TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES
April 7, 2026, 3:00 pm
Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing

Historic Preservation Commission Members Present: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Bettie Bond-Vice-Chair, Krystal Carter, Bennie Gaetano, and Melody Oxendine

Town Staff Present: Jane Shook-Director of Planning and Inspections, Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Virginia Roseman-Council Member Liaison (via WebEx), and David Pedersen-Board Clerk

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Call to Order

Chair Smyth called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting, held in the Planning & Inspections Conference Room at 680 West King Street, Suite C, and via WebEx to order at 3:01 pm.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Carter, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Vote: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Oxendine, to approve the March 3, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission Advisory meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Discussion and Review of Text Amendment for Public Art (Murals) in the Historic District

Ms. Mitchell directed the HPC to agenda packet, starting on page 7, which contained the proposed draft text for a text amendment regarding murals with suggested changes to Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Articles 26, 34, and Appendix D. She began by noting a change to the definition of murals where some of the regulatory language in Article 34 would be moved to Article 26 Signs. She directed the HPC to packet page 8, which started the proposed changes to Appendix D, including modification of the elevation (facade) definitions. She noted the clarification of primary, secondary, and tertiary elevations was pertinent - specifically for murals. She then pointed out the classification language on packet page 9 from the District Designation Report, stating that those designations (CA, CH, NC, and VL) were carried throughout that report. She added that those classifications represent properties that are historically or architecturally contributing (CH and CA), and clarified that those pertain to those properties during the district's period of significance only; she noted that any property not in that period of significance is classified as non-contributing.

Chair Smyth inquired whether any vacant lot would then be categorized as non-contributing, as it can't fall into the period of significance. Ms. Mitchell and Ms. Shook confirmed and noted that a clarification can be added for vacant land.

Ms. Mitchell noted the red strikethrough text on packet pages 9 and 10, stating that throughout Appendix D there were varying lists of architectural features that have been consolidated into one definition for architectural features. Ms. Mitchell continued to Section 8 of Appendix D, pointing out the addition regarding "Ghost Signs." She stated that existing text for ghost signs is currently located in the public art standards, but upon review felt that these were better categorized under signs. Additional language was also added to clarify best procedures if a ghost sign is identified on a property.

Ms. Mitchell continued discussing the proposed changes and noted that the current text in Section 11 (Public Art Standards) are presented as a re-write as it was a cleaner edit to show all changes as new text. She added that the proposed changes keep the intent of the current standards with clarification overall and reorganization. Ms. Mitchell briefly summarized the Overview (11.01) and Review Procedures (11.02) sections as presented in the packet.

Council Member Liaison Roseman joined the meeting via WebEx at 3:09 pm.

Ms. Mitchell noted the change of bringing item B in Section 11.02, regarding Town Council review, into the same section as the HPC review for better organization and continuity.

She then addressed General Standards (11.03) being applicable to any public art, with more language for murals specifically towards the end. She provided a summary of Standards (11.03), noting the refining of language. She continued to Sections 11.03.01 Installation, 11.03.02 Replacement of previously approved artwork, and 11.03.03 Maintenance, providing short summaries of those sections.

Ms. Mitchell asked if there were any questions. The HPC agreed that they were favorable to these changes.

Ms. Mitchell moved on to discuss the Murals (11.04) section, reiterating that these standards were cumulative with the previously discussed. She began by providing an overview of the property designations table provided on packet page 17. She also emphasized the importance of clarity in defining secondary and tertiary elevations, and she wanted the HPC to consider the amount of surfaces those two elevations would involve. Ms. Mitchell highlighted for discussion the text "In unusual and carefully considered circumstances, a mural may be appropriate on the primary elevation," expanding on how it may provide flexibility in certain situations depending on the building.

Ms. Mitchell and Ms. Shook discussed examples of buildings that this would be applicable to for illustrative purposes. Ms. Shook clarified by providing a speculative example (842 W King St., Magistrate Office) of an existing glass panel integrated into a primary façade and that although it is part of that façade elevation, there is potential for a small mural to be appropriate in that location. She reiterated that this would be on a case-by-case basis, but the language was written to provide guidance on similar situations.

Vice-Chair Bond inquired about the buildings facing King Street that also have a side visible from Howard Street, with respect to the Howard Street Project, and if that would affect their façade ordering. Chair Smyth clarified that those facing Howard St would still be considered tertiary as the rears of the buildings. Ms. Shook also reminded the HPC that they had previously discussed this concept relating to a previous case, and that adding to the elevation definitions "front," "side," and "rear" would provide greater clarity for applicants, Staff, and the Commission going forward.

