Downtown Boone Development Association

September Board Meeting – September 30, 2025
8:30 a.m. – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Kendra Sink, Renee Boughman, Megan Kevorkian, Julia Moretz, Suzanne Livesay, Jordan Humler, Fulton Lovin and Stephanie Boozer
Ex-Officio Members Present: Eric Plaag and Edie Tugman

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Dale Presnell and Mark Freed

MSD Members Present: Hope Thingelstad (Explore Boone) and Alyssa Hasty (Lost Province)

Call to Order

At 8:35 a.m., Kendra called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and invited the group to go around the room for introductions.

Request for Approval of September Agenda

Kendra asked for a motion to approve the September agenda. Lane noted that she had received a Board Application from Melody Pineda after the agenda had been published and asked to amend the agenda to include discussion of her application as the first item under Organizational. Eric also requested that Edie be given a few minutes to speak, and Lane suggested placing this item before the Board application.

Stephanie made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Renee seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of July Meeting Minutes

Kendra asked for a motion to approve the July meeting minutes. Suzanne made a motion to approve the minutes, which Kendra seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements

Lane explained that the transaction details appeared to show costs for the Director's Meeting coming from this year's budget, but clarified that the purchase order had been rolled into this fiscal year and the funds had not yet been transferred. She also noted that her desktop computer had reached the end of its warranty and a new computer had been ordered.

The Board briefly discussed the functionality of the Tsunami cameras. With no further discussion, Renee made a motion to approve the financial statements. Fulton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Organizational

Remarks from Town Council Liaison – Edie Tugman
Edie thanked the Board, sharing that she had enjoyed her time serving more than she ever expected, and expressed that she would miss everyone. Lane announced that Edie had resigned her position on Town Council effective October 1. Edie spoke briefly about her upcoming move, and the Board expressed their gratitude for her service.

Request for Approval of M. Pineda Board Application

Lane opened by noting that Melody Pineda currently works in the University's properties office and previously served on DBDA when she owned businesses downtown. Eric asked if the position was Ex-Officio; Lane clarified that it was a regular Board-appointed position.

Edie and Eric also updated the Board on recently passed legislation in the NC General Assembly affecting the Town's ability to enforce codes and ordinances on University-owned projects. They explained that the legislation would allow the University to operate outside of Town regulations, and noted that a representative had offered to attempt to repeal the legislation if the Town reversed recent changes to downtown gameday parking.

Following the discussion, Julia made a motion to approve Melody's application. Stephanie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Lane opened the discussion by noting the Board's ongoing need for officers, particularly Secretary and Treasurer. She explained that both roles would be manageable commitments, as the Town Finance Department supports the Treasurer's responsibilities, and the Secretary's primary duty would be to review meeting minutes.

During discussion, Suzanne offered to continue serving as Vice-President if Kendra remained as President. Kendra agreed but expressed willingness to step aside if someone else wished to lead. Renee volunteered to serve as Secretary, and Julia volunteered to serve as Treasurer.

Kendra made a motion to nominate Renee Boughman as Secretary and Julia Moretz as Treasurer. Suzanne seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Fulton then made a motion to nominate Kendra Sink as President and Suzanne Livesay as Vice-President. Renee seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of New Board Application

Lane opened by noting that Board applications had been a frequent topic of conversation. In addition to the DBDA considering a new Board application, the Town Clerk and Mayor Pro-Tem had also been discussing application processes. Lane explained that, following discussion during the ARC Board Development Training, she had drafted the application included in the packet. However, after further conversations with the Town Clerk, she learned that this format would not be supported on the Town website. She asked the Board to review the information requested in the draft application.

Lane shared that during the training, consultants from Strategic Consulting emphasized the importance of applications that provide more detail about time commitments and the mission of the Board. While the draft application included in the packet will likely not be used, she noted that staff will work with the Town to develop a more refined version for the DBDA to be hosted on the Town's website.

Lane also mentioned that if the application cannot capture all the necessary information, the Board could consider developing a value statement to circulate. In addition, she highlighted ongoing discussions about expanding Board Member Orientation, incorporating a board matrix to support recruitment, and developing a more formal recruitment strategy and documentation.

Kendra noted that the current DBDA application does not help applicants fully understand the Board and its role. Renee added that she would like to see additional information provided, such as a link to more details about NC Main Street. Lane concluded by noting that although this item appeared on the agenda for approval, given that the process is still evolving, the intention was to provide an update and request additional input from the Board.

Recap Annual Meeting

Lane opened by noting that she felt the annual meeting was well attended and went smoothly. She expressed her appreciation to NC Main Street for developing the impact report, which highlights the past year's investments and provides valuable statistical information collected throughout the year. She noted that the impact report was shared with attendees during the meeting to provide context on the program's progress and achievements. She also thanked Explore Boone for opening the program with a presentation that offered informative tourism highlights. Lane concluded by thanking the Forrester family for allowing the use of their space for the meeting.

