MINUTES – REGULAR
MEETING BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
January 14, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 2026 in the Town Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road in Boone. Mayor Dalton George presided. Council members present included Mayor Pro-Tem Todd Carter, Councilmember Virginia Roseman, Councilmember Eric Plaag, and Councilmember Adrian Tait. Staff present included Interim Town Manager Dale Presnell, Grants Coordinator Laney Wise, Public Works Director Todd Moody, Planning Director Jane Shook, Deputy Planning Director Brandon Wise, Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed, Finance Director Guy Miller, Police Chief Daniel Duckworth, Police Major Shane Robbins, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager George Santucci, Downtown Boone Development Coordinator Lane Moody (Virtual), and HR Assistant Tina Gragg (Virtual). Town Attorney Allison Meade was also in attendance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor George asked for a brief moment of silence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor George read the following board vacancies:

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Three alternate positions

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Two regular positions

PLANNING COMMISSION
One regular position

After asking if any councilmember had any additional announcements, Mayor George moved to the next item on the agenda.

TENTATIVE AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor George asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to approve the agenda as presented. Councilmember Plaag asked whether the Council would approve removing Item IX.4, Request to Purge Unpaid Parking Citation, from the consent agenda and moving it to Council Matters for discussion. Council unanimously consented to this change.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Mayor George asked Mayor Pro-Tem Carter to read the World Meditation Day Proclamation, and Mayor Pro-Tem Carter agreed. Mayor George then read the National Mentoring Month Proclamation. Both proclamations were read into the record and adopted.

PROCLAMATION DECLARING WORLD MEDITATION DAY IN THE TOWN OF BOONE

WHEREAS, mental health and inner peace are essential foundations for a thriving, resilient, and compassionate community; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations General Assembly has officially designated December 21st as World Meditation Day, recognizing the transformative power of meditation to reduce stress, improve health, and foster global harmony; and

WHEREAS, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of The Art of Living Foundation, a nonprofit, educational, and humanitarian organization, has dedicated his life to the service of humanity, fostering peace, and promoting human values for over 45 years; and

WHEREAS, this initiative invites all residents of Boone, regardless of background or belief, to pause, breathe, and connect, creating harmony between communities, thereby strengthening the bonds of our local community and creating a ripple effect of peace across the globe; and

WHEREAS, Gurudev is universally recognized for his pioneering work in stress management and personal development through powerful breathing-based techniques like SKY Breath Meditation, which have benefitted more than 800 million people across 182 countries; and

WHEREAS, under his guidance, the Art of Living Foundation has advanced humanitarian initiatives in trauma relief, community empowerment, youth development, and prisoner rehabilitation, helping individuals and communities heal and thrive; and

WHEREAS, on World Meditation Day 2025, millions of people across hundreds of cities worldwide united – both online and in person – for a global moment of stillness, symbolizing humanity’s shared aspiration for peace and well-being; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Boone hereby retroactively proclaims December 21, 2025, as World Meditation Day in Boone, encouraging all residents to take a moment for reflection, peace, and inner stillness.

This is the 14th day of January, 2026.

National Mentoring Month Proclamation 2026

WHEREAS, January 2026 will mark the 24th anniversary of National Mentoring Month, an annual campaign to focus attention on the need for mentors, as well as how each of us can work together to increase the number of mentors to help ensure positive outcomes for our young people.

WHEREAS, Boone, NC honors volunteer mentors who support young people by showing up for them every day and demonstrating their commitment to helping them thrive; and

WHEREAS, mentoring programs like WYN's Mentoring Program make our communities and our state stronger by driving impactful relationships that increase social capital for young people and provide invaluable support networks; and

WHEREAS, mentoring plays a pivotal role in career exploration and supports workplace skills by helping young people set career goals, equipping mentors with the skills needed to support the professional growth of young people, and drives positive outcomes for young people and businesses; and

WHEREAS, quality mentoring promotes healthy relationships and communication, positive self-esteem, emotional well-being, and growth of a young person and their relationships with other adults; and