Ms. Mitchell continued to open up a discussion regarding murals on retaining walls, beginning by summarizing the table item on packet page 17. She mentioned that Town Staff desired to discuss this with HPC. Their thoughts were for this to apply to any property type, providing examples of potential applications

to local historic landmark properties, such as the Jones House (future local historic landmark property) parking lot retaining wall and Watauga County Jail's (currently The Pasta Joint restaurant) retaining wall.

Ms. Shook pointed out the existing mural along the TDA wall as a current example of a mural on a retaining wall. She stated that there also may be other smaller structures outside of the building footprints that may be able to be included as well, providing the example of a solid waste enclosure.

Chair Smyth inquired whether there were any known historic retaining walls dating to before 1964. Ms. Shook responded by saying that it would be difficult to have historical accuracy on the ages of specific walls, though their locations could provide insight. Chair Smyth agreed, stating that their proximity to a historic building should be taken into account, and that overall it was a good addition. Ms. Mitchell added the Comprehensive Architectural Survey report might provide information about retaining walls, depending on the property and the corresponding summary.

Ms. Mitchell continued summarizing the table rows on packet page 18. Chair Smyth clarified that the text regarding murals engulfing architectural features partially or fully applied to a previous tentative mural project, and stated that he felt this opens up space for creativity. HPC members discussed the use of the terminology "engulf" relating to architectural features.

Ms. Mitchell finished summarizing the table, noting the new definition of Architectural Features as described earlier.

Chair Smyth inquired if an applicant is required to come forward with all paint colors/types for a proposed mural. Ms. Shook replied that they are not currently, but it could be an application requirement. Ms. Mitchell clarified that often in past cases, those details have been provided.

Ms. Mitchell asked if there were any further questions. Commission Member Carter inquired as to whether the provided murals guideline/property types table would be available to applicants. Ms. Shook clarified that it is currently part of a text amendment and will have to complete that process, but will be available upon its approval.

Chair Smyth mentioned packet page 8, regarding tertiary elevations, inquiring about the language "does not face the public street and is generally not visible…," and what implications "generally" may carry. Ms. Shook stated that the term provides some flexibility to make determinations case-by-case. She stated that the Town Attorney encouraged keeping some of that language in review, noting that it provided a guidance framework for the HPC to be flexible in unique situations. Chair Smyth expressed satisfaction with this reply.

Chair Smyth proceeded to inquire if there may be the option for applicants to recreate pre-existing ghost signs in their original location if photographic evidence was found of the sign. Ms. Shook asked for time to look into this, noting that generally the theory of recreation is frowned upon, but she is not sure how that might apply to signage.

The HPC agreed that overall these changes were thorough and addressed concerns that were brought up from a previous mural discussion. Commission Member Carter inquired to confirm whether a previous case would need to re-apply once these changes took effect, which was confirmed by Ms. Shook as the case was tabled until the consideration of mural text.

Ms. Shook added that in research overall, stricter standards were found in other jurisdictions, providing an example of 1 mural per building. She noted that if the HPC felt that any stricter standards were needed, they can share those suggestions, but the overall idea in Staff's draft text presentation was to bring flexibility. She also stated that Ms. Mitchell had structured the draft to be more similar in structure and tone to the rest of the regulatory language in the UDO, noting that it is more user-friendly and provides better guidance. Chair Smyth pointed out that regarding stricter standards, he felt that the draft already contained language that

gives the HPC some latitude to make decisions case-by-case. He also lauded the provided map of property classifications in the Downtown Boone Local Historic District.

Ms. Mitchell mentioned that the topic of murals in the historic district was previously discussed with Town Council last fall, and a synopsis of today's discussion would be taken to the Town Council meeting the following day (April 8, 2026), with Staff presenting this proposed text amendment. Ms. Mitchell and Ms. Shook noted that they had both seen some small spelling/grammatical errors that would be corrected prior to presentation.

Ms. Mitchell verified that the HPC was favorable of the language regarding retaining walls being applicable to all property types.

Ms. Shook noted that she wanted to modify the "NC" (Non-Contributing) property classification to include the classification of "VL" for vacant lots for clarity to potential applicants.

Ms. Shook left the meeting at 3:41pm.

Ceremony Updates and Discussion of Press Release Quote for Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel

Ms. Mitchell began this discussion and reminded attendees that the date of the ribbon-cutting ceremony would be May 21, 2026, at 3 pm. She highlighted two main topics for today's discussion, being the speaker order and press release quotes. Ms. Mitchell stated that she had quotes from the Watauga County Historical Society (WCHS) and Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA).

She proceeded to inquire with Council Member Liaison Roseman regarding the speaker order, suggesting that HPC Chair Smyth would begin with an introduction, followed by Council Member Liaison Roseman, Adelia from the WCHS, and Mayor George giving final remarks to transition to the ribbon-cutting portion of the ceremony. Chair Smyth inquired whether Civil War Trails (CWT) would be giving a quote. Ms. Mitchell replied that CWT was looking into if they had a representative available from their Western Branch, as the scheduled install in April precedes the ceremony. If so, she felt that after Historical Society may be an appropriate speaker ordering for CWT.

