Downtown Boone Development Association
May Board Meeting – May 27, 2025
8:30 am – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Renee Boughman, Kendra Sink, Suzanne Livesay, Sarah Long, Fulton Lovin, Mike Forrester, Megan Kevorkian and Stephanie Boozer

Ex-Officio's Present: Edie Tugman and Eric Plaag.

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Brad Farthing and Mark Freed

MSD Member's Present: Bob Flanigan (King Street Flats), Alyssa Hasty (Lost Province), Julia Moretz (Betty's Biscuits), Amy Forrester (Fizz Ed), Jordan Sellers (Blue Ridge Conservancy), Hope Thingelstad (Explore Boone), Mike Linthicum (Davis, Martin, Powell/Howard Street) and Amber Bateman (Watauga Arts Council).

Call to Order
At 8:36, Kendra called the meeting to order.

Request for Approval of May Agenda
Lane noted that, given the minimal discussion needed for the First Friday Art Crawl, aside from the proposed change to a First Thursday event in July due to the July 4th holiday falling on a Friday, the Board may want to use that time to receive a Boonerang update. Sarah then made a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Kendra and passed unanimously.

Megan asked if she could make an announcement and went on to the Board know that she would be hosting a social district listening session with Mayor Pro-Tem Dalton George on June 4th at 6pm at SouthEnd Brewing.

Request for Approval of April Meeting Minutes
Mike made a motion to approve the April meeting minutes. Megan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements
Renee made a motion to approve the financial statements. Kendra seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Organizational
Request for Approval of E. Rector Board Application
Lane began by updating the Board on a recent meeting she had with Ethan, Maci from High Country Emporium, and Illya from The Happy Persimmon regarding the Howard Street Scavenger Hunt project. She shared that all three showed strong dedication to supporting Downtown Boone and encouraged them to consider applying for the DBDA Board.

Ethan followed up by submitting an application, which is now before the Board for consideration. Lane recommended appointing Ethan to fill the remainder of Austin Northerns term.

She then briefly reviewed the current Board roster, including upcoming term expirations and potential

candidates.

Following a short discussion, Mike made a motion to appoint Ethan Rector to Austin Northerns remaining term. The motion was seconded by Megan and passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of Main Street Director's Meeting Rentals
Lane opened by referencing the quote included in the agenda packet and acknowledged that she had inadvertently omitted the cost to rent the Appalachian Theatre for the new Director's Meeting on Monday afternoon. She clarified that the cost is modest, only $300, and that she had already submitted a requisition for the funds, which are available in the current year's budget.

Lane explained that the requisition encumbers the funds, allowing them to roll into next year's budget. Upon Board approval, her plan is to pay the deposit soon, with the remaining balance to be paid after the event. She noted that Kristina had mentioned catering flexibility, for example, if five gallons of coffee are ordered but only four are consumed, the caterer will return with just four gallons the following day, which could reduce the final cost or at least keep it stable.

Mike and Kendra both remarked that the catering costs were very reasonable. Following a brief discussion, Sarah made a motion to approve the quote. The motion was seconded by Renee and passed unanimously.

Discussion of Training Opportunities in June
Lane began by providing an update on ongoing website improvements, noting that she has been working with Julia Moretz on upgrades—specifically the development of a new events calendar.

She continued by sharing that, over the past few months, she has been hosting marketing and social media trainings through the Small Business Center Network. Lane then noted that Julia recently offered a helpful suggestion: to host training sessions tailored specifically to Boone. These could include topics such as how to submit events to the new calendar and how to ensure that Google business listings are accurate and up to date.

Lane added that these ideas were part of a recent conversation and that they have not yet moved forward with scheduling any sessions. Lane finished up by letting the Board know she would keep them in the loop on the progress. With no further discussion the Board moved on.

Request for Approval Shoppes at Farmer's Façade Grant
Lane opened the discussion by noting that she was bringing the façade grant request to the Board prior to the completion of the work, as she could not recall whether the Board preferred to approve grants before or after work had been completed.

Sarah recalled that façade grants are typically approved before the work begins. Edie added that such projects usually require approval from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Eric noted that it may not be ideal to begin approving grants prior to receiving HPC approval.

Lane confirmed that the proposed project had recently received its HPC approval. With that clarification, Kendra made a motion to approve the façade grant. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.