WHEREAS, students who meet regularly with their mentors are more than 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and youth who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor; and

WHEREAS, youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using drugs and 27 percent less likely to start drinking; and

WHEREAS, almost half of today's young adults report having a mentor in their youth and those rates appear to have been rising steadily over the past several decades, and

WHEREAS, in 2025, volunteers in Western Youth Network's Mentoring program spent over 2,927 hours with youth in Watauga County totaling more than $101,830.33 worth of donated time to benefit our community; and

WHEREAS, National Mentoring Month is the time of year to celebrate, elevate, and encourage mentoring across our state and recruit caring adult mentors in Boone, NC;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Dalton George, Mayor of Boone, NC, do hereby proclaim January 2026 as National Mentoring Month and January 21st as Boone Thank Your Mentor Day.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor George provided a brief overview of the guidelines for public comment and then opened the public comment period.

- Councilmember Plaag provided public comment regarding his recent experience with a towing and booting company in the Town of Boone. He stated the following: I am Eric Plaag, and I am here commenting strictly in my role as a Boone citizen. On December 2, 2025, just before 6pm, my wife and I went to our part-time jobs at a local teashop where we run a weekly trivia gig. We parked in a designated loading zone to unload agiant sheet cake and other food. My emergency flashers were on, and my car door was open. We were inside for perhaps 45 seconds tops, just long enough to put down our things; I don't say that with any degree of exaggeration. When we came back out, we found a young man standing next to our car. When Teresa realized what was happening and objected, the young man sneered, "Too late. The boot's already on your car." When I explained that we were using the loading area for what it was intended, he scoffed and told me that the loading area was only for residents, not for anyone else—clearly incorrect from a zoning perspective.

  His ID badge, which Town ordinance requires be clearly visible, was attached to his waistband and obscured by the winter coat he had on. It was dark, and it was snowing lightly. I asked four separate times to see his boot operator ID, which Town ordinance requires him to show me on request. He either refused or ignored me all four times, in one instance saying, "Are you going to pay me or not?" thus implying that I would not be permitted to see his ID until I paid him. He then got in his vehicle and closed the door. I then walked behind his vehicle to photograph his license plate—my only way of documenting who had put a boot on my car. While I was doing this, he started the car and rapidly reversed, striking my body with his vehicle. I called Boone PD. During this time, the boot operator opened his door and told me to get out of the way because he was leaving. I told him I wasn't moving because he had just struck me with his car, and I was calling the police.

  When Boone PD arrived, the officer on scene refused to press any charges against the boot operator, saying that he couldn't because he didn't see it happen. He told me I could go to the Magistrate's Office the next day and try to convince the ADA to bring assault charges. He also seemed indifferent to my being booted while legitimately using a loading zone and the boot operator's refusal to show me ID. I eventually asked the officer how I was going to get my car free, and he told me I'd have to pay the boot fee. I then asked twice more in front of the officer to see the boot operator's ID, and the boot operator again refused. Not sure what else to do and essentially held hostage by the

situation, I agreed to pay. The boot operator took cell phone photos of my driver's license and credit card before processing payment—completely inappropriate from a data security perspective. I then asked for a seventh time to see his ID. This time, after I had paid, the officer insisted that the boot operator show me his ID.

Ultimately, no civil violation was issued. The Town Attorney has also informed me that my only recourse for recovering the $180 I was improperly charged is to file suit, which will surely cost me more than the fee in question. I can't think of a more obvious case in which the issuance of a civil violation was warranted and the facts so well documented. And yet I, as a Town citizen, was denied the protections afforded to me by our municipal code that are designed to shield us from predatory booting practices. In short, the ordinance—and apparently the Boone PD—aren't doing the job that Boone Town Council intended for them to do when this ordinance was passed. For the health, safety, and well-being of our community, it's time for that ordinance to be revisited.

