Downtown Boone Development Association
January Board Meeting – January 30, 2024
8:30 am – The Community Room at the Appalachian Theater

Board Members Present: Suzanne Livesay, Sarah Long, Fulton Lovin, Mike Forrester, Austin Northern, Michelle Novacek, Renee Boughman, Wayne Miller and Megan Kevorkian at 8:50 am.

Ex-Officio's Present: Lindsay Miller, Eric Plagg, and Edie Tugman.

MSD Members/Guests present: Jordan Sellers, David Jackson, Amber Bateman, Krystal Bob Sneed, Bob Flanigan, Lynne Mason, Sharon Pinney, Bettie Bond, Krystal Carter, and Valerie Midgett at 9:52 am.

Town Staff Present: Amy Davis, Reta Jackson, Laney Wise, Lane Moody, Mark Freed, and Geoff Hayes.

Call to Order
At 8:35 Suzanne called the meeting to order and asked to go around the room for introductions.

Request for Approval of January Agenda
Michelle made a motion to approve the January agenda. The motion was seconded by Sarah and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval November Meeting Minutes
Fulton made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Renee and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements
Fulton inquired about what the "Tsunami Surveillance" is on the financial reports. Lane stated that those are the cameras that are used throughout downtown. Lane thanked Fulton for the question and noted that she had an update about the cameras. She continued that just last week the cameras at Appalachian and King, and N. Depot and King had been updated, that the camera on Queen Street had also been updated and then moved to the intersection of Howard and S. Depot and a new camera added at the intersection of N. Water and King Street. Austin then made a motion to approve the financial statements. The motion was seconded by Fulton and had a unanimous vote.

Requested Appearance
Jordan Sellers Northern Peaks Trail Coordinator with Blue Ridge Conservancy (BRC) opened by handing out a few conceptual design maps and trail designs for the Northern Peaks Trail/Rivers Street Park Trails. He then gave background on the Northern Peaks Trail noting that Blue Ridge Conservancy is the non-profit partner for the project and that the project is still early in its development. He stated that the current focus is on working with publicly owned lands, specifically the Rivers Street Park location because this spot has been identified as a potential to be the southern terminus for the Northern Peaks Trail. Jordan reviewed the handout that he submitted noting that all plans were still conceptual and indicated that he was planning to apply for a Recreational Trails Grant for the project and possibly a State Trails Grant. He continued that both of these grants would require a grant match. Jordan then took a moment to review the conceptual trail, noting that it would likely be ADA compliant and that there would be opportunities for additional fixtures throughout the trail. Jordan stated that trail construction only is estimated to be $66,000. The total amount needed for the 25% grant match would be a total of $16000.

Michelle inquired who would maintain the trail and Jordan stated that initially, it would likely be the Town of Boone, but BRC hoped to develop a "Friends of the Trail" program to have the maintenance turned over to a volunteer base. Jordan then answered a few more questions regarding the project logistics. Lane added that if the Board was in favor of the request the funds could be made available from the Community Appearance line, and it would still leave money for a FIG grant for up to $5,000, $3,000 for public art, and a balance of $3,000 in the line. There was a short discussion about how to guard against problematic camping in the area. Suzanne then asked if there were any additional questions before moving to the associated agenda item.

Organizational

Request for Approval of Funding for the Recreation Trails Grant (for trails at Rivers Street Park)

Suzanne inquired if anyone was interested in making a motion regarding the grant funding. Fulton made a motion to give $8242.50 or half of the 25% grant match for the Rivers Street Trail Recreational Trails Grant. The motion was seconded by Michelle and had a unanimous vote.

Update on Website Upgrades

Lane stated that she was currently working closely with Mallory at OverMountain Studios to work on upgrades to the DBDA website. She stated that they were currently a little behind schedule but thought that good progress was being made. Lane noted that the Board had previously discussed getting professional headshots but in light of the cost of headshots, asked that the Board members submit a picture of themselves for the website along with a short biography of themselves. With no other discussion the Board moved on.

Update on 501(c)(3) Status

Lane stated that this would be a quick update noting that she had not received any response from the IRS. She continued that it had been 77 days since the 1023 Form had been submitted. The IRS advises a response time of up to 180 days. With no other discussion, the Board moved onto the next agenda item.

