Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 5th, 2024
5:30 P.M.

Members Present: Chair Brian Crutchfield, Vice Chair Jennifer Maxwell, Member Becca Nenow, Member Joan Brook, Member Ryan Robinson (Virtual) and Member Michael Weiss (Virtual),

Members Absent: Member Georgia Arnold, Member Bhuwan Thapa and Member Evan Flaherty

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

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

Others Present: Joey Crews, Mike Kapp, Alex Zimmerman, Jessica, and Steven

Call To Order:

Chair Crutchfield called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m..

Adoption of Agenda:

Vice Chair Maxwell made a motion to approve the April 3rd, 2024 Sustainability Committee minutes as presented. Upon the motion of Chair Maxwell, seconded by Member Nenow, the April 3rd, 2024 Sustainability Committee minutes were approved unanimously.

Requested Appearances: Peel Scooters:

Chair Crutchfield introduced Mr. Alex Zimmerman, Ms. Jessica, and Mr. Steven and asked for them to present. Mr. Zimmerman thanked the Committee for inviting him and his group. He explained that Peel Scooters is an electric scooter and bicycle rental company, similar to Lime Scooters, that caters to smaller municipalities. What makes Peel Scooters different from other companies, Mr. Zimmerman explained, is that they implement a demand-based fleet and do not flood the community with extra vehicles. Mr. Zimmerman then discussed certain regulations Peel Scooters can implement with a community, such as no-ride zones, slow-speed zones, and others. Based on Boone's climate, Mr. Zimmerman recommended that if the Town decided to utilize Peel Scooters, the vehicles would only be available 6 to 7 months out of the year for maximum safety. Mr. Zimmerman discussed how Peel Scooters

work with local businesses, and have the ability to partner with local bike maintenance shops for maintenance of e-bikes. Furthermore, Mr. Zimmer explained that safety is the main concern for Peel Scooters, and as such, all riders must scan a QR code to learn about local and state-wide safety laws and that Peel Scooters advertise safety on social media. If rules are not followed, riders will be fined and eventually banned if unsafe behavior continues to occur. Vice Chair Maxwell asked if helmets were included, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that while they tried to include helmets on their fleet originally, a majority of the helmets were either taken or misplaced, which is why riders are encouraged to wear their own helmet. Chair Crutchfield asked about other communities where Peel Scooters have been implemented, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that Peel Scooters can be found in communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Ohio. Mr. Santucci asked if Mr. Zimmerman has worked with a University before. Mr. Zimmerman explained that in South Carolina, Peel Scooters have been implemented in the Town of Conway, and due to the pilot program's success, Coastal Carolina University will be implementing a program in August. Member Brook asked about no-drop zones and explained that while King Street is the main downtown district within the Town of Boone, it is also one of the busiest streets. She explained that it could be unsafe. Discussion ensued regarding potential no-drop and no-ride zones. Councilmember Plaag asked about the seasonal deployment and explained that there is a shortage of parking within Downtown Boone. If the Town were to deploy Peel Scooters, they could potentially help alleviate some of the parking issues. However, if deployment were just seasonal, the vehicles would only help reduce parking stress seasonally. Mr. Zimmerman explained that snow is a safety risk and said that while he would be open to doing year-round deployment, he had safety concerns. Mr. Santucci asked about where the vehicles would park, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that Peel Scooters can install parking areas on public property. Member Robinson asked if businesses could request a parking area in front of their business, and Mr. Zimmerman said yes. Discussion ensued regarding racking systems and charging. Mr. Kapp asked if Peel Scooters had been tested on hills, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that, based on the terrain of Boone, the vehicles could handle the hills. Member Nenow asked about the model of e-bike Peel Scooters utilize and if the electric part of the e-bike could be shut off in certain areas like the Greenway Trail. Mr. Zimmerman explained that the e-bikes used at Peel Scooters are industry-leaders, and that they do have the capability of programming a “non-electric” section in the Town. Mr. Santucci asked if speed could be governed, and Mr. Zimmerman confirmed that yes, speed could be governed. Mr. Santucci then asked if the vehicles could reduce their speed if going downhill, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that while speeds can be governed in certain areas, the vehicles do not have the ability to slow down while going down a hill. However, he did note that there are manual breaks on all of the Peel Scooter vehicles. Member Brook asked about a potential deployment timeline, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that they could be deployed as early as April of the following year. Member Nenow asked about who would manage the fleet, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that Peel Scooters hires fleet managers who are located within the municipality that they are implemented within. Chair Crutchfield asked about age limits for operating the vehicles, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that Peel Scooters can require driver’s license verification to reduce the potential for underage users. Mr. Zimmerman then thanked the Committee and explained that if they had any more questions, he could be reached via email. With no further questions, Mr. Santucci thanked Mr. Zimmerman and noted that a micro-mobility subcommittee could be helpful within the Committee. He explained that Mr. Crews, who is a current Sustainability Committee member, could not act as a Committee member in the near future due to his acceptance of an internship as the Energy Intern for the Town of Boone. As such, he could not be a

member of a subcommittee currently. Mr. Santucci noted that the Boone Town Council had approved raising the quorum for the Committee to five so a subcommittee of four could be created. Councilmember Plaag noted that while he was the Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, they had to receive specific permission from the Boone Town Council to create an official subcommittee. Mayor Pro-Tem George echoed Councilmember Plaag and noted that the Committee could not have an official subcommittee now; however, they could have an unofficial working group. Mr. Kapp asked if the Town had ever considered having a shared position on a committee in which he and Vice Chair Maxwell could take turns attending meetings. Councilmember Plaag and Mayor Pro-Tem George said that no, there could not be a shared position. Councilmember Plaag then noted that within the Town Code, there are certain limitations regarding Committee requirements, and he recommended that the Sustainability Committee not create working groups until clarification with Attorney Meade is had. Mayor Pro-Tem George echoed these sentiments and added that he would bring this topic of consideration to the next Boone Town Council Meeting. With no further discussion, Chair Crutchfield moved to the next item on the agenda.