- Mr. Chris Thaxton, resident of Boone and President of the University Village Property Association, spoke in opposition to the Landmark proposal. He requested that Council reject the proposal, stating that it contradicts Council's adopted Neighborhood Conservation District plan. Mr. Thaxton stated that market data included in the application does not support the proposal. He raised concerns regarding traffic impacts and stormwater management, noting that the development could overwhelm existing infrastructure and that on-site stormwater storage must be carefully planned. He referenced Council's prior denial of a smaller proposal due to infrastructure concerns and asked Council to remain consistent with its previous findings and vote against the proposal.
- Mr. Billy Budd, resident of 726 App Drive, stated that the applicant held a presentation for neighbors in April and left documentation, which he reviewed and submitted comments on. He outlined concerns that, in his view, have not been addressed in the current proposal. Mr. Budd referenced Watauga County property records indicating the site consists of approximately 14 acres, while the proposal references 24 acres, noting a significant discrepancy. He stated that only approximately four acres are proposed for merging and expressed concern regarding inappropriate parcel consolidation. He noted the presence of a B-3 overlay but stated that the property lacks frontage on U.S. 105. Mr. Budd further stated that the proposed number of beds increased from approximately 500 to 704 without justification based on zoning or current conditions. He raised design concerns, noting that materials presented do not depict the slope of the property and instead show the site as flat. He stated that renderings appear to be reused from other projects. He also expressed concern regarding parking, stating that no accommodations were shown for non-residents or nearby buildings, and concluded that the applicant's response to concerns has not been professional or reasonable.
- Ms. Diana Halstead, resident of Boone, thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She stated that the proposal would add approximately 199 units and over 700 bedrooms, in addition to approximately 3,000 student beds already proposed in Boone, which she stated exceeds existing infrastructure capacity. Ms. Halstead noted that while housing demand is frequently cited, student housing occupancy rates are reportedly below 75

percent, indicating that additional student housing may not be necessary. She discussed Boone's tax revenue structure, noting that many students are not permanent taxpayers, while long-term residents bear the ongoing costs and impacts of development. She urged Council to closely scrutinize the data supporting the proposal and stated that Boone's small size is a defining characteristic and identity of the community.

Mayor Dalton invited additional individuals to provide public comment.

- Ms. Paula Ward stated that she grew up in the Beverly Heights neighborhood and expressed concern regarding the proposed 700 bedrooms. She identified traffic as her primary concern, noting that family members and longtime residents, many of whom have lived in the area for 50 to 60 years, are not accustomed to the level of traffic the project may generate. She described the site as one of the last remaining green spaces in town, historically used for activities such as learning to drive and sledding. Ms. Ward encouraged Council to consider impacts to water, sewer, traffic, and overall infrastructure and thanked Council for their time.
- Mr. Jeff Graham, resident above the Beverly Heights neighborhood, spoke in opposition to the project and echoed previous comments. He stated that his parents purchased their home in 1982 and referenced planning efforts in 2016 intended to protect the neighborhood. He expressed concern regarding the irony of the current proposal undermining those protections. Mr. Graham cited frequent traffic accidents in the area and stated that the proposal would adversely impact traffic conditions, particularly between Beverly Heights and the State Farm area. He thanked Council for the opportunity to speak.
- Ms. Jennifer Tyson (via WebEx), a member of Harmony Lanes, thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She expressed support for collaborative efforts to improve infrastructure and referenced a proposed $250,000 allocation from the developer for sidewalk improvements. She stated that a 10-foot multi-use path would better serve the community's long-term interests than a 5-foot sidewalk. She encouraged the Town to explore land acquisition and easements to support connectivity and recommended the creation of a subcommittee to ensure coordinated and proactive planning consistent with Boone's sustainability goals. She thanked Council for its continued support.

Mayor Dalton reiterated that public comment is permitted on any item on the agenda and noted the sidewalk discussion raised during public comment.

