Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 7th, 2024
5:30 P.M.

Members Present: Chair Brian Crutchfield (Virtual), Vice Chair Jennifer Maxwell, Member Joey Crews, Member Georgia Arnold, Member Becca Nenow, Member Joan Brook (Virtual), Member Michael Weiss (Virtual), Member Evan Flaherty, and Member Bhuwan Thapa (Virtual)

Members Absent: Member Ryan Robinson

Staff Present: George Santucci, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager, Brandon Wise, Environmental Specialist, and Laney Wise, Grants Coordinator/Communications

Council Liaison: Mayor Pro Tem Dalton George and Councilmember Eric Plaag

Others Present: Will Bennett

Call To Order:

Due to technological issues, Vice Chair Maxwell was asked to chair the meeting. Vice Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m..

Adoption of Agenda:

Vice Chair Maxwell asked for a vote to adopt the agenda as presented. Upon the motion of Member Nenow, seconded by Member Crews, the agenda for February 7th, 2024 Sustainability Committee meeting was approved unanimously.

Approval of December 14th Minutes:

Vice Chair Maxwell asked for a motion to approve the December 14th, 2023 Sustainability Committee meeting minutes as presented. Upon the motion of Member Nenow, seconded by Member Crews, the December 14th, 2023 Sustainability Committee meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Old Business: Earth Third Friday and Film Fest:

Mr. Santucci began by explaining to the Committee that in April, the Town of Boone will be hosting multiple events in honor of Earth Day. Mr. Santucci invited members to join him and other staff members at F.A.R.M. Cafe in early April to help promote the Earth Day events. Mr. Santucci then explained that on April 19th beginning at 5:00 p.m., the Town will be hosting Earth Third Friday, the annual Arbor Day event, at the Jones House. Mr. Wise explained that this year, due to recent updates to the Town of Boone's UDO in regards to invasive species, the theme of the event will be Invasive and Native Species. Mr. Wise went on to say that, similar to the event in the past, many NGOs and sustainable organizations would be tabling. Ms. Wise then explained that on April 19th, in conjunction with Earth Third Friday, the Town will also be hosting the second annual Boone Earth Film fest. She asked the committee that if they had any films they recommended they show, to please let her know. Vice Chair Maxwell suggested Ms. Wise reached out to Beth Davidson regarding her film on F.A.R.M. Cafe, and Councilmember Plaag explained that new information has been released regarding Docuappalacha, and that he thought it would be a good film to show again as well. Vice Chair Maxwell gave a brief overview of the Earth Expo Appalachian State University would be hosting beginning at 1:00p.m. on April 19th as well, and listed other events Appalachian State University would be hosting during the month of April.

Old Business: CCAP Action Matrix:

Mr. Santucci began by explaining that this item on the agenda was to help clarify what the matrix is for the Boone Community Climate Action Plan (Boone CCAP) that the Committee approved during the previous meeting. After walking through the matrix with the Committee, Mr. Santucci explained that the Boone CCAP had yet to be presented to the Town Council due to the fact that some of the numbers calculated by ICLEI, the consulting firm working with the Town, were wrong. He clarified, and explained that the overall charts and emission data were correct, however, the data for how these numbers were calculated were incorrect. Councilmember Plaag asked Mr. Santucci if he could give a brief explanation regarding New River Light and Power's new solar policy, and Mr. Santucci agreed, however, noted that there would not be enough time during this meeting to go in depth. Mr. Santucci pointed out to the Committee that transportation is 47% of the cause of all emissions within the Boone Community, and noted that transportation will be the biggest lift in order to reach the goals laid out within the Boone CCAP by 2050. Member Crews asked Mr. Santucci if a pamphlet could be created that detailed how electric cars could power a house, and Mr. Santucci stated that it was a good idea, however, the technology was not completed yet. Mr. Weiss thanked Mr. Santucci for the clarification, but noted that he wanted to make sure the co benefits of these actions, such as cost-savings, increased wellbeing, and increased health, were not ignored. Mr. Santucci explained that increased educational materials will be produced that will highlight these materials as supplements to the Boone CCAP. A discussion was held regarding the clarity of the Boone CCAP and the goals and actions found in the document. Member Thapa asked Mr. Santucci if Appalachian State University's emissions were accounted for within the document. Mr. Santucci explained that Appalachian State University has been a vital partner in this project, and that the University emits roughly 20% of the community-wide emissions. Member Nenow asked Mr. Santucci if the document was produced by ICLEI, and Mr Santucci explained that it was created in conjunction with Town staff. Member Nenow noted that some of the formatting on the matrices presented was off, and that some words were misspelled. Ms. Wise noted that, while the information was the same as the matrices found in the packet, the completed Boone CCAP has been updated with a different theme and all formatting issues were addressed.