Chair Smyth noted that in previous discussion, they had determined they'd like to cover the Civil War Period in Watauga County specifically, up to Stoneman's Raid. As such, he felt that switching order with Adelia would be appropriate. Council Member Liaison Roseman suggested that she do an introduction and Mayor George delivers closing remarks in tandem with this. Chair Smyth agreed. Adelia Daly, attending for the WCHS, agreed as well, stating that Stoneman's Raid was very Town-oriented, so the remarks covering the larger County context as a WCHS representative felt appropriate. Chair Smyth noted that his portion would be truncated, as the Raid itself was the first unified Union action in the area up to that point, to which Adelia agreed.

The HPC agreed that Mayor George delivering final comments would be appropriate.

Adelia inquired about when the HPC would like a draft of the Historical Society's comments. Chair Smyth replied that he would send his comments out next week, but is flexible on draft delivery timelines. Ms. Mitchell pointed out that draft copies aren't necessarily required, as the remarks are from each individual and don't necessarily require approval.

Vice Chair Bond recommended approaching Mayor George soon to discuss details and logistics. Ms. Mitchell stated that she would talk to him at the Town Council Meeting the next day.

Council Member Liaison Roseman reiterated being favorable of this order of speaking, feeling it was appropriate with respect to both time and place. The HPC agreed, noting that the Civil War ended soon after the Raid.

Ms. Mitchell inquired if Chair Smyth's comments would be brought forward at the May HPC advisory meeting for input. Chair Smyth confirmed and noted that he would also be able to send copies out for review prior to that.

Adelia inquired about whether her attendance at that meeting would be pertinent, which the HPC affirmed.

Ms. Mitchell stated that she had been in touch with Lane Moody (Downtown Boone Development Director) regarding DBDA's potential involvement and that they likely will not speak, but are excited to see the project come to fruition.

Vice Chair Bond inquired whether Ms. Mitchell had heard from the TDA (Tourism Development Authority). Ms. Mitchell stated that once the invitations were ready, she'd ensure one was sent to them.

Chair Smyth noted that he wanted to ensure credit was given to all stakeholders involved, and that he'd obtain a list.

Ms. Mitchell returned to the topic of the press release used to announce the ribbon-cutting ceremony and the quote needed from the HPC. She noted that previous Civil War Trails (CWT) press releases were formatted differently than the Town's press releases with more narrative elements and reiterated that the CWT directive for the press release quote was to discuss the project and should communicate community excitement. Ms. Mitchell proceeded to read the quotes shared with her:

WCHS press release quote: *"While Stoneman's Raid on Boone was a relatively minor incident in the American Civil War, its impact on the people of Boone and Watauga County was profound. The Watauga County Historical Society is delighted to see the Town of Boone take this important and long-overdue step of partnering with the Civil War Trails program to acknowledge, interpret, and commemorate the significance of Stoneman's Raid and the American Civil War more broadly for our community."*

DBDA press release quote: *"The Downtown Boone Development Association is grateful to the Historic Preservation Commission for their thoughtful work in bringing this piece of Boone's history to life. This marker honors an important moment in our past and invites residents and visitors alike to connect more deeply with our downtown. We look forward to celebrating with the community and hope everyone will take a moment to experience it."*

The HPC was favorable of the quotes. Ms. Mitchell stated that Civil War Trails will compile the press release and that the Town had they option to use it or modify it via the Town's communications staff member. She also stated that she would provide a program handout at the ceremony. She continued to detail the decorations she obtained and related logistics for the event with the HPC, who were favorable of them. To close, she briefly recapped and there were no further questions from the Commission.

Review and Discuss the Rivers House Park NPST (Northern Peaks State Trail) Sign

Vice Chair Bond opened this topic by confirming that the date of the event for the NPST at Rivers House Park would be the Friday of the following week, April 17, 2026. Ms. Mitchell confirmed this date with the activities beginning at 3 pm, and she directed the HPC to packet page 21, which contained a sign proof for review. She mentioned that review of the top paragraph which briefly describes the history of the park was requested of the HPC. Ms. Mitchell added that although the Park's current name on the proof is "Rivers House Park," the existing monument at the property lists the park as "Rivers Park." She stated the park is 13 acres in size, but one parcel of that total is owned by the Town of Boone, meaning that it was over 12 but under 13 acres provided by the Rivers Family. As such, she highlighted the modified text on packet page 22 relating to this point. Ms. Mitchell also stated that she contacted Digital Watauga - who has the image available of Rachel Rivers-Coffey – and that they had provided an image credit to be used.