- Ms. Sarah Mathis requested that Council revisit issues related to towing and booting practices. She described unsafe conditions during a recent snowstorm and stated that she parked her vehicle where she felt safe but later discovered it had been towed. She expressed concern that penalizing individuals for avoiding unsafe driving conditions may encourage people to drive during hazardous weather, thereby discouraging safer choices.
- Ms. Hannah Brady, resident behind the VFW, stated that she wished to represent a different demographic within the community. She noted that the neighborhood includes a high number of young families, including her own, with children ages seven and eight.

She stated that her family has lived in Boone for approximately 300 years and chose the neighborhood for its location and suitability for raising children. Ms. Brady emphasized the presence of multiple generations of long-term residents and expressed concern that high-turnover housing within established neighborhoods compromises safety and predictability. She described narrow, one-lane roads where vehicles must pull off to pass, noting similar conditions in Beverly Heights. She referenced a later agenda item regarding cut-through traffic and stated that she found irony in that discussion given the anticipated impacts of the proposed development.

- Mr. Zach Hill provided public comment regarding the predatory towing and booting practices in the Town of Boone. Mr. Hill referenced an article he wrote, published in 2023 in the High Country Press, regarding predatory towing and booting practices. He noted that the predatory practices have been ongoing, and asked for the Boone Town Council to revisit the ordinance for towing and booting companies and advocated for continual enforcement regarding these matters.

Mayor George thanked those who provided public comment, and moved to the next item on the agenda.

REQUESTED APPEARANCES

Informal Discussion of Proposed Multifamily Development at 115 Beverly Heights Avenue

Mayor George invited Mr. Chase Powell of Landmark Properties to present the proposed multifamily development at 115 Beverly Heights Drive. Mr. Powell thanked Council and provided an overview of the updated concept. Following the presentation, Mayor George opened the floor for questions and comments.

Councilmember Roseman stated that she opposed the project when it was initially presented in 2025. While acknowledging the increased number of bedrooms in the revised proposal, she expressed support for locating one- and two-bedroom units along Beverly Heights Avenue. She noted that units with a bathroom in each bedroom resemble student housing and may discourage family occupancy. Councilmember Roseman asked whether affordable housing was included and whether amenities, including the swimming pool, would be accessible to all residents. Mr. Powell responded that renters typically prefer units with attached bathrooms and confirmed that all amenities would be available to all residents.

Councilmember Plaag expressed concern regarding the increased density, noting that the proposal had grown from over 500 bedrooms to more than 700. He questioned why feedback from earlier discussions, particularly related to density, traffic, and walkability, had not been fully incorporated. He referenced another conditional district project that included a significant number of market-rate units and asked why similar information had not been provided for this proposal. Mr. Powell responded that the revised concept diversified unit types and concentrated higher density along the Highway 105 Extension, consistent with prior discussions. He noted the inclusion of a “Grab and Go” market to improve walkability and stated that Landmark Properties was working with traffic engineers, NCDOT, and Town staff to initiate a traffic impact analysis (TIA). Councilmember Plaag clarified that, to his understanding, Council had preferred reduced

density along neighborhood streets and asked about discrepancies in parcel acreage. Mr. Wise stated that the Planning and Inspections Department had not reviewed the acreage because no permit application had been submitted.

Councilmember Tait asked whether Council would have the opportunity to review a TIA. Mr. Powell stated that no TIA had been completed because no permit application had been submitted. Councilmember Tait raised concerns regarding stormwater management and asked whether any stormwater concepts had been reviewed. Mr. Powell stated that Landmark Properties was developing preliminary plans with civil engineers and noted that potential traffic safety concepts included widening Beverly Heights Avenue. He also stated that discussions had occurred with AppalCART regarding the potential for additional transit stops.