New Business: Townwide Invasive Species Inventory and Management Plan:

Mr. Santucci introduced Mr. Bennett as the newest intern for the Sustainability program. He explained that Mr. Bennett was working on creating a map that identified the invasive species found on Town property, and Mr. Bennett explained that he was estimating that there are about 12 different types of invasive species on Town property. Mr. Santucci explained that this project was inspired by the removal of the reed canary grass on the Greenway. Member Nenow asked if the Town had ever considered renting goats to control the spread of low-lying invasive species, and Mr. Wise explained that unfortunately, many invasive species needed to be removed by the root in order to cull the spread. A discussion was held regarding different volunteering opportunities the Town had to offer, and how political science majors could become involved with the Committee and other sustainable initiatives produced by the Town.

New Business: Upper Hardin Creek Grant Application:

Mr. Santucci explained that many streambank restorations have taken place within the Town of Boone. He went on to say that a big project the Town is working on now is restoring the streambank of the Upper Hardin Creek off of Daniel Boone Drive Extension. He explained that the current state of the stream has caused flooding within that area, and that in 2000-2001, the Town of Boone had purchased all houses that were located next to the stream within that area. These houses were purchased as they flooded often. He went on to say that he was currently searching for grants to help fund this $900,000 project, and that many applications were sent to different agencies. Member Weiss asked if there was a study produced that showed which streams in Boone were the highest priority in regards to streambank restoration, and Mr. Santucci explained that restoration projects were dictated by the extent of flooding and the cooperation of landowners. A discussion was held regarding the Upper Hardin Creek streambank restoration and the potential to connect the Greenway Trail in a more cohesive fashion.

Other Matters:

Councilmember George asked Mr. Wise to update the Committee regarding the American Chestnut Foundation project. Mr. Wise explained that originally, the Town was trying to partner with Appalachian State University regarding soil sampling at the Strawberry Hill Arboretum, however, due to different schedules it has not been feasible. However, he explained that he and Mr. Bolick, the Town of Boone's landscaper, would be sampling the soil soon to send to the American Chestnut Foundation.

Councilmember George then discussed the potential Hellbender mural project that was happening with the Downtown Boone Development Association. Councilmember Plaag explained that a rendering of the potential mural was shown at the Downtown Boone Development Association meeting, however, the mural shown would not be approved due to design. Ms. Moody, the Downtown Development Coordinator for the Town of Boone, was in discussion with the organization proposing the mural, and he explained that once he learned more he would bring the information back to the Committee. Councilmember George asked the Committee if they would give consensus in support of the project, in which the Committee gave consensus of support.

Councilmember Plaag gave the Committee an update regarding the Housing Retreat the Town of Boone's Planning and Inspections Department had hosted recently with the Town Council. He explained that a discussion held during the retreat was in regards to potential rezoning amendments, and asked if the Committee would like to make a contribution to the discussion regarding how increased mass transportation would help with affordable housing. Mr. Santucci gave a brief overview of the Boone Next project and how it correlates with the Committee's goals. Member Flaherty asked if additional educational resources could be produced that could encourage tourist use of AppalCART. A discussion was held regarding park and rides in the Town of Boone and the current Greenway infrastructure found throughout the Town. Mr. Santucci asked the Committee if they would like to see a map of the current state of pedestrian infrastructure throughout the Town, and the Committee gave consensus for Mr. Santucci to present on the pedestrian infrastructure at the next Committee meeting.

Public Comment:

Vice Chair Maxwell asked if anyone in attendance would like to provide public comment. Hearing none, Vice Chair Maxwell asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

Upon the motion of Member Nenow, seconded by Member Flaherty, the adjournment February 7th meeting of the Sustainability Committee was approved unanimously at 7:40 p.m..