MINUTES- BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 14, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, in the Boone Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Dalton George presided. Town Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Adrian Tait, and Anne Pruitt. Town staff present included Interim Town Manager Hank Perkins, Town Clerk Nicole Harmon, Grants Coordinator/Communications Laney Wise, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Planning Director Jane Shook, Downtown Development Director Lane Moody, Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed (remote), Major Jon Houck, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, Commercial Zoning Administrator Amy Snider (remote), and Town Attorney Allison Meade.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A brief moment of silence was observed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor George announced the following board vacancies:

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Three alternate positions

CULTURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD
One student position

PLANNING COMMISSION
One regular position

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

Upon a motion by Council Member Pruitt, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, Council voted to approve the agenda as presented.

VOTE: Aye: Pruitt, Carter, Roseman, Tait
Nay: None
Absent: Ball

REQUESTED APPEARANCES

Informal Discussion of Proposed Zoning Request for Ridgehouse Development

Derek Goddard spoke on behalf of the developer regarding the proposed development along the Highway 105 bypass and requested feedback from Council on what would be necessary to gain Council support for the project. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter asked whether the developer intended to pursue annexation, and Mr. Goddard confirmed that annexation was desired.

Council Member Pruitt noted that Council had approved approximately 1,700 residential beds within the past year that had not yet come online. She expressed concerns about declining university enrollment, the number of available rental properties, and the lack of single-family housing, and asked whether additional apartments were needed and whether any market studies had been conducted. Mr. Goddard responded that his clients viewed the project as a wise economic decision and that the development was not necessarily intended to target students.

Council Member Tait discussed traffic concerns but indicated that the surrounding area appeared to have sufficient capacity to accommodate additional traffic. He also inquired whether the developer anticipated requesting stormwater variances, and Mr. Goddard acknowledged that some variance requests would likely be necessary. Mr. Goddard further explained that while the developer had experience with big-box retailers and other large developments, the developer preferred residential development for this property.

Mayor George expressed a preference for housing geared toward young professionals and individuals rather than students and noted the potential for increased traffic pressure on the outskirts of Town. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter indicated that the location was appropriate for higher-density housing but stated that he would not support a development utilizing a rent-by-the-bedroom model. He also emphasized the importance of public transportation access for residents who rely on AppalCART.

Council Member Roseman expressed disappointment with the lack of green space in the proposal but acknowledged the property's potential for expansion of the Town limits. She agreed with Mayor Pro-Tem Carter that she would not support a rent-by-the-bedroom development.

Ms. Meade noted that site work was underway and that the developer could proceed with construction under County jurisdiction without Town approval. She emphasized that increasing the overall housing supply could contribute to a more affordable and accessible housing market. She also sought clarification regarding the developer's need for additional information from the Town Council as it decided between annexation versus proceeding without annexation. Mr. Goddard reiterated the developer's interest in annexation and clarified that the grading activity was not associated with a specific proposed use.

Mayor George further suggested that, should the development be student-oriented, consideration be given to reducing parking requirements.

Ian Robinson – Howard Street Redirection Proposal

Mr. Robinson presented a proposal to reverse the planned direction of one-way traffic on Howard Street, allowing vehicles to travel from South Depot Street toward Appalachian Street rather than from Appalachian Street toward South Depot Street. Mr. Robinson referenced his longstanding ties to the downtown area and expressed concerns regarding the current design, particularly the limited connectivity of Appalachian Street, which only connects to King Street. He suggested that reversing the traffic flow would better accommodate connections from Rivers Street, improve pedestrian safety, and support downtown businesses. He also noted that parallel parking along Howard Street was positioned on the left side, which was unusual, and referenced a 2005 traffic study that considered alternatives consistent with his proposal. Mr. Robinson emphasized that traffic performance should not be the sole consideration in determining the street's configuration and reported that feedback from affected businesses had been largely supportive.

Council Member Roseman expressed support for the proposal, stating that she believed it would provide a more natural traffic pattern for the downtown area. However, she emphasized the importance of understanding the potential impacts on traffic signals at Depot Street. Mr. Robinson responded that both previous traffic studies had determined that the various configurations could adequately accommodate traffic. Council Member Roseman noted that traffic conditions had changed significantly since those studies were conducted. Mr. Robinson encouraged Council to consider implementing the proposed change sooner rather than later to minimize impacts on businesses, suggesting that the configuration could be reversed if necessary.