Councilmember Roseman expressed concern about traffic safety along Beverly Heights Avenue and asked whether safety measures could be guaranteed. Mr. Powell stated that traffic bollards had been discussed but noted safety concerns raised by the Fire Department and Town staff. Councilmember Roseman also stated that Appalachian State University students should not be characterized as transient residents, as many intend to remain in Boone long term.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter stated that he would not support the project without a completed TIA and would not support a development in which all units are rented by the bedroom. Councilmember Plaag agreed and stated that similar models have contributed to rising rents in other developments. Councilmember Plaag asked about the occupancy rate of The Standard, a Landmark Properties project. Mr. Powell stated that the occupancy rate was 97 percent, which Councilmember Plaag disputed based on available data. Mr. Powell stated that discussions with AppalCART occurred in 2025 and that additional transit stops would require a fee to mitigate service impacts.

Councilmember Tait thanked Mr. Powell for the presentation and noted that the use of retaining walls addressed the site's slope. He suggested exploring the daylighting of the creek for stormwater management and asked whether a community park along University Circle had been considered. He reiterated the need to evaluate the minimum development necessary for project viability rather than maximizing density. Mayor George encouraged Landmark Properties to review feedback from Council and neighboring residents and revise the concept accordingly.

Attorney Chelsea Garrett, representing Landmark Properties, thanked Council for the opportunity to receive feedback. She summarized that key concerns included traffic safety, limiting rent-by-the-bedroom units, and exploring workforce housing options. Council agreed with this summary. After a brief discussion regarding pedestrian safety and potential trail connections to University Circle, Mayor George thanked the presenters and moved to the next agenda item.

Informal Discussion Regarding New Public Works Facility

Mayor George introduced Mr. Bill Dixon. Mr. Dixon thanked Council for their time and provided a brief history of his involvement with the new Public Works Facility project. He noted that he, Mr. Moody, and other Town staff toured the AppalCART building, the Foscoe Fire Department

building, and the Kernersville Public Works Facility as part of the design process. Mr. Dixon explained that, through collaboration with Town staff, the preferred building design was estimated at approximately $30 million, while the preferred budget range was between $15 million and $20 million. After presenting the proposed design, Mr. Dixon requested Council direction regarding the proposed site plan.

Councilmember Plaag thanked Mr. Dixon for his work on the project and asked whether the proposed building could be equipped with solar panels in the future, noting that Boone Town Council has prioritized carbon-neutral buildings. He also asked whether Mr. Dixon had consulted with Mr. Santucci regarding this possibility. Mr. Dixon responded that a portion of the building would be suitable for rooftop solar panels but stated that he had not yet discussed this option with Mr. Santucci. Councilmember Plaag briefly discussed the pressing need for a new Public Works Facility.

Mayor George agreed with Councilmember Plaag, acknowledged the budget constraints, and asked whether the proposed site plan would meet the Public Works Department's current and future needs. He then asked about the differences between a $30 million facility and a $20 million facility. Mr. Dixon explained that the $30 million option would have a larger footprint and a greater presence. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter asked how the scaled-down plan differed from the $30 million option. Mr. Dixon explained that the original plan included a second floor, whereas the presented plan consisted only of a first floor, resulting in a reduction in overall square footage. He stated that any new facility would be an improvement over the current conditions but expressed concern that the department could outgrow the space within 10 years. Councilmember Roseman asked about the possibility of locating Public Works staff on a second floor with the fleet housed beneath the building. Mr. Moody explained that fleet operations were housed separately due to space requirements and noise impacts.

Mayor George then asked Mr. Presnell, who deferred to Mr. Miller, about the potential for introducing a bond referendum. Mayor George stated that the current climate would likely be favorable for a bond to fund the new facility. Mr. Miller and Mr. Presnell discussed the possibility of utilizing USDA funding, noting that Boone's population is currently below the 20,000-person threshold. Attorney Meade asked whether the Town had the capacity to take on an additional USDA loan, and Mr. Miller responded that it did. Mayor George stated that he wanted to evaluate the implications of a $20 million project versus a $30 million project and asked Mr. Dixon whether such an evaluation would delay the project timeline. Mr. Dixon stated that guidance on a target budget would be helpful at this stage. Mr. Moody noted that incorporating sustainability goals would increase costs, and Mayor George requested to see the cost differential, stating that he was generally supportive of sustainability upgrades.

