TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES
September 1, 2026, 3:00 pm
Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing

Historic Preservation Commission Members Present: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Bennie Gaetano, and Phoebe Howerton

Town Staff Present: Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Jane Shook-Planning & Inspections Director, Hank Perkins-Interim Town Manager, 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 3:00 p.m.

Ms. Mitchell introduced Phoebe Howerton, the HPC's newly appointed Student Member.

Adoption of Agenda

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Howerton, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Chair Smyth, to approve the August 11, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission advisory meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Items for Discussion

Chair & Vice Chair Application

Ms. Mitchell re-introduced the Chair and Vice-Chair application form, as the HPC now has three members. Commission Member Gaetano inquired about the role of Vice-Chair, and Ms. Mitchell and Chair Smyth indicated that the position acts as the Chair in the Chair's absence.

Ms. Mitchell noted that any completed applications would be included in the October HPC Advisory Meeting packet.

Clawson-Burnley Park Interpretative Panel

Ms. Mitchell introduced this topic by providing a recap of goals set by Town Council for the panel, including:

- to introduce the Town's female mayors (Velma Burnley and Loretta Clawson),
- explain why the park is named for them, and
- outline their accomplishments.

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Chair Smyth gave an overview of his current work document and inquired whether the Watauga County Historical Society (WCHS) or the families of the two previous mayors should have input into the panel text. Ms. Mitchell indicated that she would reach out to the WCHS, and that she would look into contacting Loretta Clawson and the family of Velma Burnley.

Council Member Liaison Roseman indicated that it was important to highlight their legacies correctly, noting that they both inspired and encouraged her to work with the Town in an official capacity.

Commission Member Gaetano added that they could also contact Ralph Lentz in the History Department at Appalachian State University as a resource, as he is a member of the WCHS.

The HPC discussed workflow logistics for collaborating on the document and ensured they had consensus from all members to do so remotely and independently.

Ms. Shook reminded the HPC that no collaborative work should occur simultaneously via any cloud software in order to ensure avoidance of any accidental violations of open meeting laws.

Commission Member Gaetano suggested that a special work session HPC meeting could be held next Tuesday, September 8 in place of the cancelled Quasi-judicial meeting.

Council Member Liaison Roseman noted that if the HPC had 5 members, two at a time could collaborate without violating open meeting laws, but since the HPC currently has 3 members, that currently wasn't possible. The HPC was favorable of Commission Member Gaetano's idea to hold a work session meeting, and briefly discussed logistics.

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Chair Smyth to hold a Special Meeting of the HPC for a work session on September 8, 2026 at 3 p.m.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

Commission Member Howerton noted that although she is favorable of the meeting, she may not be able to attend, but would attempt to be there.

Jones House Local Historic Landmark Designation Update

Ms. Mitchell provided an update on the Jones House report, noting that it was approved by Town Council to be sent to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and that comments from them were expected by the end of September. She hoped to include the comments and corresponding SHPO letter in the October HPC Advisory Meeting packet. Ms. Mitchell informed the HPC that SHPO's comments are advisory and non-binding but can very often provide helpful feedback. Assuming the discussed timeline, she outlined a goal to take the report to the Public Hearing/Planning Commission meeting on November 23, 2026, at 6 p.m., highlighting the fact that the HPC members would need to attend that meeting. She highlighted that the goal is for the Planning Commission would make a recommendation that night. Ms. Mitchell indicated that with this timeline, the report would likely go before Town Council for a final vote in a December, which is usually scheduled as a special meeting considering the holidays.

Chair Smyth introduced himself and the other HPC members to Mr. Hank Perkins, and Mr. Perkins introduced himself to the HPC and provided some of his background with the Town of Boone.

Statement of Conformity Report as of August 25, 2026

Ms. Mitchell introduced the report, beginning with the two sign applications for 627 & 743 West King Street, noting that Christy Turner, Residential Zoning/Sign Administrator, is the Project Manager Liaison for both applications. She provided some additional details, noting that the attached sign for 743 West King Street would be attached through mortar joints as required, and the awning sign for 627 West King Street would be placed 8 feet above the sidewalk.

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She informed the HPC that the Jones House Statement of Conformity was for a like-for-like replacement of timbers at the sidewalk. She also updated the HPC on an application from May 2026 for 222 Depot Street, noting that it is pending storm water infrastructure from the work at 174 Depot Street.

Other Matters

Ms. Mitchell informed the HPC of a series of Walk Audits that the Town of Boone is hosting with AARP NC on Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 9 a.m. She informed the HPC that it is a walkability audit/survey of various routes in the Town and that volunteers were encouraged to register. She encouraged anyone who would like additional information or to sign up to reach out to herself or Ms. Shook.

Ms. Mitchell informed the HPC of two recently published articles involving their work. One of the articles was by The Appalachian, which highlights Boone's newest panels, namely the Boone Cemetery panels and the Stoneman's Raid panel, and features snippets of quotes from Ms. Mitchell and Commission Member Gaetano. The other article was by Left 91.7 regarding the Jones House Local Historic Landmark Designation process, which mentioned the recent report by the HPC and featured a short quote from Ms. Mitchell. She congratulated the HPC on being recognized. Ms. Mitchell also briefly reminded the HPC of how they should handle interview requests and their limitations for speaking on behalf of the Commission without consensus from the Commission first. She offered her assistance if they had questions regarding procedure for quotes or interviews.

Adjournment

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Chair Smyth, to adjourn the meeting at 3:32 p.m.

Vote: Aye – 3
Nay – 0

The motion passed.

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

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