Mayor George acknowledged the complexity of the proposal, including coordination with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), bicycle lanes, and other design considerations. Mr. Moody explained that the project had undergone two traffic studies, received

approval through USDA Rural Development and the State Engineer, and was already under construction, with pavement striping underway. He clarified that both studies had recommended the currently approved traffic direction and that the bicycle lane configuration could not simply be reversed. Mayor George further noted that reversing the traffic flow would eliminate the protected left-turn lane.

Mr. Robinson reiterated his concerns regarding traffic circulation, noting that Appalachian Street was frequently used as a loading zone by downtown businesses, creating traffic obstructions. He also explained that vehicles entering from Rivers Street, which accounted for a significant portion of traffic, would be required to make three right turns to access the eastern portion of Howard Street under the current configuration.

Ms. Meade expressed personal sympathy for the concerns raised but advised that the Town was legally obligated to proceed with the project as contracted, particularly given the ongoing construction contracts and USDA financing involvement. She recommended completing and closing out the existing project before evaluating potential modifications as a separate design project. Mayor Pro Tem Carter agreed, acknowledging the value of the proposal but recognizing that changes could not reasonably be made at the current stage.

Council Member Pruitt emphasized that the original intent of the Howard Street improvements was to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment rather than encourage additional vehicular traffic. She questioned the need to reconsider a design that had undergone extensive planning, particularly while construction was underway.

Mayor George suggested that Council Member Tait raise the matter at an upcoming Rural Planning Organization (RPO) meeting. Council Member Roseman expressed hope that an additional traffic study would be conducted following completion of the project and reiterated that she had not supported the current design.

Amber Bateman – Watauga Arts Council

Ms. Bateman of the Watauga Arts Council presented regarding a proposed bench installation along the Greenway Trail, with assistance from the Public Works Department. Council Member Roseman asked that the artist provide additional materials for future repairs. Mr. Moody noted that the proposed location was subject to flooding and indicated that an encroachment agreement would be necessary. Ms. Meade recommended including maintenance requirements in the agreement, as well as provisions requiring the applicant to cover removal costs at the end of the bench's useful life. Ms. Bateman agreed, noting that the concrete pad could subsequently be used for another installation.

Council Member Tait inquired about future streambank restoration efforts, and Mr. Moody confirmed that restoration was anticipated and could necessitate relocating the bench. Mayor George suggested considering an alternative location for the installation.

Ms. Meade inquired about applying an anti-graffiti coating. Ms. Bateman indicated that graffiti was not expected to be a significant concern but agreed to explore the option.

It was the consensus to proceed with the proposal.

Mayor George declared a break at 9:59 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:06 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING - CDBG PROJECT CLOSEOUT (DECK HILL WATER TANK REPLACEMENT)

Mayor George opened the public hearing at 10:06 a.m. High Country Council of Governments Senior Planner Kelly Coffey read the following statement:

Town of Boone
CDBG-I project #19-I-3102
Closeout Public Hearing October 14, 2026

The purpose of this public hearing is to give an opportunity for citizen input concerning the closeout of the Boone CDBG-I project #19-I-3102. The CDBG-I program provided funds to replace the Deck Hill water tank.

The Town of Boone was awarded a total of $2,000,000 in Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure (CDBG-I) funds from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NC DEQ). The original scope of work consisted of demolishing and replacing the existing 500,000-gallon Deck Hill water tank with a 500,000-gallon pre-stressed concrete tank. The existing tank was over 50 years old and deteriorating.

The CDGB-I funding can assist only areas where at least 51% of the homes are considered low- and moderate-income (LMI).

The entire Town of Boone benefited from the project. The Town is considered LMI per the most current US Census data. Approximately 12,866 people were assisted with CDBG-I funds, with an estimated 10,116 (or 78.63%) residing in low-and moderate-income households.

The Town elected to change the desired water tank type from pre-stressed concrete, as originally designed, to glass-fused or welded steel because the original bid came in over budget and the welded steel option was less expensive and less time-consuming to build. The Town also decided to separate the demolition, site grading/preparation, and associated utility work from the water

tank construction, soliciting these bids separately and creating two separate construction contracts.

