others to participate if they were able.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

Upon a motion by Mayor Pro-Tem George, seconded by Councilmember Carter, Council voted to approve the agenda as presented.

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

APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Mayor Futrelle read the following resolution into the record:

RESOLUTION HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF GREGORY HOLLARS

WHEREAS, Gregory Hollars began his dedicated service to the Town of Boone on August 15, 1995, as a Utilities Maintenance Worker in the Public Works Department, bringing with him a strong work ethic, a commitment to excellence, and a deep care for his community; and

WHEREAS, Gregory's exceptional performance and leadership skills led to a series of well-earned promotions, including Equipment Operator in July 1996, Street Department Supervisor in February 1997, Fleet Supervisor in September 1999, again as Street Department Supervisor in November 2000, Interim Street Department Superintendent in August 2014, and finally, Street Department Superintendent on January 12, 2015; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his 30-year career, Gregory Hollars has exemplified professionalism, integrity, and dedication while supervising a team of 10 employees, overseeing the maintenance and safety of 42.9 miles of roadway, and ensuring effective management of critical town infrastructure including stormwater systems, street signage, street lighting, snow removal, and department budgeting and procurement; and

WHEREAS, Gregory's leadership and institutional knowledge have made a lasting impact on the Town of Boone, setting a high standard for service and leaving behind a legacy of operational excellence and community stewardship; and

WHEREAS, after decades of service to the Town and its residents, Gregory is retiring to enjoy a well-deserved next chapter focused on spending quality time with his beloved grandson, Grey, and pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors through his business, DirtWorx;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Boone Town Council hereby honors and commends Gregory Hollars for his outstanding service, expresses its sincere gratitude for his years of dedication and leadership, and extends best wishes for a happy, healthy, and fulfilling retirement.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Plaag, seconded by Councilmember Roseman, Council voted to approve the resolution as presented.

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

Members expressed their thanks to Mr. Hollars for his hard work and dedication during his 30-year career. Mr. Hollars, in turn, thanked Town staff and Council members for their support over the years.

Mayor Pro-Tem George read the following proclamation into the record:

TOWN OF BOONE
DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Disability Pride Month is celebrated nationally and internationally each July to commemorate the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990, a landmark civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Disability Pride Month provides an opportunity to recognize and honor the history, culture, and accomplishments of individuals with disabilities in various fields, including education, employment, arts, sports, science, and advocacy while affirming disability as a natural and valuable part of human diversity, where all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and equality, and where barriers to participation and inclusion are eliminated; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Boone acknowledges the barriers and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, including societal attitudes, built and architectural barriers, lack of accessibility, discrimination, and unequal opportunities; and

WHEREAS, approximately 15% of the world's population are disabled, representing a rich spectrum of identities across age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and socioeconomic background; and

WHEREAS, we appreciate the efforts of disability rights activists, organizations, and advocates who work tirelessly to advance the rights, independence, and well-being of individuals with disabilities, and to create a more inclusive and accessible world for all; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Boone is home to a vibrant and diverse disabled community whose presence, leadership, creativity, and advocacy deeply enrich our town; and

WHEREAS, this month challenges ableism, combats stigma, and promotes full inclusion and equity by recognizing that disability is not a deficit—but a vital part of who people are and how they move through the world; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Boone is committed to being a town where all people, including those with disabilities, can live with dignity, safety, access, joy, and pride;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Tim Futrelle, Mayor of the Town of Boone, along with the Boone Town Council do hereby proclaim July 2025 as Disability Pride Month in Boone, North Carolina, and call upon all residents to join in recognizing and celebrating the disabled members of our community with visibility, respect, and solidarity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Boone Human Relations Commission will be hosting a Disability Pride event on Saturday, July 26, from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at the Watauga Agricultural Conference Center.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Roseman, seconded by Councilmember Carter, Council voted to approve the proclamation as presented.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no speakers signed up for public comment.

WORK SESSION

Councilmember Plaag initiated the discussion by stating that, given recent developments, it was time to revisit the Town's Nondiscrimination Ordinance (NDO). He recommended exploring options to either modify the ordinance or adopt additional measures that clearly communicate the Town's commitment to defending residents' rights.

Attorney Meade recalled that during the initial adoption of the NDO, the Town passed the strongest version possible without requiring the creation of a new employee position. She explained that, in North Carolina, housing discrimination claims could be pursued under the state's Fair Housing Act, which was enforceable by the government. Ms. Meade noted that the Town's ordinance defined racial and sex-based discrimination as broadly as permitted under current legal constraints, and any further expansion would likely require employee certification and the addition of investigative and legal staff.