Old Business: Update on Invasive Species Project:

Mr. Santucci began to give an update on the Invasive Species project that Mr. Bennett, the current Botany Intern for the Town of Boone, had been working on throughout the Spring semester. He explained that Mr. Bennett will continue as an intern throughout the summer and that he was excited to continue with this project, though he was unable to attend the Committee meeting due to conflicts. Mr. Santucci then showed a map Mr. Bennett had prepared that detailed what types of invasive species are present on Town-owned properties. He then showed the Rivers House Property and explained that Mr. Bennett had classified certain invasive plants by vine, shrub, tree, and other. The most prevalent invasive species found on the property is garlic mustard, and he explained that Mr. Bennett and staff from the Watauga Riverkeeper held a “Garlic Mustard Removal” day on the property recently. Mr. Santucci explained that once the inventory is complete, Mr. Bennett will develop an invasive species management plan for the Town of Boone. Member Brook and Vice Chair Maxwell asked how the Committee and others could get involved in volunteering events, and Mr. Santucci explained that he would email the Committee once other opportunities arise. Mayor Pro-Tem George noted that during the Boone Earth Film Fest, multiple films used invasive species as food, and asked that the Committee begin to look into that option more. Member Brook agreed, and explained that using invasive species would reduce food waste and alleviate food insecurity to some extent. Vice Chair Maxwell added that she manages that focuses on composting and food waste and noted that Ms. Shannon Isaacs, the Town of Boone’s Adoption Program and Sanitation/Recycling Coordinator, attends the meetings, as does Mr. Santucci. Discussion was held regarding reporting back to the Committee information from the aforementioned meetings. With no further discussion, Chair Crutchfield moved to the next item on the agenda.

Old Business: Project Updates:

Mr. Santucci gave a brief update regarding the restoration of Lower Hardin Creek, a severely eroded and unhealthy creek located at the Boone Greenway Trail. He explained that the restoration will begin on June 10th and that a portion of the Boone Greenway Trail will be closed during the restoration project. That section of the Boone Greenway Trail is expected to reopen in September or October 2024. Mr. Santucci then encouraged the Committee Members to visit the Solar Picnic Table on the Jones House Lawn. This table is entirely

off-grid and gathers enough solar energy to chare cell phones and laptops via ports built into the table. With no further questions, Chair Crutchfield moved to the next item.

New Business: Energy Intern:

Mr. Santucci asked Mr. Crews to begin. Mr. Crews thanked Mr. Santucci for the opportunity, and explained once again to the Committee that he was no longer a member as he was now the Energy Intern for the Town of Boone. Mr. Crews explained that he will be looking into energy efficiency mechanisms that the Town of Boone's building could utilize, including changing the lights in the Fire Departments across the Town to a lower-wattage light and conducting energy audits on town-owned buildings. Mr. Crews then explained how during the first two weeks of his internship, he has created mock solar systems that could be installed on town-owned properties. He noted that these systems were designed to capture the most amount of solar power, and are not currently feasible based on the price of solar structures. However, he added that he felt these designs would be useful for potential grant funding or infrastructure funding in the future. Mr. Crews then presented the following properties where solar systems could be installed: Daniel Boone Parking Lot area, Queen Street Parking area, Bolick Property, the Boone ABC store, and grassed section at the Ricky L. Miller Water Treatment Plant. Discussion was held regarding other potential solar project areas Mr. Crews could research. Mr. Santucci noted that he was extremely proud of the work that both interns have completed so far, and was looking forwards to seeing the outcomes. With no further discussion, Chair Crutchfield moved to the next item on the agenda.

New Business: Create Committees for Sustainable Business Program and Energy Efficiency:

Mr. Santucci noted that since the Boone Town Council will need to discuss allowing subcommittees, he asked if the Committee would consider tabling this topic. The Committee gave consensus to table this topic until the Boone Town Council discussed the topic of subcommittees further.

Other Matters:

Mr. Santucci asked if any Committee Member had anything to mention. Vice Chair Maxell noted that sustain Appalachian would be partnering with Boonerang Music & Arts Festival to help facilitate a no-waste festival. She explained that student volunteers will be sorting trash to divert all recyclables and compostables from the landfill. She encouraged the Committee to visit Jimmy Smith Park during the festival to view an in-person sorting event. Chair Crutchfield added that he had been researching NC Green Travel, and would love to one day partner with the sustain Appaalchian and have students assist with complete green business audits for local businesses. With no further comments, Chair Crutchfield moved to the next agenda item.

Public Comment:

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

Adjournment:

Upon the motion of Vice Chair Maxwell, seconded by Member Brook, the adjournment June 5th meeting of the Sustainability Committee was approved unanimously at 7:50 p.m..