The budget originally consisted of $1,969,800 for public water improvements and $30,200 for administration. A budget revision was approved to transfer $3,000 from the public water improvements line item to the administration line item. This correction was needed to resolve an oversight that occurred when administration funds were previously budgeted. This change resulted in $1,966,800 for public water improvements and $33,200 for administration.

The demolition contract was awarded for $399,000. The tank construction contract was awarded for $1,120,000 for a total construction cost of $1,519,000. A change order was approved to increase the tank construction contract by $21,843.30 for rock excavation. The subsurface rock encountered was not evident during geotechnical borings conducted prior to the project, as these areas were under the existing tank footprint and only accessible upon demolition of the existing tank. Rock excavation was necessary to complete installation of the new tank foundation and below-grade piping penetrations. A second change order was approved for the demolition contract to pay for additional stone that was needed for the gravel pad around the tank. This increased the contract price by $10,182.55.

Seven time extensions were requested and approved.

1. The engineers concluded that due to site constraints and topography, a subsurface investigation by a specialty subcontractor was necessary, which delayed completion of the bid and design package.
2. Access to surrounding property not currently owned by the Town was required to complete the subsurface investigation. Access was delayed by extremely slow negotiations with the landowners.
3. The delay in getting permission to access the surrounding property again affected the project's milestone dates. Further, the contractor's driller was months behind due to site access issues they were experiencing. An extension of the bid and design package submittal deadline was approved.
4. The contractor struggled to find a drilling subcontractor with the correct equipment, as his regular driller was months behind, which delayed completion of the field work.
5. A major obstacle to moving the project forward was communicating with the multiple property owners (heirs) who owned the land surrounding the water tank, necessitating further extension.
6. Negotiations with the property owners continued to delay the project. Milestone dates were extended, and a property easement was eventually secured.
7. In light of the fact that the project had to be rebid, the milestone date for advertising the project, receiving bids, and submitting bid information was extended, as well as that for executing the construction contract.

The project is complete and came in under budget. Final project financial outlays are as follows:

	$ 31,500.00	land acquisition
	$ 3,000.00	planning
	$ 30,200.00	administration
	$1,924,364.75	engineering & construction
Total	$1,989,064.75	CDBG funds received and expended

Of the $2,000,000 award, there is a total of $10,935.25 remaining. These funds will be deobligated – returned to NC DEQ –to be used for future CDGB-I programs.

The final project accomplishment has been the construction of a 500,000-gallon welded steel water storage tank. The tank serves as the main water distribution system control tank and provides system storage for the southeastern portion of the distribution system. The new tank is essential for meeting peak demands, fire suppression, and the overall operation of the entire water distribution system.

The benefit of the project on low- and moderate-income persons is that they will have a safe and reliable supply of drinking water.

Hearing no comments, Mayor George closed the public hearing at 10:14 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy Williamson of Watauga County expressed concerns regarding proposed amendments on the upcoming ballot and their potential impacts on municipalities throughout North Carolina. She encouraged voters to educate themselves about the amendments and consider voting against them, warning that their passage could significantly reduce funding available to Watauga County and local governments. Ms. Williamson questioned how municipalities would address budget shortfalls, potential service reductions, and unforeseen emergencies with diminished financial resources. She emphasized that residents would ultimately feel the effects of reduced funding and stressed the importance of preserving local control.

David Welsh of Boone expressed concerns regarding the saturation of the student rental market, noting that the supply of rental housing continued to increase while demand declined due to decreasing enrollment at Appalachian State University. He referenced three major developments underway and expressed concern that the proposed Highway 105 Bypass project would ultimately target student renters due to the financial incentives for developers. Mr. Welsh, who said he has relied on rental income since 1992, said he was experiencing longer vacancy periods for the first time in decades. He cautioned that additional student housing developments could negatively

impact local property owners who depend on rental income, particularly those with older rental properties. He encouraged Council to use whatever authority it had to advocate for affordable housing rather than additional student-oriented developments, questioning the fairness of benefiting large developers at the expense of established local property owners.