Councilmember Tait asked about the feasibility of combining Fire Station #4 and the Public Works Facility on the same campus. Chief Isaacs explained that Fire Station #4 was strategically located to improve response times and that the proposed station was fully funded. Councilmember Tait asked whether costs could be reduced by scaling back aesthetic elements. Mr. Dixon responded that the design had already been reduced to minimal aesthetic features. A

discussion followed regarding the potential use of a design-build delivery method. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter asked Mr. Moody whether a $25 million budget would allow for future building expansion. Mr. Moody stated that a $25 million budget would support sustainability upgrades and allow the department to expand within the facility.

Councilmember Plaag asked whether a $25 million budget would meet the department's needs. Mr. Dixon responded that the $20 million figure presented was an estimate and that actual costs could vary. Councilmember Tait asked why a design-build option was not initially pursued. Attorney Meade stated that she would need to consult with Mr. Moody regarding whether a design-build approach was feasible under the Town's current processes. Council discussed potential conflicts of interest. Councilmember Tait clarified that his comments were intended to expedite construction, and Mr. Dixon stated that he was not opposed to a design-build approach if Council determined it to be the best option.

Mayor George directed staff to further explore these options while also evaluating financing mechanisms for a $25 million facility. Councilmember Roseman asked about pedestrian access to the facility and expressed concern regarding the building's location and accessibility. Mayor George responded that the site had been specifically purchased by the Town for the Public Works Facility. Councilmember Plaag asked whether sufficient space would be available on the site for a potential park-and-ride system. Mayor George emphasized that funding the Public Works Facility should be prioritized as a critical need. Councilmember Plaag asked whether the proposed plan could proceed to a neighborhood meeting to satisfy conditional district requirements or whether that step should occur later. Mr. Dixon explained that a more complete design would be required prior to holding a neighborhood meeting. A discussion followed regarding notification and invitations for the neighborhood meeting.

Council Member Plaag made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Carter, to authorize staff to begin preparations for a neighborhood meeting in February using the proposal as presented, with the understanding that the proposed facility may be modified or expanded within the established $25 million budget, with the intent for the proposed development to be presented at the March Planning Commission/Public Hearing and subsequently to the Boone Town Council at its April meeting.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

WORK SESSION

Councilmember Plaag began by stating his belief that some towing and booting companies in Boone are engaging in predatory and extortionate behavior that often leaves those booted or towed feeling held hostage by the companies involved. He noted that on private residential property, individuals must be trespassed before a vehicle can be towed, while businesses are

permitted to tow or boot vehicles without a trespass notice. He further noted that the Town of Boone does not tow or boot vehicles unless they have received repeated unpaid violations.

Councilmember Plaag stated that he was recently booted by a towing and booting company while parked in a loading zone and unloading supplies for his part-time job. He reported that the employee of the towing and booting company did not present valid identification and refused to remove the boot. Councilmember Plaag went on to say that after refusing to show valid identification, the employee entered their vehicle and, when trying to leave the parking lot, stuck his body with the vehicle. When this occurred, Councilmember Plaag contacted the Boone Police Department.

Councilmember Plaag proposed amending the current ordinance to establish the following enforcement structure: a first offense would result in a written warning; a second offense would require a trespassing letter filed with the Boone Police Department; and a third offense would result in trespassing charges filed with the Boone Police Department. He further stated that, based on a conversation with Chief Duckworth, the Boone Police Department does not want to handle civil matters and that enforcement actions against towing companies are not part of an officer's role.

Mayor George invited Chief Duckworth to respond. Chief Duckworth stated that Councilmember Plaag had misrepresented their conversation and clarified that the ordinance language is currently unclear. He explained that the Boone Police Department enforces clear violations and that the statement suggesting officers do not want to handle civil matters was incorrect. Councilmember Plaag stated that if an individual is lawfully utilizing a loading zone and is booted, an officer should have an enforceable violation to address. Councilmember Roseman asked whether a requirement establishing a maximum allowable parking duration in loading zones could be added to the ordinance. Mayor George explained that when the ordinance was revised in 2022, the protections added were the maximum legally permissible at that time. He then asked Attorney Meade whether the legal or political landscape had changed since 2022 to allow for stricter regulations.

