Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 8th, 2024
5:30 P.M.

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: George Santucci, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager, Brandon Wise, Deputy Director of Planning and Inspections, and Laney Wise, Grants Coordinator/Communications

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

Others Present: Joey Crews, Mike Kapp, Alex Zimmerman, Antonio Knight, Jillian Schulte, and Finley Collins

## Call To Order:

Vice Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m..

## Adoption of Agenda:

Vice Chair Maxwell motioned to adopt the August 8, 2024 Sustainability Committee agenda as presented. Member Robinson seconded the motion, and the agenda was adopted unanimously.

## Adoption of the June 5th, 2024 Sustainability Committee Minutes:

Member Brook motioned to adopt the June 5th, 2024 Sustainability Committee minutes as presented. Upon the motion of Vice Chair Maxwell, seconded by Member Robinson, the June 5th, 2024 Sustainability Committee minutes were approved unanimously.

## Topics of Discussion A: Electric Micro-Mobility:

Before beginning the discussion, Vice Chair Maxwell noted that she would need to leave the meeting at 6:45 p.m. and would need Mr. Santucci to take over the meeting. Mr. Santucci agreed, and then explained that the agenda was arranged differently for this meeting as it

was based on topics discussed before with the Committee regarding creating subgroups once the Boone Town Council approves the subgroups. Mr. Santucci then introduced Mr. Alex Zimmerman with Peel Scooters and explained that Mr. Zimmerman was there to discuss the proposed implementation of Peel Scooters in the Town of Boone that was discussed earlier in 2024. Mr. Zimmerman thanked Mr. Santucci and gave a brief recap of the prior discussion. Afterward, he asked the Committee if they had any comments. Councilmember Plaag noted that he remembered that members of the Committee had concerns regarding route safety before this meeting. He explained that, if possible, he would like a map created where Peel Scooters were only programmed to go on specific routes, such as back roads, to avoid busy highways. Member Thapa agreed. Mr. Kapp asked if it would be possible to have the routes programmed to just sidewalks, and Mr. Zimmerman explained that while they can program specific routes that scooters and bikes are allowed to be on, they cannot program them to stay on only sidewalks. Councilmember Plaag noted that he did not think it would be fair to Peel Scooters to ask them to design a map as they are not familiar with all the routes in the Town of Boone, and indicated that if a subgroup was created, he felt that this would be a good task for the subgroup. A discussion was held regarding the different routes. Mr. Santucci asked if Peel Scooters had ever contracted with municipalities before, and Mr. Zimmerman said that they had. Member Nenow added that with something like this, she was concerned that the Town would have to go out to bid as this is a contracted service. Mr. Wise noted that he believed because the contract was not a payment contract, they would not need to go out to bid. However, if the Town allowed Peel Scooters to operate in the Town of Boone, while they may be contracted with the Town of Boone, they would not be able to not allow similar companies to operate within the Town. Mr. Santucci asked Mr. Zimmerman if it was problematic to require bikes and scooters to park at bike racks, in which Mr. Zimmerman said no and explained that they could geofence certain areas where bikes and scooters must park. Member Robinson asked Mr. Zimmerman if they had ever considered partnering with private businesses and not municipal entities. Mr. Zimmerman said that they had not but would be open to considering it. Discussion was held regarding geofencing. Member Thapa asked if Peel Scooters had contacted Appalachian State University and asked if Mr. Kapp had brought them to the Chancellor's Office. Mr. Kapp explained that he would wait to see what the Boone Town Council decided to do before bringing this to the Chancellor's Office. A discussion was then held regarding motorized and nonmotorized settings on Peel Scooters' scooters and bicycles. Vice Chair Maxwell asked if Mr. Santucci was asking for the proposal to the Boone Town Council to be a feasibility study or a plan to develop a program, which Mr. Santucci explained that it was up to the Committee to decide. Member Robinson noted that they will join in when they see more community members riding bicycles. Vice Chair Maxwell pointed out a direct link between bicycles and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A discussion was held regarding potential safety outreach techniques and strategies. Mr. Santucci explained that through this conversation, it seemed that the Committee was in favor of looking into this. He asked Councilmember Plaag and Councilmember George if they would be in favor of a motion that states that the Committee is in favor of an e-bike program in the Town of Boone and that they are willing to continue to meet and discuss a plan or something else. Councilmember George noted that there would need to be ordinance changes for a program like this, as well as a contract, so he was not sure if it would be the right time to bring this to Council. Councilmember Plaag asked if the approach could be that the Committee was willing to lay the groundwork for the program while Attorney Meade reviews a draft contract from Mr. Zimmerman. Councilmember George disagreed with this approach and explained that he felt that Attorney Meade and the Planning and Inspections Department would probably