Councilmember Carter thanked Councilmember Plaag for bringing the matter forward and reminded the group that the Town had previously consulted with Gene Troy, with the North Carolina Human Relations Commission (Civil Rights Division), who advised that Boone's ordinance was among the strongest in the state, apart from the state-level Fair Housing Ordinance. Councilmember Carter expressed interest in determining whether the Town could feasibly take further action. He clarified that cases of housing discrimination are currently referred to the state.

Mayor Pro-Tem George noted that the existing NDO already covers many issues addressed by fair housing law and suggested that aligning the Town's efforts with state statutes might be sufficient. Attorney Meade raised the question of whether the concern pertained to local instances of discrimination or to the performance of the North Carolina Human Relations Commission (NCHRC). She assumed the issue was more likely a lack of public awareness rather than government inaction, and suggested that the Town focus on education while relying on the state's established legal framework.

Councilmember Plaag voiced concern over ongoing rhetoric at both the state and federal levels regarding efforts to strip rights from LGBTQ+ individuals. He felt that Boone's ordinance was not as explicitly clear as others and proposed including language that referenced the protections available under state law. Councilmember Plaag emphasized the need for better public education and suggested the creation of a "Tenants' Bill of Rights." He also mentioned that funding might be available to reimburse municipalities for related costs.

Attorney Meade disagreed with the idea that securing outside funding alone would make local enforcement equivalent to state-level expertise. She stated that she had never received a housing discrimination complaint during her tenure and questioned whether there was a need to duplicate the state's enforcement role. However, she supported adding language to clarify that housing complaints were handled by the state and including educational resources to help residents understand their rights.

Councilmember Roseman suggested including hyperlinks on the Town's website to redirect residents to relevant information. Councilmember Carter noted that the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was developing a new webpage and planned to hold a Fair Housing Conference in April.

Mayor Pro-Tem George inquired about the possibility of partnering with Appalachian State University (ASU), but Attorney Meade expressed caution, emphasizing that issues of discrimination should not be taken lightly. Mayor Pro-Tem George pointed out that resolutions often drew public attention, and Attorney Meade agreed that a resolution would be appropriate without the need to create an entirely new ordinance.

Mayor Pro-Tem George offered to help draft an educational resolution and bring it back for review. There was general support for Attorney Meade to work on language to enhance the

current NDO and for staff to add educational links to the Town's website. Councilmember Carter supported this approach and recommended consulting Equality NC to determine whether similar language had already been used in other small municipalities. Attorney Meade shared that when she originally drafted Boone's NDO, she had used Equality NC's model ordinance and researched examples from other municipalities to produce the strongest possible version. She recommended that staff reach out to Gene Troy for further guidance.

After a brief discussion, there was consensus for Attorney Meade and Councilmember Carter to explore adding clarifying language about fair housing to the NDO without creating a new ordinance, while Mayor Pro-Tem and Councilmember Plaag would work on a resolution and informational piece to help the public understand their rights.

ADOPTION OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

Upon a motion by Councilmember Roseman, seconded by Councilmember Plaag, Council voted to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

1. Transportation Projects for the 2008-2037 State Transportation Improvement Program
2. Hickory Ridge Accessible Path – Change Order
3. Contract – Department of Commerce (Howard Street Revitalization Project)
4. Boone BOO! Ordinance
5. Budget Amendment
    a. **Police Department**

To:	Crime Prevention	010-500-300-51310	$3,500.00
From:	Appropriated Fund Balance	010-000-000-499900	($3,500.00)

Explanation: Walmart Sparkgood grant funding for Shop with a Cop and National Night Out.

COUNCIL MATTERS

BOONE FAIR HOUSING ORDINANCE

Upon a motion by Councilmember Plaag, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem George, Council voted to table this agenda item.

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

Absent: Tugman

UPDATE ON NORTH STREET PARK

Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed reported that in 2019, he joined a regional art project initiative and selected a project focused on Pegge Laine and the Junaluska community, which included the Clarissa Hill Cemetery, an ABC book, and the development of a community garden in North Street Park. As part of this project, the existing fence was removed, and raised bed gardens were constructed. He informed the Council that the project was still ongoing at a modest pace.

Director Freed noted that the community had been surveyed and expressed interest in improving the parking area, enhancing the entryway, adding a pavilion, and incorporating storytelling elements to share the history of the Junaluska community. Ms. Laine shared that work was underway to secure historical markers for the Clarissa Hill Cemetery and expressed the need to establish North Street Park as a pocket park. She then provided a brief history of the site.

Councilmember Plaag suggested incorporating the Northern Peaks Trail into the project and recommended considering a renaming opportunity for the park. Names such as Horton, Hagler, and Jackson Park were mentioned, with the intention of honoring significant Black leaders from the community. Councilmember Plaag expressed strong support for reimagining the space in a way that reflects the community's legacy.

