TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2025, 3:00 p.m.
Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing

Historic Preservation Commission Members Present: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Bettie Bond-Vice-Chair, and Ayden Basinger

Council Liaison Present: Virginia Roseman (via WebEx)

Town Staff Present: Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Amy Snider-Commercial Zoning Administrator, and Alyson Wuagneux-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 and via WebEx to order at 3:02 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0
The motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Discussion of HPC Work Plan

Ongoing Tasks

Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist, provided an overview of ongoing tasks. She began by noting the update for Stoneman's Raid in the meeting packet. The second item was in regards to the Jones House Landmark Report, as Staff is waiting for the final report from former HPC member Riley Ziegler. Once Staff received the final landmark designation report, then it will need Town Council consideration to send to the State Historic Preservation Office for review. The final ongoing task outlined was the Boone Kraut Creek Marker, which is currently in collaboration with Dr. Kristen Baldwin Deathridge's history class at Appalachian State University. Staff is expecting a draft by summer or possibly fall, depending on further review.

Upcoming Tasks

Ms. Mitchell then outlined upcoming tasks beginning with the Boone Cemetery Survey, recalling that the initial survey was conducted between 2016-2018. Ms. Mitchell stated she will review past documentation from Council member Dr. Eric Plaag and determine next steps. She then discussed the Downtown Street Reports, stating that existing reports for Appalachian Street, Howard Street, and Junaluska Road are included on the Town's website. Remaining reports for King Street, Queen Street, Depot Street, Rivers

Street, Water Street, and Burrell Street need to be completed. Ms. Mitchell is compiling a list of resources to assist with this effort.

Ms. Mitchell then communicated that staff will begin research on two projects (Winkler's Creek Dam and Clawson/Burnley Park Markers). She noted that the Winkler's Creek Dam project was directed by Town Council in 2024 for historical research and significance on the site. Council Liaison Roseman described the location, noting its proximity to the Winkler Creek Reservoir. Ms. Mitchell stated that staff—primarily herself—will begin researching historical records, compiling resources, and engaging additional personnel as needed. Vice-Chair Bond asked whether images of the site are archived within Digital Watauga. Council Liaison Roseman clarified that the existing images were taken by an organization that had proposed a mountain bike route in the area. Council Liaison Roseman further explained that the bike trail proposal was later rejected, but the survey revealed the dam's existence and its exposure to vandalism. She expressed that preserving the site would require balancing accessibility with protective measures to prevent further damage.

Ms. Mitchell also provided information on the proposed Clawson/Burnley Park Markers recently directed to HPC by Town Council. She stated that the project will continue in the next fiscal year. Council Liaison Roseman highlighted that the marker's purpose is to honor influential women in the community and their roles as mayor in particular. Ms. Mitchell confirmed that staff can begin preliminary work on the marker research.

Completed Tasks

Ms. Mitchell highlighted completed tasks, including the recent Boone Cemetery interpretative panels installation and architectural survey documentation submittal. She noted that the Digital Watauga photo library project is still in progress. Dr. Plaag, in his role with Digital Watauga, has estimated that completion is expected by the end of June. Vice-Chair Bond suggested HPC members attend the Digital Watauga meeting on June 18th at the public library for further information on digital questions.

Upcoming Task Prioritization

Ms. Mitchell opened the discussion by asking for input on prioritizing upcoming tasks. Vice-Chair Bond emphasized the importance of documenting the ongoing work on Depot Street and Howard Street.

Chair Smyth inquired about the Clawson/Burnley Park marker project. Ms. Mitchell explained that the task involves creating a marker for each former Mayor—one for Loretta Clawson and one for Velma Burnley. She explained the process will follow previous marker projects, such as the Councill's Store marker and Hayes-Bryan-Greene Cemetery marker, involving a report with proposed marker text.