Chair Smyth stated that the wording "began donating the house" was confusing. Vice Chair Bond stated that it likely referred to the process of the donation through a will. The HPC deliberated about this wording, eventually concluding that the wording should be adjusted in some way to remove "began."

Vice Chair Bond inquired about the wording regarding the park's size, "round out the park's 13 acres." Commission Member Gaetano inquired about the wording "over 12 acres" specifically, and Ms. Mitchell clarified that it was a land donation amount that was over 12 and under 13 acres.

Vice Chair Bond inquired about the remaining parcel not from the Rivers family, and Ms. Mitchell replied that based on county tax records, the deed was from a family with the last name of "Hill".

Chair Smyth suggested an alteration to the first sentence of the second paragraph, proposing "true to the intent of the will" in place of "true to the intent of the donation", stating that it is a noble act. Ms. Mitchell replied that they hadn't altered the second paragraph.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the sign proof in the packet would be located in the trail kiosk, and that the desire was for the sign to be printed as soon as possible.

Vice Chair Bond proposed replacing "R.L. Clay" with the full name instead of initials.

Chair Smyth revisited the donation language, suggesting "arranged for the donation" opposed to "began donating". The HPC was favorable of changing the language. After discussion, the HPC revised the language as follows:

Rivers Park is named for the Rivers family, who owned and edited Boone's primary newspaper, the Watauga Democrat, from 1889 to 1994 and resided in the nearby R. L. Clay House (Rivers House) for many years. Rachel-Rivers Coffey and her husband Armfield Coffey arranged in their will for the donation of the house and over 12 acres of surrounding parcels to the Town of Boone. The Town purchased additional property in 2000 to round out the park's 13 acres. Deed restrictions stipulate that the land may be used for recreation, wildlife preservation, and historical purposes.

Vice Chair Bond confirmed the time of the event would be from 3 pm to 7 pm, and Ms. Mitchell concurred. Ms. Mitchell then discussed event parking logistics with the HPC, noting that it will coincide with the Town's Earth Third event.

Review of Boone/Kraut Creek Historic Marker Report

Ms. Mitchell opened this topic by recapping the discussion at the previous March 3, 2026, Advisory meeting. Commission Member Oxendine stated that she was unable to edit the report as previously discussed. She started with discussing the proposed marker text and revisited the notion of where in the facility's timeline they should end the report. Specifically, she was inquiring as to whether the marker should include the former wicker company being in the facility. Vice Chair Bond stated she thought it should end with the kraut factory closing in 1981, and Chair Smyth agreed. She added that she felt Option 1 of the proposed marker text captured this best in the closing sentence. Chair Smyth read Option 1 aloud for the HPC, ensuring the factuality of the entire text with the HPC. The HPC was favorable and Commission Member Oxendine confirmed the factuality. She also reiterated the change discussed at the previous meeting, changing from "North State Canning Company" to "Watauga Kraut Factory" to maximize naming accuracy. She briefly touched on keeping names of important figures in the report and changing language from "polluting Boone Creek" to other phrasing such as "runoff" or "drained." The HPC briefly discussed the language, opting to eliminate "polluting Boone Creek over the years" from the text.

Ms. Mitchell inquired whether the HPC would like to include the new research they had about the wicker production in the facility in the marker report. After some discussion, Chair Smyth added that it also fell outside of the period of significance to be included in the marker text. Commission Member Oxendine clarified as to whether American Wicker should be included in the historical sketch, which the HPC affirmed.

They felt that extending this idea to include the facility's current use in the historical sketch would be appropriate as well.

Ms. Mitchell requested an updated version of the report from the HPC before presenting it to Town Council for consideration. Vice Chair Bond inquired about a potential timeline. Ms. Mitchell noted that to determine this, she needed to confirm a proposed location for the marker. The HPC noted that they were in agreement with the one location in the report (971 W King St) for ease of accessibility and visibility. Ms. Mitchell noted that she would need to obtain approval from Watauga County for that location, and also take the full marker proposal to Town Council. Ms. Mitchell stated that the marker company's production time would also affect their timeline significantly. Overall, she broadly estimated a timeframe of later this year.

New Town of Boone Logo, Seal, and Story Badges: For Information

Ms. Mitchell presented the new Town branding including the new Town Logos, Seal, and Story Badges officially to the HPC, who were enthusiastic about them overall. Vice Chair Bond provided some feedback on the story badges, with Ms. Mitchell noting the Town Council resolution to adopt them would be the following day, so actual changes were unlikely. Ms. Mitchell proceeded to describe that the HPC would be using the Town primary logo for any future projects and shared use cases of them all for informational purposes.

Other Matters

There were no other matters for discussion.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Smyth at 4:34 pm.

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Vardell Smyth-Chair **David Pedersen, Board Clerk**