want to review everything prior to a proposal being presented to the Boone Town Council. Mr. Santucci asked if the sentiment of the conversation could be brought to the Boone Town Council right now instead or a motion, and Councilmember George agreed that until a few more details are fleshed out, he would feel more comfortable with that. With no further questions, the Committee moved to the next item on the agenda.

## Topics of Discussion B: Sustainable Business Program:

Mr. Santucci asked the Committee if they had reviewed the Green Travel Program from the State of North Carolina. He explained that he felt that it would be better for the Town to use something already created rather than create something new. Member Robinson explained that he believed that any time a business is able to get verified by a credible third-party is an excellent way for a business to gain notoriety. He then asked the Committee's opinion on if the Town of Boone should provide green business practice trainings for businesses in the area. He explained that he would rather talk with the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and felt that it would be good for the Committee to continue to push the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce to revitalize their Green Business program. Vice Chair Maxwell agreed and noted that at Appalachian State University, the Office of Sustainability has a program where different departments can become certified based on their sustainable actions. She explained that it promotes healthy competition between departments and that the program has succeeded. Member Robinson noted that the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce is currently putting together a package of required trainings for businesses and that he could help advocate for green business trainings to be added. Vice Chair Maxwell added that helping businesses become certified through the State's Green Travel Program and any potential opportunities for certification would be great for an internship. With no further comments, the Committee moved to the next agenda item.

## Topics of Discussion C: Energy Efficiency:

Mr. Santucci explained that multiple educational resources are available on the local energy providers' website. Member Weiss noted that those resources are good, however, he believed that what is currently offered is a only a good starting point. He went on to say that he understands that the Committee cannot implement policies and other offerings, however, he was wondering if there was a way for the Committee to provide information regarding different policies and offerings. Vice Chair Maxwell noted that right now, she believed it would be best for Committee members to work with members of the public and help educate them regarding the different options currently available to them. Mr. Santucci agreed, and added that there are multiple resources available through the IRA, however, a lot of it can be overwhelming.

Vice Chair Maxwell left the meeting at 6:46 p.m., and Mr. Santucci resumed the meeting acting as the board chair in Chair Crutchfield and Vice Chair Maxwell's absences.

A discussion was held regarding information from a survey conducted by the Human Relations Commission, and its impact on the Boone Next process. Councilmember George noted that there was a member from Appalachian State University that was planning to host a town hall meeting regarding minimum housing codes and weatherization, and that he felt that that could be informational regarding how energy efficiency fits in. He noted that this person was still planning the town hall, so nothing was concrete yet. Mr. Wise agreed and

explained that minor house changes, such as weatherstripping, assist with energy efficiency and minimum housing in Boone. Member Weiss noted that he felt that education was necessary but that he wanted to look more into wholesale solutions. A brief discussion was held regarding how minimum housing audits could be performed, in which Mr. Wise explained that minimum housing inspections can only be conducted if a complaint is sent in. Mr. Santucci noted that WAMY and Appalachian State University's NRLP would conduct energy audits. With no further discussion, Mr. Santucci moved to the next item on the agenda.

## Other Matters:

Mr. Santucci asked if other matters needed to be discussed. Ms. Wise noted that Mr. Santucci had not introduced the Committee's newest members. Mr. Santucci apologized and introduced Members Jillian Schulte and Finley Collins. Mr. Santucci explained that Members Schulte and Collins had not been sworn in yet, so they could not vote. However, he asked both to give a brief introduction. After their introductions, Mr. Santucci asked the Committee if they had anything else to discuss. Hearing none, Mr. Santucci moved to public comment.

## Public Comment:

Mr. Santucci asked if anyone in attendance would like to make a public comment. Hearing none, Mr. Santucci asked for a motion to adjourn.

## Adjournment:

Upon the motion of Member Robinson, seconded by Member Nenow, the motion to adjourn the August 8th, 2024 meeting of the Sustainability Committee was approved unanimously. The Sustainability Committee adjourned at 7:07 p.m..