Mayor Pro-Tem George voiced support for moving forward with the project. In response to Councilmember Carter's question about whether the project involved expansion, Director Freed clarified that the work would be limited to improving the Queen Street lot entryway and parking area, with no expansion of the park's footprint.

Ms. Laine confirmed that she would continue efforts to collect and preserve community stories. There was consensus among the group to proceed with requesting funding for the project. Councilmember Plaag recommended involving Laney Wise in the process to obtain grant funding, if possible.

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION REQUEST

Councilmember Carter made a motion to approve the request for funding in the amount of $940 as submitted. Mayor Pro-Tem George seconded the motion.

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

APPOINTMENT TO CULTURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD

Councilmember Plaag expressed discomfort with appointing a member to a Town board who does not reside in the county. Cultural Resources Director Freed noted that the applicant is actively invested in the music school at Appalachian State University and the local music scene, and maintains a presence in the area. Attorney Meade noted that Blowing Rock is partially located in Caldwell County.

Councilmember Carter asked if there were any objections to the nomination. Director Freed stated that he had none and remarked that the applicant would bring a different perspective, noting that no other applications had been submitted.

Councilmember Carter nominated Justin Butler to serve on the Cultural Resources Advisory Board. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor Futrelle called for a vote.

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

Justin's term will expire on July 30, 2028.

APPOINTMENT TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Councilmember Roseman appointed Krystal Carter to the open term expiring June 30, 2027, and noted that Ms. Carter's work schedule had been altered to allow her to attend meetings, citing this as the reason she resigned her previous position. Councilmember Roseman also nominated Melody Oxendine for the open student seat. Councilmember Plaag noted that he knew applicants Ascher and Benny socially and had some discomfort because he knew that Ascher would not be available for the whole duration of the meetings. He stated that Benny was an enthusiastic historian and supported their presence as a student representative. Councilmember Plaag asked if Councilmember Roseman would be willing to nominate Melody to a regular seat and Benny to the student seat. Councilmember Roseman accepted this suggestion. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor Futrelle called for a vote.

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

Melody and Krystal's terms will expire on June 30, 2027. Benny's term will expire on June 30, 2026.

APPOINTMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Mayor Pro-Tem George nominated Mike Kapp to serve on the Sustainability Committee. Hearing no further nominations, Mayor Futrelle called for a vote.

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

Mike's term will expire on June 30, 2028.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Davis updated members on the following matters:

1. Parking – staff has sold 16 employee passes and has not heard any complaints regarding rate increases. Manager Davis requested that an agenda item regarding limiting pay station parking to 2 hours on game days be added for the next meeting.

2. Jaycee Park parking agreement – Manager Davis reported that staff had been in touch with Marrena Greer at SAHA, who was unable to find any such agreement in their files. Ms. Greer invited Councilmember Roseman to come look for agreement if she wished. In reference to documents previously sent out by Councilmember Plaag, he indicated that it was clear that the property was purchased by the Town, not a gift. Councilmember Roseman indicated that she would work with Billy Ralph Winkler to continue the search for the document. Councilmember Plaag suggested staff reach out to Barney Hampton as well.

3. Grants – Staff reported receiving $35,000 from the Arbor Day Foundation for tree cleanup at the Rivers House property. Manager Davis indicated that staff had initially applied for $25,000, but was awarded more since the Town was such a good member. Councilmember Plaag noted that a dozen large trees were down on the property and asked how far into the cleanup process the funds would get staff. Public Works Director Todd Moody responded that he believed most of the fallen trees could be removed with that amount of money.

4. Sustainability – Manager Davis indicated that interns were working at the Elizabeth Young Community Gardens on signage to identify plots, pollinator and perennial plots, and battery-powered pump stations to fill tanks.

5. Sustainability – Staff is exploring trolleys for the area and employee parking incentives.

6. Cultural Resources – the High Country Water Media Society is exhibiting at the Jones House in July. Manager Davis announced that Old Time Jam Sessions, Summer Slow Jams, and Summer Concerts were ongoing and announced the upcoming Doc Watson Day and Busker Fest. She noted that the July 4th fireworks went well.

7. Police Department – Manager Davis announced that the department would soon be expanding its social work program to add a peer support specialist through the Protect and Connect grant program, and would be hiring one full-time police officer to partner with the peer support specialists as part of a co-response team. She noted that, together, they would integrate law enforcement techniques with peer support services and help connect individuals to appropriate resources. The goal is to meet the individual needs of those where they are, and when officers are not on active calls, they will follow up with members of the homeless community and make wellness calls to victims of car crashes or other incidents in an effort to enhance community outreach and improve the overall level of customer service provided by the department.

8. Planning and Inspections – the Boone Next document has been added to the website, a press release went out today, and the website is up.