Ryan Abrams of Boone expressed concerns regarding inadequate lighting throughout Town, particularly during nighttime hours. He noted that many residents walk after dark and that poor visibility makes it difficult for motorists to see pedestrians. Mr. Abrams stated that approximately 80% of pedestrian fatalities in North Carolina occur at night and emphasized that improving intersection lighting should be a priority if the Town was committed to promoting walkability and pedestrian safety.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

Upon a motion by Council Member Roseman, seconded by Council Member Tait, Council voted to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- Water Loss Audit Project – Cavanaugh PSA
- Work Management Software Systems
- Engineering Services Agreement for New River Hills Lift Station – Hazard Mitigation Project
- Ordinance – Holiday Parade Road Closure
- Budget Amendments

  Police Department:

  TO: Amory Supplies 010-500-300-519200 $6,000.00
  FROM: Contributions/Donations 010-000-000-482200 ($6,000.00)
  Explanation: Funds donated by Back our Blue Watauga for the purchase of rifle slings and weapon lights. Any remaining funds will be used at the Chief's discretion as requested by the donor.

  Governing Body:

  TO: Professional Services 010-400-000-509100 $42,000.00
  FROM: Appropriated Fund
  Balance 010-000-000-499900 $42,000.00

  Explanation: To appropriate funds for Town Manager search/hiring process.

- Minutes: September 23, 2026, Regular Town Council Meeting

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Tait, Pruitt, Carter
Nay: None
Absent: Ball

Council Member Pruitt suggested reviewing the special event permit fee structure to better reflect costs incurred by the Town for events that involve the closure of Town-maintained streets. She emphasized the importance of encouraging community events while minimizing undue financial and operational burdens on Town departments. Mayor George recommended scheduling a work session for further discussion.

COUNCIL MATTERS

Consideration of Council Meeting Schedule

Due to the upcoming holidays, Council agreed to cancel the regular Town Council meetings on November 11 and 25 and schedule a special meeting on November 18, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. The Council also decided to cancel the regular meeting scheduled for December 23, 2026.

CDBG-DR Workforce Housing for Ownership Program Discussion

Ms. Wise and Ms. Shook presented information regarding the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Workforce Housing Grant Program following a meeting with the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG). They indicated that staff could prepare a competitive application for the WYN property, with potential reimbursement-based funding ranging from $2 million to $5 million. Staff reported that they had consulted with Municipal Engineering on preparing a site plan, estimated to cost up to $10,000, and discussed the potential use of modular housing units with the Watauga Housing Council. Ms. Shook indicated that potential challenges included site accessibility, the feasibility of transporting modular units to the property, and necessary road improvements, which would not be eligible for grant funding. If awarded, staff stated the Town would need to secure a construction loan to finance the project before receiving reimbursement.

Interim Town Manager Perkins expressed concerns regarding the numerous unknowns, particularly financing and the potential impact on the proposed Public Works building, which remained a critical priority. He noted that financing would involve the Local Government Commission (LGC) and require consideration of available equity versus borrowed funds. With a commitment required by the end of December, he cautioned against jeopardizing the Public Works project. However, he acknowledged that pursuing the application could provide valuable experience even if the Town ultimately elected not to proceed.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter supported moving forward with the application process and obtaining an engineering plan, noting that additional funding opportunities could arise in the future. He also acknowledged existing staff workloads and commitments.

Ms. Meade expressed reservations about proceeding with engineering plans before conducting a comprehensive analysis of the property's highest and best use, particularly in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. Ms. Shook explained that staff had visited the site, reviewed its topography, and evaluated potential development options within the Town's capabilities. Ms. Meade emphasized that proceeding directly to engineered plans would bypass important considerations, including financial feasibility, long-term maintenance costs, and the potential need for ongoing Town subsidies to maintain the units and enforce affordability requirements. She recommended prioritizing implementation of the Boone Next Plan town-wide to ensure the most effective use of staff time and resources and questioned whether the necessary analysis could reasonably be completed within the next two months.

Council Member Pruitt agreed with concerns regarding staff capacity. Council Member Tait supported continuing the planning process but expressed reservations about rushing to meet the current grant cycle. Ms. Shook emphasized that the funding was a one-time opportunity, while Ms. Wise acknowledged that future opportunities might arise but were not guaranteed.

Ms. Meade asked about the flexibility of the grant requirements, noting that the Town could be bound by the project as submitted. Ms. Shook explained that HCCOG had indicated the program differed from the traditional CDBG process and suggested proceeding with the prescreening application to determine whether modifications would be permitted after submission.