Following the vote, Edie inquired about the amount of the grant. Kendra asked whether Mr. Langdon had specified the amount he was seeking. Lane responded that, to her understanding, he was requesting the full $7,500.

Kendra then amended her motion to specify that the Board was approving the façade grant for the Shoppes at Farmers in the amount of $7,500. Mike seconded the amended motion, which passed unanimously.

Review and Request for Approval of Updated Façade Grant Application

The Board began by reviewing the proposed updates to the façade grant program. Lane explained that, following the discussion at the budget retreat, language had been added to support business owners directly impacted by Howard Street construction. She noted that this language had been included in the application before the Board but felt it would be wise to further define which businesses are considered "Howard Street-impacted."

Fulton suggested using property lines as the basis for determining eligibility, while Suzanne proposed language specifying that a business's primary entrance must face Howard Street. Amy Forrester asked whether the façade work itself would need to face Howard Street. Lane clarified that, according to the current application language, façade work would not be required to face Howard Street.

There was general discussion about the recent increase in upgrades to back entrances, and Eric suggested repurposing a sentence Lane had just read as the qualifying language to follow the listed grant amount in the application.

After a lengthy discussion to refine the definition of "impacted," Fulton made a motion to approve the proposed changes along with the addition of the following language to be inserted after the grant amount:
"For the purposes of the Howard Street grants, a façade is defined as an individual storefront or secondary elevation of a building that faces Howard Street."

The Board then continued discussing how to move forward in the most equitable way. Kendra worked to clarify the intent of the proposed changes, stating in an effort to offer as much opportunity to businesses her understanding is that a business with any side of its building on Howard Street could request the full $10,000 grant. However, it would remain up to the Board's discretion to approve or modify the award amount.

Eric offered an alternative version of the definition for added clarity and flexibility:
"For the purposes of the Howard Street grants, a façade is defined as an individual storefront or secondary elevation of a building that faces Howard Street or is otherwise visible to the general public from Howard Street."

Fulton then moved to approve the proposed changes in the packet and to insert the revised language above into the application following the grant amount. Renee seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Promotional

Review of Downtown Boone Restaurant Week

Lane began by noting that she did not yet have substantial feedback to share, as the survey requesting

input from downtown restaurants had not yet been distributed. However, she shared that both Lost Province and Fizz Ed provided positive feedback, reporting increased business during the week.

Lane also noted that parking staff recorded the use of 99 parking passes. Kendra commented that even if all passes weren't used, they still successfully drew attention to the event. Lane provided a brief overview of the businesses she had delivered passes to.

Suzanne requested that the survey include a question about percentage increases in sales to help better evaluate the event's impact. She also suggested considering the addition of Saturday to the event timeline for next year. The Board then engaged in a short brainstorming session to explore additional ideas for improving the event before moving on to the next item.

Discussion on Boonerang
Mark opened by announcing that Boonerang will begin slightly earlier on Friday this year to accommodate the Battle of the Bands programming, while the rest of Friday evening's schedule will remain similar to last year. He noted that the stage will be brought in Thursday night, which will require a road closure.

Mark also highlighted the International Celebration scheduled for Sunday, concluding with a piñata activity. He thanked the Board for their continued support and opened the floor for any questions.

Lane followed by reminding the Board that, due to the July 4th holiday falling on a Friday, the July Art Crawl will be held on First Thursday instead.

With no other discussion, the Board moved on to the next item**.**

Discussion of Busker's Fest Programming Updates
Lane began by providing a brief update before inviting Amber to speak about the event. She noted that Busker's Fest has been a successful part of recent First Friday Art Crawls, and there has been growing interest in expanding the event. However, due to scheduling conflicts with App State football games, it isn't always feasible to expand within the First Friday Art Crawl framework. As a result, Busker's Fest is being proposed as a standalone event on Saturday, September 20th. Lane then turned the floor over to Amber.

Amber confirmed that attendees have responded positively to the event, but many noted that the 5–8 PM timeframe made it difficult to experience everything. Amy Forrester added that visiting artists arriving on a busy Friday evening contributed to additional traffic concerns. Amber shared that the downtown breweries are also planning complementary Oktoberfest-style programming as part of the event.

The Board discussed the idea of expanding the event to a five-hour format to allow more time for engagement without overextending the performing artists. There was additional conversation about a recent podcast appearance by Mark and Amber, which highlighted their advocacy for the local arts community. Suzanne thanked them for their efforts and encouraged Board members to listen to the episode.