Attorney Meade stated that she was unsure but would research the issue further. She suggested that clarifying loading zones and other enforceable activities would be beneficial. Attorney Meade further explained that when officers lack clarity in enforcement situations, they must make a good-faith determination and will default to not taking action when violations are unclear in order to ensure equitable enforcement. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed interest in strengthening the ordinance to better protect individuals from predatory towing and booting practices. Councilmember Plaag stated that after requesting 30 random applications for towing and booting operators from the Town of Boone, none listed valid addresses, indicating an administrative error. Attorney Meade stated that she had not trained police officers on the enforcement of the 2022 ordinance and apologized for the oversight. She added that, following a conversation with Chief Duckworth, she recommended transferring the identification credentialing process to the Boone Police Department.

Mayor George stated that businesses should be made aware that contracting with predatory towing and booting companies may harm their businesses rather than help them. Councilmember Tait asked whether the Boone Police Department should be responsible for verifying proper signage size and required language for towing and booting notices. Attorney Meade explained that designated officers already handle signage verification. Councilmember Plaag asked whether there was a mechanism to fine property owners and document impacts to individuals who are booted in order to demonstrate the effects of towing and booting practices on businesses. Councilmember Tait agreed with Councilmember Plaag. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter stated his support for transferring the identification process to the Boone Police Department.

Councilmember Plaag apologized to Chief Duckworth for misinterpreting their prior conversation. Chief Duckworth stated that the Boone Police Department shares concerns regarding towing and booting practices in Boone and that the discussion was productive. He added that transferring the identification process to the Boone Police Department would be a straightforward improvement.

Mayor Pro Tem Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Tait, to authorize Town Staff and Attorney Meade to move forward with presenting updated language to Chapter 73, specifically updating loading zone regulations and the new ID process. Mayor George asked if the motion could be amended to instruct Attorney Meade to review language from the State as well.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter agreed to the amendment.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor George reminded Council that Item IX.4, Request to Purge Unpaid Parking Citation, had been moved to Council Matters for discussion. Mayor George then asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, to approve the consent agenda as presented .

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

The following items were approved:

1. Consideration of Approval - Municipal Agreement

2. Approval of Budget Amendments
3. Approval of Minutes
    a. December 10, 2025 Special Town Council Meeting
    b. December 10, 2025 Regular Town Council Meeting
4. Temporary Construction Easement and Footer Easement Agreement Between the Town of Boone and the Thalers

PLANNING MATTERS

Consideration of January 5, 2026, Public Hearing Cases

Mr. Wise introduced the packet page prompts for the January 5, 2026 public hearing cases. Attorney Meade reviewed the changes to the conditions being agreed upon between the applicant and Council. Councilmember Plaag asked whether the phrase attainable units could be modified to workforce units, to which Attorney Meade agreed. Councilmember Tait asked whether the community could provide input regarding the location of the proposed sidewalk and whether the donation could be used as grant matching funds rather than for direct construction costs. Attorney Meade explained that the $250,000 contribution was originally intended as a donation to the Town of Boone; however, RK Investments felt that, rather than potentially waiting multiple years for construction, the funds would be better utilized to construct a section of sidewalk more quickly. A brief discussion followed regarding sidewalks in Boone.

Mayor George thanked RK Investments and Town staff for their work on the project and stated that he believed the benefits achieved for Boone residents through this process were positive. Councilmember Plaag asked whether brownfield mitigation was required for the project, and Attorney Meade explained that, under state law, the property owners were required to remediate the site in order to develop the property. Councilmember Tait stated that he felt RK Investments Investors had been very amenable throughout the process and that he was proud of the work completed by the Planning Commission and the Boone Town Council on the project.