Discussion of Setting Recurring Committee Meeting times

Lane opened by noting that it had been suggested that the Board set up a recurring meeting time for committee meetings. There was consensus that a recurring meeting time would be ideal and the Board instructed Lane to send out a Doodle Poll to determine the time frame that had the most availability for the Board. With no additional comments, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Review and Discussion of NC Main Street Strategic Planning Session/Work Plan

Lane noted that March 12 -14th is the next Main Street meeting and it will be held in Goldsboro. She request some board members volunteer to attend.

Work plan reviewed and long-range goal of attending the "Town Gown" conference discussed. As the event is somewhat pricey, we will put aside money to attend in the future.

Sarah moved to approve the work-plan, Mike seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Promotional

Update on First Fridays

Lane noted that she had met with Watauga County Arts Council Director Amber Bateman to brainstorm

additional opportunities for artists during First Friday Art Crawl events. She noted that she is specifically trying to use the language around special events, with permission from the Town Manager and Town Attorney to avoid having to make any changes to the language in the Ordinance.

Design

Update on Town Hall Public Restrooms Project

Lane opened by stating that it was her understanding that the Town is currently working on setting up the special projects line associated with the project and moving the TDA and DBDA funds to the line. She continued that Public Works is working on finding storage for the items currently housed in the vault and construction will likely not start until springtime or there is warmer weather. Fulton inquired if the new TDA space would also provide public restrooms. Lane stated that she is currently unaware of the specific plans for the TDA space but would be happy to inquire. With no other discussion, the Board moved on.

Economic Vitality

Discussion of Suggested Downtown Parking Changes

Lane opened the discussion by stating that Council Member Plaag had recently presented herself, Amy, and Reta, with a variety of proposed changes to parking with the goal of alleviating some of the downtown parking issues. Lane noted that the staff is still working on processing some of those suggestions but thought it would be prudent to present one of those suggestions to the DBDA for feedback. Lane went on to inform the Board that in an effort in increase turnover the meters along King Street would return to one hour only meters. Numerous Board members expressed their desire that the meters not be changed. Eric asked to clarify and stated that he believed that this change might help to free up parking for visitors, and hopefully reduce the use of the spaces by students attending class. There was a short discussion about the cost of a ticket, the late fees for fines, and what happens if a ticket is not paid. Reta and Renee both offered their perspectives about returning to one hour and stated that they believed returning to one-hour meters would cause more problems than it solves. Eric noted that this suggestion was just one of a more comprehensive list of suggestions and noted that some of the suggestions were aimed at disincentivizing certain behaviors. He noted that he didn't want to take up too much time today because he anticipated talking about the other pieces of the plan in the future. Lane added that she had discussed the potential for a pilot program at selected meters to see if the hourly reduction had its intended effect. She also added that she would be sending out a simple survey to the entire association for their feedback. Suzanne expressed concern about how to effectively communicate the pilot program and encouraged that more data be collected about who is using the meters. Sarah reiterated her suggestion that additional signage stating that the parking is for people visiting downtown be added to the meters. Megan expressed her concern about blaming the students for the bulk of the parking issues and expressed her desire for additional data to be collected. Eric noted that part of his parking suggestions included revisiting parking rates and fees and stated that he anticipated that no matter what suggestions are proposed there would always be a pinch point. After some back-and-forth discussion, Suzanne opened the agenda item up to public comment. Lynne Mason was the first to speak and she highlighted the need for additional permitted spots, investigating why many permitted spots are unused, limiting hours on game days, and the need to be proactive about working on solutions. Bob Sneed added that he thought the most pressing issue was the need for additional parking, especially when expanding downtown businesses. David Jackson encouraged the Board to think openly about how different user groups utilize parking and make sure that if any changes are made those changes are clearly communicated. Valerie Midgett spoke about how parking affects her business and encouraged the board to not support changing the meters back to 1 hour or increase to increase parking enforcement past 5 pm. Sharon Pinney emphasized the need to be aware of the impact of parking changes on downtown employees. Amy noted that the change in the sales tax revenue has significantly impacted the

Town's budget and affected their ability to move forward with higher-cost projects. Megan reiterated the need to collect a variety of information about who is using the downtown parking so that the Board can get a better understanding of the stakeholders. Eric noted that he would have preferred a different delivery of his proposal and that he would be bringing his full proposed comprehensive plan in the future. Megan noted that she would prefer that when the suggestions are presented there is additional information to provide context to the reasoning. After a brief discussion about permit parking the Board moved on to adjournment.

Call for Adjournment

With no other items to discuss Sarah made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mike and had a unanimous vote.