Downtown Boone Development Association
July Board Meeting – July 22, 2025
8:30 a.m. – The Jones House

Board Members Present: Kendra Sink, Mike Forrester, Renee Boughman, Ethan Rector, Megan Kevorkian, Sarah Long, and Stephanie Boozer

Ex-Officio Members Present: Eric Plaag and Lindsay Miller

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody, Brad Farthing, and Geoff Hayes

MSD Members Present: Joe Lynch (Speckled Trout Outfitters), Hope Thingelstad (Explore Boone), Alyssa Hasty (Lost Province), Chase Luddeke (Mellow Mushroom), and Skip Sinanian (Boone Saloon)

Call to Order

At 8:35 a.m., Kendra called the meeting to order**.**

Request for Approval of July Agenda

Kendra asked if there was a motion to approve the July agenda. Stephanie made the motion, which was seconded by Mike. The motion passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of June Meeting Minutes

Kendra asked if there was a motion to approve the June meeting minutes. Renee made the motion, which was seconded by Kendra. The motion passed unanimously.

Request for Approval of Financial Statements

Lane noted that she had included both the current year's and previous year's statements but pointed out that only one transaction had posted, which was for the Tsunami cameras downtown.
With no further discussion, Ethan made a motion to approve the financial statements. Stephanie seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Organizational

Request for Approval of R. Boughman Board Application

Lane reviewed the current open positions, noting that Renee was reapplying for her seat and that there was one additional Board-appointed position open.
She continued by explaining that as of August 1, there would be five open Town Council-appointed positions: the remaining term for Vanessa White's seat (expiring in 2026), two new open positions, two potential reappointments (Kendra and Megan), and one Board member who must roll off, Sarah Long.
Kendra asked why so many members were rolling off at once. Lane explained that there had been some inconsistencies in past appointment cycles, but she hoped to realign the schedule moving forward. Lane added that three applications had been submitted for the five open positions.
Kendra made a motion to approve Renee's application. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.

Discussion of August Annual Meeting Agenda

Lane shared that, per the request at the previous DBDA meeting, the TDA will open the annual meeting with a presentation on tourism-related data and demographics.
She continued that DBDA's portion of the meeting will include updates on incoming and outgoing Board members, highlights from the past year, and a review of work plan and statistical information.
Lane concluded by reminding the Board that the meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 26, at 8:30 a.m. at fizz Ed with breakfast provided, and encouraged Board members to invite other business owners.

Discussion of NC Main Street Director's Meeting

Lane noted that the goody bags were assembled but welcomed additional contributions. She also shared that she met with Kristina Pugh at the University to finalize details.
The Board briefly discussed parking and the event schedule. Lane requested help on the morning of Tuesday, August 5, to set up the room. Ethan asked for details, and Lane confirmed she would send a reminder email closer to the event.

Update on ARC READ Non-Profits Training Course Selection

Lane shared that she and Kendra have completed two training sessions and now have a clearer understanding of the associated grant program. She highlighted that, upon successful completion, the DBDA will be eligible for a $25,000 no-match, non-competitive grant.
She provided a copy of the ARC Capacity Building Projects information sheet outlining allowable uses for the grant, including Board development training and technology investments. Lane also reviewed other non-profits participating in the cohort.
Kendra commented on the intensity and commitment required by the program and expressed hope to identify opportunities in upcoming sessions. The Board briefly discussed the training, and Lane confirmed she would share additional information as it becomes available.
Ethan asked if he needed to register for any sessions, and Lane clarified that participation is limited to the Board President and Executive Director. Sarah thanked Kendra and Lane for their commitment to the training.
With no further discussion, the Board moved on.

Discussion of Placer.ai Information

Lane opened by noting that Placer.ai had reached out in 2024 about a subscription, but the cost was prohibitive at $10,000 per year. She shared that they recently reached out again, offering a significantly reduced price and even an option for a partnership subscription.