9. Work has started on the Post Office roof.

10. Public Works – Milling and Resurfacing will begin this week on the following streets: Arbor Lane, Edgewood Drive, Council Street, and Hillcrest Circle. Construction of the Daniel Boone Gardens pavilion was completed in June, and events are taking place.

11. Renovations to the Council Chambers will begin in the coming weeks, and staff are working to secure an alternate meeting location.

TOWN ATTORNEY UPDATE

Attorney Meade provided a reminder regarding the Town's ethics and gift policy, noting that an offer involving Symphony by Chetola Lake tickets had recently been brought to her attention. Council members were reminded that they are not permitted to accept gifts of value in their capacity as public officials.

Councilmember Carter noted that he and a co-worker had accepted invitations in connection with their employment at the Hospitality House. Attorney Meade emphasized the importance of ensuring that all invitations and offers are clearly in compliance with the Town's ethics policy. Council was advised to reach out with any questions or concerns regarding the acceptance of gifts or event invitations.

Next, Council discussed a request from an overdose awareness organization to install a temporary exhibit at Clawson-Burnley Park, which would include posters placed in the ground for some days or weeks. The group also proposed a "purple pantry" which would contain overdose supplies and a gathering/rally to occur one day in August. Attorney Meade expressed discomfort with the request for the temporary exhibit installation from a First Amendment standpoint, noting that all regulations for Town parks must be content-neutral. Allowing this installation would require allowing similar requests from any group. Given this concern, she recommended not allowing the exhibit at this time. However, she drew a distinction between the proposed temporary exhibit, on the one hand, and the proposed "purple pantry" and the special event gathering, on the other.

Councilmember Plaag suggested that a pantry could be installed and used similar to the Little Free Libraries in town, but instead to offer medical supplies. He stated the argument could be made that this was a health and welfare need and did not see a reason the Town could not partner with this organization and designate the park as a supply location. Mayor Pro-Tem George agreed and expressed support for this concept.

Regarding public gatherings similar to the one requested, Attorney Meade clarified that the Town has not historically required permits, and that gatherings in town parks are generally protected under the First Amendment as core expressive conduct. If a permit is ever required for public safety reasons, she noted that the same rules must apply to all groups. Mayor Pro-Tem George asked if staff could direct Cultural Resources Director Freed to install the poster exhibit at the park. Attorney Meade responded that Town-funded and supported initiatives might be possible. She added that gatherings can occur freely, and that unless there is a demonstrated problem, no additional regulation is needed at this time. It was agreed by consensus that Ms. Meade would investigate legal parameters for both a purple pantry and for the possibility of the town engaging in expressive activity in the park while excluding the same activity by private speakers.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Mayor Futrelle announced that the first and only double-decker bus in the state was recently unveiled in Boone.

Councilmember Roseman stated that the Historic Preservation Commission had not met since her last report and that meetings would resume in August.

Mayor Pro-Tem George announced that construction on the ABC Store expansion began recently.

Councilmember Plaag reported that Dr. Scott Elliott attended the recent Economic Development Commission meeting and reported on hurricane recovery in the area. He stated that he appreciated Dr. Elliott looking out for Western North Carolina and Boone.

Councilmember Plaag reported that the DBDA expressed a strong desire for the removal of the arcade structure located in front of Fire Station 1, citing its deteriorated condition. The board noted that removal has been complicated by the adjacent property, but emphasized the need to proceed, even if the Town must cover the cost of removal on the neighboring property. It was mentioned that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has had the arcade's removal on its wish list for over ten years. Additionally, the board requested the removal of the structures on the former Boone Drug building and Off the Rack, as well as the pillars located in front of Town Hall. Town Manager Davis noted that the current budget does not include a construction line item to support these removals.

Next, Councilmember Plaag relayed concerns that the Appalachian Theatre had not seen or been consulted on the final plans for curb cuts, gutters, and driveways on Howard Street. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that buses can access the theatre and requested that the final pavement and hardscape plans be shared with DBDA members. Manager Davis acknowledged the request for renderings but noted that it would be too late in the process and cost-prohibitive to produce detailed drawings at this stage. Councilmember Plaag agreed, but felt that plans were still necessary to ensure functionality. Public Works Director Moody assured members that pavement and hardscape plans would be distributed to DBDA members. He added that it would not be feasible to change plans at this point in the project to provide bus access to the rear of the theatre. Councilmember Plaag stressed the importance of not limiting the theatre’s ability to produce and host performances due to access issues. Mayor Pro-Tem George suggested the Town could allow the theatre to use the Town's parking lot if needed, possibly through a lease agreement or other arrangement.

Upon a motion by Mayor Pro-Tem George, seconded by Councilmember Roseman, Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

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

Absent:Tugman

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Nicole Harmon-Church, Clerk Tim Futrelle, Mayor