Council Member Roseman expressed concern about potentially foregoing $2 million or more in available funding and noted that the Town's healthy fund balance could allow it to pursue both the workforce housing project and the Public Works building. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter agreed that the Town would likely need to take a more active role in developing affordable housing rather than relying solely on private developers. He supported advancing to the pre-screening phase, provided there was sufficient flexibility to modify or withdraw the project if necessary. He also noted the current administration's willingness to direct funding toward western North Carolina and expressed interest in pursuing the opportunity while acknowledging potential limitations in staff capacity.

Ms. Wise clarified that the pre-screening phase involved submitting an application and indicated that including a site plan would strengthen the submission. She reiterated that approximately $10,000 would be needed for engineering services. Ms. Meade suggested that the engineering assessment evaluate the property's highest and best use in a manner compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Council Member Tait recommended exploring alternative development concepts as part of the engineering process. Ms. Shook cautioned that expanding

the scope could require additional funding and time and potentially jeopardize the application deadline.

Council Member Roseman suggested using Affordable Housing funds for the engineering work and moved to authorize expenditures of up to $25,000 from those funds for the engineering work. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter seconded the motion. Following discussion, Ms. Meade advised that the Town's Mini-Brooks Act policy authorized the Town Manager to approve professional services contracts up to $50,000. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter suggested amending the motion to authorize Interim Town Manager Perkins to proceed under that authority, and Council Member Roseman accepted the amendment.

VOTE: Aye: Roseman, Carter, Pruitt, Tait
Nay: None
Absent: Ball

MAYOR REPORT

Mayor George announced a winter weatherization workshop at the Watauga County Agricultural Center today, sponsored by the Sustainability Committee.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

From the Human Resources Department, Mr. Perkins reported that a representative from Empower Retirement provided information to employees regarding retirement benefits, and the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) conducted defensive driving training for employees.

The Police Department continues preparations for accreditation through mock assessments, with an official site visit scheduled for December. The department extended a conditional offer of employment to a former intern. The department's weight room is nearing completion and is expected to be fully operational during the week.

Public Works reported that leaf collection would take place from October 15 through December 18. Milling and paving have been completed on Appalachian Street, South Depot Street, and Burrell Street.

Planning and Inspections has delivered a Town-owned property digest and digital map.

TOWN ATTORNEY REPORT

Ms. Meade followed up on the item raised at the prior Council meeting by Mayor George with respect to municipal ordinances addressing payment of rent for unhabitable premises. She explained that North Carolina landlord-tenant law allows tenants to seek rent abatement when they live in uninhabitable conditions. However, tenants must pursue relief through a small claims action. She referenced similar ordinances adopted by Asheville, Durham, Charlotte, Pineville, and Pittsboro, noting that Charlotte's ordinance dated back to 2007. The proposed amendment would be to the Town's Minimum Housing Ordinance and would prohibit landlords from collecting rent for premises deemed uninhabitable. While the Town would not have authority to directly enforce the provision or impose penalties, Ms. Meade indicated the amendment would be intended to strengthen tenants' ability to seek relief in private actions. Ms. Meade emphasized that the Town's most effective means of addressing substandard housing conditions would be ensuring adequate staffing and resources to respond to minimum housing complaints. It was the consensus of Council for Town Attorney Meade to work with staff to develop proposed ordinance language for future consideration.

Mr. Perkins referenced the earlier public comments regarding the proposed constitutional amendments, acknowledging the significance of its potential impacts on local governments. He noted that the details of any resulting implementation plan, including its scope and timeline, remained unknown.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Council Member Pruitt reported that the Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA) had adjusted the hours for BOO! and expanded the associated road closures.

Council Member Roseman reported that she had been asked to serve on the Parks and Recreation board as a citizen representative. Ms. Meade indicated that she did not anticipate any issues with the appointment but would look into it.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter provided an update on AppalCART's electric buses, noting that the manufacturer of the Proterra bus had declared bankruptcy, making replacement batteries unavailable. As a result, he stated the bus would be offered for sale. He reported that three new all-electric New Flyer buses being purchased through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) were expected to arrive the following fall, with two additional double-decker buses anticipated in September 2027. He also referenced the success of the recent Local Government Works event and announced the upcoming Domestic Violence Awareness Month event.

Council Member Tait reported that the Economic Development Commission (EDC) had discussed a potential partnership with Appalachian State University involving the Impact Hub initiative. The partnership would explore establishing a university liaison to help address community issues.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Mayor George adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

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Nicole Harmon, Town Clerk Dalton George, Mayor