Before moving further in discussions with Placer.ai, Lane wanted to gauge the Board's interest. She also noted that the TDA uses a similar, though different, platform to measure media effectiveness and wanted the Board to be aware of comparable resources in the community before making a decision.

There was a brief discussion during which Hope reviewed how they use their platform, Arrivallist. Renee and Eric expressed concerns about the objectivity of the information provided by Placer.ai. Hope clarified that Arrivallist is not generative AI and typically uses geofencing to gather data. Megan noted that analyzing the data could require significant staff time.

After continued discussion, there was general consensus not to pursue the subscription at this time, at least until it becomes clear which projects would benefit from this information. Before moving on there was a brief discussion about checking in with the University to see if there were any additional resources there. Lindsay noted that there is a educational AI series occurring on campus and she would report back if she found an opportunities.

Promotional

Discussion of Events Calendar

Lane reminded the Board that a new events calendar is now available on the DBDA website. She noted that one of the key benefits of this calendar is the ability to share a link with downtown stakeholders, allowing them to add their own events. Lane added that she has been populating the calendar to ensure it does not appear empty but encouraged everyone to begin using it.

Update on Busker's Fest

Lane opened by noting that this item was kept on the agenda in case the Watauga Arts Council had any updates; however, no new information was provided. Lane reminded the Board that the event is scheduled for Saturday, September 20, from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Megan added that South End Brewing and Lost Province would also be hosting Oktoberfest events during that time. With no further discussion, the Board moved on to the next item

Design

Discussion of Noble Wins Benches

Lane began by informing the Board that the bulk of the sidewalk work assigned to the DBDA has been completed, noting that this work came at a significant cost. With those funds now freed up, there are additional opportunities for allocating streetscape funding, and 30% of the budget must be dedicated to streetscape improvements.

Lane introduced the idea of Noble Wins benches, which are made from recycled windmill blades, to gauge the Board's interest before moving forward. She added that these benches could be painted to serve as public art.

A general discussion followed regarding various public art opportunities and potential collaboration ideas. Eric noted that some of the benches appeared more like structures, which might require review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

There was general consensus for Lane to continue exploring the Noble Wins benches and bring back options for the Board's consideration.

Lane concluded by noting that several higher-cost projects are on the horizon, including pole decorations for Howard Street, public art installations, and murals. She emphasized that these expenses could add up quickly and suggested it may be worthwhile to estimate the total costs of the proposed projects. This would help determine whether it might be productive to consider allocating funds from

the undesignated fund balance. Lane stated that she would begin compiling these cost estimates over the coming months for the Board's review.

Discussion of Collaborative Social District Survey

Lane opened the discussion by reviewing the recent survey requesting downtown input on a potential social district. She reported that there were 64 responses, noting that while a large majority supported exploring the idea, those who were opposed provided strong reasoning for their position.

Lane suggested compiling the survey results into an easily digestible document so Board members could review the findings prior to further discussion. She also proposed developing a timeline for these discussions to ensure other Board goals remain on track.

Kendra clarified that the DBDA is not the final decision-maker for establishing a social district. Lane confirmed that the DBDA's role would be to make a recommendation, while the final decision rests with Town Council.

Eric added that it would be ideal for the DBDA to provide a formal presentation to Town Council, including the recommendation and a potential draft policy.

There was discussion regarding the timeline for submitting a recommendation. Lane noted that there was general consensus not to take any action while Howard Street construction is underway, which allows time for the Board to develop a plan.

Update on Howard Street Revitalization Project

Lane opened by noting that, per the previous month's discussion requesting visual aids for projects, the requested materials had been provided by the Public Works Department. She pointed out that the pavement plan was displayed on the wall and the hardscape plans were available in the foyer.

Lane then provided an update on construction, reporting that the duct bank work is currently underway. While challenging, the work is progressing well. She noted that some frustrations may arise due to new conduits protruding from the ground and emphasized the need to begin addressing parking along Howard Street. A brief discussion followed regarding the difficulties of parking in that area.

Kendra then provided an update on the Back-to-School Festival and shared details about the upcoming fundraising needs.

Kendra made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mike.