Update on ARC Ready Non-Profits Board Development

Lane opened by noting that much of the information had already been covered in the earlier discussion about the Board application. She highlighted that once the formatting allowed on the Town's website is confirmed, staff will continue working to better communicate both the role of the Board in the community and the value of serving on the Board. Lane also informed members that two additional counseling sessions are scheduled for December and January. It was her understanding that these sessions will be used to help guide the Board in effectively utilizing the grant funding associated with completion of the training.

Kendra asked whether there were any projects listed in the approved uses for the grant funds that the Board might be able to take advantage of. Lane suggested that the reference to professional development for Board members and key staff could be particularly beneficial. Following a brief discussion of potential training opportunities, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Discussion of Upcoming Trademark Declarations

Lane reported that Cory Rayborn, the attorney who assisted with securing the organization's trademark, had reached out regarding the need to renew the trademark declarations. She noted that the renewal is not required until August 2026.

Fulton asked about the colors of the logo and whether other color variations could be used, adding that he appreciated the vibrant colors of the Boonerang logo. Edie inquired whether, similar to the branding process the Town is currently undertaking, there might be an opportunity to develop logo patches, potentially specific to Boonerang. Lane responded that she was unsure but could follow up with the attorney. Kendra added that her recollection was that the color palette was outlined in the individual license agreements.

The Board then discussed the idea of logo patches and brainstormed ways to incorporate more vibrant colors into the existing logo. Kendra suggested that if there is interest in pursuing this further, it would be an appropriate agenda item for the Design Committee. With no other discussion the Board moved on.

Review of Buskers Fest

Lane opened by reviewing the history of Buskers Fest, noting that it has traditionally been part of First Friday programming. She explained that due to the event's popularity, it was held in 2025 as a stand-alone event on Saturday, September 20, to allow for expanded hours and programming. Lane remarked that the event was a great success.

Amber Bateman, Director of the Watauga Arts Council, shared that the hours were set intentionally to allow attendees time to shop and dine downtown as well as participate in the event. She also noted that buskers were strategically placed to help draw foot traffic throughout downtown. Amber added that she hoped to distribute a survey to downtown businesses to gather feedback on how the event impacted sales and foot traffic. She briefly highlighted areas they would look to adjust in the future and noted that the event featured over 200 buskers and artists.

Lane expressed her appreciation to the Arts Council for their hard work in organizing the event. A short discussion followed regarding event signage, and Fulton expressed that he thought the timing was perfect.

Megan added that she thought that having the Oktoberfest programming within the event was also very successful and she was excited about the social media traffic that it generated.

With no other discussion the Board moved on.

Discussion of Upcoming Events

Lane opened by noting that First Friday Art Crawl would take place that Friday, and she would be sharing the list of associated events the following day. She highlighted that this month's event would include the inaugural flag raising for Appalachian Heritage Month, which Town Council recently proclaimed for the month of October. Kendra inquired about the flag, and Suzanne provided a copy from the email distributed by the Watauga Arts Council.

Lane continued by noting that the upcoming weekend would be especially busy, with a home football game scheduled, Appalachian State University's Homecoming on Saturday, October 18, the Valley Country Fair in Valle Crucis, and the Woolly Worm Festival in Banner Elk.

She went on to report that Boone BOO! would take place on a Friday this year and she anticipated a large turnout. Due to the popularity of last year's trophies for the costume contest, Lane shared that she had ordered them again and added a "zombie" trophy for older participants. She reminded the Board that DBDA would not be purchasing candy for businesses this year and encouraged businesses to begin preparing.

Kendra inquired why the Board had stopped purchasing candy in past years. Lane explained that the amount previously purchased was insufficient to meet demand and that distribution was very time-consuming. Megan commented that any additional supply would be helpful, and Kendra agreed it might be worth revisiting. The Board then discussed the option of purchasing candy again for downtown businesses, noting that if implemented, businesses would need to pick up their candy rather than DBDA managing delivery. Jordan suggested that his church could potentially serve as the pick-up location. The Board also brainstormed possible ways to source candy at the best price.

Following discussion, Renee made a motion to allocate up to $3,000 for candy and treats for Boone BOO!. The motion was seconded by Kendra. Renee, Kendra, Megan, Suzanne, Jordan, Stephanie, and Julia voted in favor, while Fulton opposed, expressing that the funds might be better used in more creative ways. A brief discussion followed regarding additional opportunities to enhance Boone BOO! engagement, after which the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Discussion of NC Main Street Storyville Training

Lane opened by noting that the Storyville training opportunity, led by Phil Eich, is another component of the NC Main Street programming provided to businesses and communities across the state. She explained that the program is funded by a State Outdoor Recreation Travel and Tourism Grant through the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Lane shared that she had participated in two of the trainings, one during the NC Main Street Directors' meeting and another at a mandatory session in Statesville. She described the training as special, unique, and a thoughtful way to highlight the people and character of the community. Lane noted that Phil did an excellent job teaching interview techniques and photography, and that participants were paired to practice the methods by conducting live interviews during the training.

She emphasized the value of the program as a marketing strategy, recalling Phil's recommendation that interviews and related posts occur more than once or twice a month. While acknowledging the benefits, Lane also pointed out that the initiative would be time-consuming. She added that, after speaking with Phil, he had expressed willingness to come to Boone to help launch the project.