Chair Smyth shifted the conversation, stating his unfamiliarity with Winkler's Creek Dam and asked for background information. Ms. Mitchell shared briefly initial findings based on newspaper archive research that there could have possibly been a nearby lumber mill. Vice-Chair Bond inquired about construction details and historical timeline. Council Liaison Roseman estimated the dam was built in the 1940s, but additional research is needed to verify this. Chair Smyth emphasized the importance of identifying who built it, historical usage, and locating older images for comparison. Ms. Mitchell mentioned that limited initial research can begin alongside other office projects.

Vice-Chair Bond suggested that the cemetery survey project is likely the easiest to complete since substantial work has already been done. Ms. Mitchell agreed it seemed to be a realistic goal and plans to reach out to Dr. Plaag for a refresher on past documentation methods and to determine what still needs to be completed.

Discussion of Civil War Trails Review of Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel

Revised Draft Text of Stoneman's Raid Interpretive Panel

Ms. Mitchell updated members on the revised draft and process. She shared that Drew Gruber, the former Executive Director of Civil War Trails (CWT) marker program, has left the organization. She has been in contact with other CWT staff to continue the project, including the organization's historian and editor, Terry Heder. Mr. Heder reviewed the submitted draft and made revisions as presented in the meeting packet.

Ms. Mitchell provided an update on word count considerations with the revised draft. She shared positive news regarding the selected quote and that a citation is not needed when CWT confirms the quote source, allowing for more available words in the text. Additionally, Mr. Heder mentioned that the map could include a title such as "Map of Skirmish in Boone on March 28, 1865," with the information incorporated within the map rather than the main text, thereby not affecting the word count. After reviewing the current word count, she determined that the text and needed image citation totaled 274 words (275-word limit).

Members discussed revisions. Ms. Mitchell explained that Mr. Heder found an anecdote involving Mrs. James Councill and mentioned that once historically verified it would be a compelling personal story to include in the final version. If the accuracy is uncertain, the narrative could be referenced with phrases such as "according to folklore" or "according to family legend." The reference has been included in the current draft (as presented) while members discuss its validity.

Members provided feedback. Commission Member Basinger recalled previous discussions about CWT wanting to include perspectives from women and felt this anecdote does not harm the story. He favored the suggestion of framing the anecdote with "according to folklore" or "according to family legend" to maintain its inclusion while acknowledging historical uncertainty. Chair Smyth agreed that the anecdote adds a visual element that military records often lack and agreed that including historical disclaimers may be beneficial.

Vice-Chair Bond emphasized the need to avoid historical lore and focus solely on verified facts. She suggested removing anecdotal elements unless a reliable historical source confirms the story. Chair Smyth proposed placing such narratives in a separate side panel to maintain historical integrity in the main text.

Members discussed another revision. Chair Smyth emphasized the importance of distinguishing between "their efforts" versus "their orders." He noted that Stoneman's Raid was carried out with orders to avoid battles and dismantle the country, including the destruction of rail lines and materials that could aid the then retreating Confederate army. Commission Member Bassinger agreed, stating that this distinction is necessary to clarify the purpose of the raid.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that a similar reference to "destroy railroads" appears in the second and fifth paragraphs of the draft. Members agreed to remove the phrase entirely from the fifth paragraph and revise the second paragraph to include "orders to avoid battles" and "then retreating" for historical accuracy. The sentence "Stoneman and most of his force left Boone the next day" will serve as the revised ending for paragraph five.

Ms. Mitchell raised a question about the Mrs. Councill anecdotal quote concerning the phrase "a volley of balls." She suggested that it may not be widely understood by all audiences and asked the Commission for

their point of view. Commission Member Basinger recommended using “a volley of gunfire” instead. HPC members favored the suggestion. Vice Chair Bond also proposed removing the phrase “smashed into the wood” altogether. HPC members agreed with this suggestion as well.

Discussion ensued on the draft text, with final draft text as follows:

(Revised version of Stoneman’s Raid Interpretive Panel from HPC)

On the morning of March 28, 1865, Union cavalry under Maj. Myles Keogh rode into Boone on the road to your left, surprising about 100 Confederate Home Guard members who had gathered to drill near the courthouse.