With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next item.

Design

Discussion of Rotating Public Art Call for Submissions

Lane opened by noting that the response to the public art call for submissions had been minimal, despite outreach efforts by multiple groups, including the Watauga Arts Council and the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts. Due to the lack of response, the deadline for submissions was extended.

Lane shared that ultimately, three submissions were received from one local artist. The Design Committee convened and selected the attached piece to be installed in the planter next to Town Hall.

Discussion of Downtown Northern Peaks Trail Themed Mural

Lane opened the discussion by thanking Jordan for his patience and inviting him to provide an update on the Southern Terminus of the Northern Peaks State Trail Park. Jordan informed the Board that the project has gone out to bid and a contractor has been selected. He expressed his satisfaction with the selected firm, noting that he has worked with them previously and is confident in the quality of their work. He anticipates that construction will begin this fall.

Eric asked about the expected project timeline, and Jordan estimated that it would take approximately one month, depending on weather conditions. Eric also shared that there are ongoing discussions about adding additional parking at the Rivers House, which could serve trail users. He encouraged Jordan to follow up on the parking conversation to help keep that initiative moving forward.

The group briefly discussed details related to the trail and the associated walkways.

Lane then shared that she hopes to incorporate Howard Street as an unofficial switchback along the trail route. She noted that she, Jordan, and Dalton George recently met to discuss the possibility of a Northern Peaks State Trail-themed mural on the side of Wildwood Community Market. Lane reported that both the business and property owners appear supportive of the idea and asked the Board if they would be interested in taking on the mural project.

Kendra asked if there was general consensus in support of the mural, and the Board indicated that there was. With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next agenda item.

Discussion of Ice House Alley upgrades

Lane opened by noting that at the previous meeting, the Board had expressed interest in exploring potential upgrades to the alleyway to increase its usage and better support Howard Street businesses. She shared that Eric and Edie had both advocated for these improvements during the subsequent Town Council meeting.

During that discussion, Public Works staff indicated that the alley is already slated for future upgrades as part of the larger Howard Street project, meaning any temporary improvements made now could eventually be undone. However, Public Works did acknowledge that some interim enhancements could still be made. Lane informed the Board that potholes in the alley have since been patched, and additional pedestrian and vehicular signage has been installed.

Fulton suggested the possibility of painting the alleyway. This led to brief discussion, and Lane noted that she would follow up on that opportunity to determine feasibility.

Eric updated the Board that he had volunteered to create a historic marker for the alleyway. He also shared that it appears the naming of the alley to Dana Folk between the buildings will move forward despite some previous setbacks.

Request to Designate Funding for Temporary Downtown Wayfinding Signage For Howard Street
Lane opened by noting that signage has been difficult to finalize due to limited infrastructure and the ever-changing nature of the construction site. She shared that she had spoken with The Forresters and Jean Bohrman, who all emphasized the need for signage solutions that allow for flexibility.

Lane suggested that it might be beneficial to order additional planters that could also serve as bases for signage. She added that the Town's landscape specialist had indicated he could likely build the planters at a cost of around $100 or less each.

Lane then asked if the Board would consider allocating $2,000 toward the purchase of planters that businesses could collectively use to hold signage, and an additional $1,000 for the creation of updated signage.

There was a general discussion about various signage options. Kendra then made a motion to allocate up to $2,000 for updated wayfinding signage. Mike seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project
Lane opened by introducing Mike Linthicum, the Resident Project Representative for the Howard Street project, and thanked him for joining the meeting. She informed the Board that most of the underground work in the alleyway had been completed, but additional work was still needed to prepare the intersection for asphalt. She noted that sewer line installation from Depot Street to Burrell Street would continue, followed by stormwater infrastructure work in the same area.

Mike added that, while the project has encountered some challenges, it is progressing and not significantly behind schedule. A general discussion followed regarding the construction status and overall timeline. The Board concluded this portion of the meeting by emphasizing the importance of continuing to support the businesses located along Howard Street during construction.

The Board then briefly discussed the current operations of the Watauga County Parking Deck. Eric stated that, to his knowledge, the deck is open and currently being used by county staff. He clarified that, while he has not been directly involved in the enforcement negotiations between the Town and County, it is his understanding that the agreement is under review by their respective attorneys.

Call for Adjournment
Kendra then made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.