Lane asked the Board if this was an avenue they would like to consider. There was general consensus to request cost information from Phil regarding assisting with implementation in Boone and bring it back to the Board.

Request for Approval of Funding for Rotating Public Art in Alleyway

Lane opened by noting that this project had been under discussion for some time as the Board worked to secure the necessary permissions to move forward. She shared that she believed the permissions were now sufficient to begin moving the project ahead. Lane asked the Board to consider setting aside funds to support the effort, estimating approximately $2,500 to clean up the wall, up to $2,000 for infrastructure to support rotating public art, and up to $10,000 for a mural on the painted brick.

Kendra inquired about the possibility of including lighting, as had been previously discussed. Lane explained that a new lighting ordinance had introduced additional regulations that would need to be considered, and that providing power to the lights would also present its own challenges.

Following continued discussion, Kendra made a motion to approve the use of up to $15,000 for the project, contingent upon the inclusion of additional lighting. The motion was seconded by Renee and approved unanimously.

Discussion of Noble Wins Benches

Lane opened the discussion by sharing a picture of a potential bench placement and reminded the Board that these benches had been discussed at the July meeting. Suzanne and Fulton expressed concerns

about both the functionality and appearance of the benches. Edie asked whether this project could be merged with the Boone Benches initiative previously suggested by Mark Freed.

The Board briefly discussed alternative placement options. Kendra noted that there seemed to be interest in benches that could also serve as public art, though not necessarily the specific benches under consideration. Megan asked about the connection between the windmill blade design and Boone. Kendra explained that Boone has a history of windmills as prominent features in the town's landscape.

Following further discussion, Kendra requested that Board members research other bench options and bring suggestions to the next meeting.

Discussion of Natural Area Collaboration

Lane opened the discussion by sharing that she had been in conversation with Rachel Whitfield of Future Relic Designs regarding a natural area in front of the Linney House near the sidewalk. The property owner expressed openness to collaborating on improvements to the space. Suzanne suggested reaching out to a garden club to gauge interest. Lane noted that she envisioned the DBDA providing funding support for the project, with volunteers assisting in its completion. After a brief discussion, the Board reached consensus to contact local garden clubs about potential involvement.

Discussion of Social District Survey Results and Timeline for Discussion

Megan opened the discussion by noting that, after reviewing the survey comments, she was concerned that many people may not fully understand what a social district is or how it functions. She suggested launching an educational campaign to provide clearer information, adding that she believed some of the expressed fears were unfounded. Edie responded that she felt there were also valid concerns. Suzanne pointed out that 80% of survey respondents indicated they had previously seen a social district.

Megan continued by highlighting what she believed were mischaracterizations within the survey responses. Renee added that one comment raised concerns about overlooking the unique dynamics of a college town. She noted that she remained undecided on how to proceed but did not want to dismiss the concerns raised.

Kendra recalled that, at a previous meeting, someone had suggested piloting the social district for just a few events during the first year, which she felt could be a good starting point. Fulton suggested that Howard Street, once complete, might serve as an appropriate location for a test run. He also cautioned that social districts can be controversial and risk dividing a community. Megan emphasized that the survey still reflected an overwhelming interest in exploring the concept. Suzanne then asked Megan to clarify what benefits she envisioned that were not already being realized. Megan responded that she did not see a direct benefit for her business but was hopeful a social district would benefit tourism, referencing her experience in Brevard.

Suzanne encouraged Board members to consult their insurance agents about potential impacts of allowing alcohol in their spaces and noted that a social district may not be beneficial for the Theatre. Kendra pointed out that there could be hospitality concerns if a business chose not to participate in the district but then had to ask patrons to leave when they brought in drinks. The Board discussed what events might be most suited to benefit from a social district. Fulton asked whether DOT had concerns

about people crossing King Street with alcohol, and Edie noted that was a good question but one she did not yet have an answer for.

Further discussion followed about how open alcohol containers might affect businesses, including the potential for spillage. Edie observed that, in her experience, most social districts were located in areas with more significant green space than Boone currently has.

After continued discussion, the Board reached consensus to call an Economic Vitality Committee meeting to focus on educating the public about the rules of a social district and to explore what events might be best supported by such a district. Kendra asked Megan if she would consider presenting again on social districts. The Board then briefly discussed members' past experiences with alcohol in their spaces before moving on to the next agenda item.

Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project

Lane opened by noting that progress on the culvert work had been slow but was expected to wrap up by the end of the week. Kendra mentioned her excitement about planning a ribbon-cutting event once the work was complete. Lane agreed and suggested adding ribbon-cutting planning to the schedule. The Board then brainstormed ideas for the event.

Lane added that after the culvert work concludes, crews will return to place a base layer of asphalt along the roadway before shifting to the opposite side of Howard Street. She noted that the paving phase will bring significant parking and traffic changes and anticipated that frustrations could arise once those changes take effect.

There was also a brief discussion regarding construction in the Peacock Parking Lot before the Board adjourned.