Keogh’s command, which included at least 13 Union loyalists from Watauga and surrounding counties, was the vanguard of Union Gen. George Stoneman 6,000-man cavalry command advancing into Virginia and North Carolina with orders to avoid battles, and “dismantle the country,” destroying rail lines and materials that could be used by the then retreating Confederate Army.

As Keogh’s men approached, shots rang out, and some Guardsmen fell back to the home of James W. Councill, which stood to your right. Hearing the noise, Mrs. Councill, carrying a child in her arms, stepped outdoors to investigate – but hurried back inside after the house was struck by a volley of gunfire.

“The fight got real hot,” Sheriff A.J. McBride, one of the Home Guardsmen, recalled. The Union cavalry charged, sending the defenders fleeing up the slopes of Howard’s Knob.

Union cavalry poured into town for the rest of the day, and Gen. Stoneman requisitioned the Councill house for his headquarters. Stoneman and most of his force left Boone the next day.

Beginning April 6, Col. George Kirk's North Carolina Mounted Infantry (“Kirk’s Raiders”) occupied Boone for several weeks, blockading major routes through the mountains. The jail and courthouse were burned.

Both Union and Confederate soldiers are interred in the nearby Boone Cemetery.

Ms. Mitchell explained the new workflow, in which she will continue to work with Mr. Heder for review and revisions. He provided guidance on how edits should be submitted, and the group confirmed they would like to see a revised version before final consideration. The text will then be presented to Town Council. Ms. Mitchell noted that once CWT begins the design process, text modifications become difficult. She also plans to inform Downtown Boone Development Association and the Watauga County Historical Society, as they contributed funding and should be aware of the finalized text. Once all stakeholders have reviewed the text, Civil War Trails will proceed with the design phase. Ms. Mitchell assured the HPC that she would follow a similar process for the design proof, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to review it.

Other Matters

Statement of Conformity Report as of May 22, 2025

Ms. Mitchell reported on the two Statement of Conformity (SoC) applications as listed in the packet. The first SoC submitted by Wildwood Community Market was for a window AC Unit installation in an existing window on the west elevation of the building. She noted that the unit is not publicly visible and it has been approved.

The second SoC pertains to the Town's Planning and Inspection Department/Post Office building copper roof repairs. As a designated historical landmark, additional considerations are required for review. Ms. Mitchell noted that details are still pending and Staff can provide updates once further documentation is available.

Hodges Building – Sign Removal & Restoration

Ms. Mitchell provided an update on a previous COA case for the building historically known as the Hodges Building. She communicated that the Vetro sign has been removed, revealing the original Hodges sign, which appears to be in good condition. The sign will undergo light cleaning with water, as no significant damage or adhesive residue has been detected.

HPC Membership & Recruitment Efforts

Ms. Mitchell distributed applications to the current Chair and Vice Chair, as the selection process follows UDO Article Two procedures. Once HPC makes recommendations on the applications, those will be submitted to Town Council for approval.

Ms. Mitchell noted that after the June meetings, only two members will remain on HPC. She was not aware of any other member application submittals. Ms. Mitchell reached out to Dr. Deathridge (App State) to inquire about potential student applicants, and the Town has posted on social media to encourage recruitment. Staff is determining the best approach for operating with minimal membership. The HPC discussed options for upcoming meeting dates. If recruitment efforts are unsuccessful, postponing until August 1 may be considered.

Meeting Time Considerations

Ms. Mitchell reported that a former HPC member has expressed willingness to return if meeting times were adjusted. Vice-Chair Bond opposed changing the time, stating that the current schedule aligns best with staff availability. Ms. Mitchell noted that any proposed change would require an HPC recommendation and subsequent approval from Town Council. The HPC discussed barriers for potential applicants and possible solutions. The HPC decided to not change the meeting time.

Vice-Chair Bond shared details about the upcoming event at Appalachian Theatre on June 26**,** highlighting that Laura Linney will be attending in person to present a screening of *The Truman Show*.

Adjournment

Commission Member Basinger made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Bond, to adjourn the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0
The motion passed.

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Vardell Smyth, Chair **Alyson Wuagneux, Board Clerk**