Councilmember Plaag then moved that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning map is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and any other applicable adopted plans, citing Boone Next Planning Principles 1, 4, 7, and 10, as well as Goals 1.2.5, 1.6.1, 1.6.3, 2.3.3, and 5.3.1. Councilmember Carter seconded the motion.

Councilmember Plaag expressed agreement with Councilmember Tait's comments. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter thanked RK&K Investors for their work on the project and for accepting the conditions set forth and stated that he was excited to see improvements made to the corridor. Councilmember Roseman thanked RK&K Investors for their responsiveness throughout the process.

The motion presented by Councilmember Plaag and seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter passed unanimously.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait

Nay: None
Absent: None

Councilmember Roseman moved that the Town Council approve Ordinance A25-0790, as shown in Exhibit A, finding that the approval is reasonable and in the public interest because the development revitalizes a brownfield site and brings positive change to the community. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Councilmember Roseman made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, that the Boone Town Council approve the attached ordinance and map in Exhibit B to extend the corporate limits of the Town of Boone.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Consideration of Petition for Annexation - Greer Watauga, LLC

Mr. Wise provided a brief overview of the petition for annexation. Once Mr. Wise concluded the overview for the petition of annexation, discussion ensued regarding the potential use of the property. Mayor George noted that the zoning request for this property is Conditional District B3, and asked Mr. Wise if the property owner was informed about the requirements for a conditional district. Mr. Wise confirmed that the property owner was informed of the requirements. Mayor George asked if Council had any additional questions. Hearing none, Mayor George asked for a motion of approval.

Councilmember Tait made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, to approve the Certificate of Sufficiency and the Resolution Fixing Date for Public Hearing, and to approve the proposed annexation and zoning going forward with the requested Conditional District B3.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Consideration of Memorandum of Agreement Between the NC Sedimentation Control Commission & Town of Boone

Mr. Wise provided a brief overview of the memorandum of agreement between the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission and the Town of Boone. Attorney Meade confirmed that she had reviewed and approved the language.

Councilmember Roseman made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Plaag, to approve the memorandum of agreement and authorize Mr. Dale Presnell to sign the memorandum on behalf of the Town of Boone.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Mayor George called for a break at 1:02 p.m., and Council resumed the January 14, 2026 Boone Town Council meeting at 1:40 p.m..

COUNCIL MATTERS

Request to Purge Unpaid Parking Citations

Councilmember Plaag began by asking whether Council recalled a prior discussion in which councilmembers would assist in writing letters to individuals who had not paid their parking citations, explaining how citation fees would be used to improve parking in Boone. Councilmember Tait asked how individuals were notified of delinquent charges and whether any debt collection efforts had taken place. Councilmember Plaag explained that debt collection was not feasible for these fines, to which Attorney Meade responded that she was unsure whether that was the case. She asked whether staff had explored how other municipalities collect overdue parking fines.

Mayor George noted that he believed there was an opportunity to expand messaging on this issue and stated that he was supportive of purging the fines and discussing policy changes at a later date. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter agreed that additional messaging would be beneficial in the future and asked that such messaging include information on how fines are used to improve parking. Councilmember Plaag noted that statutory regulations govern on-street parking violations and require that funds collected from those fines be used for on-street parking improvements; however, fines collected from off-street parking could be used for other projects. Mayor George recommended that staff utilize guidance from the UNC School of Government for both notifications and debt collection. Attorney Meade agreed with Mayor George's comments. Councilmember Roseman also expressed agreement and supported purging the fines, stating that she did not believe it was possible to collect the funds at this time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to approve the purging of outstanding 2022 citations totaling $50,672, and direct staff to return to Council with stronger enforcement recommendations based on tactics used by other municipalities, as well as guidance on how to effectively message any changes.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Disaster Preparedness Presentation

Chief Isaacs provided a brief update regarding recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene and noted that the Town of Boone was able to recover quickly due to preparedness measures implemented prior to the storm. He explained that, before Hurricane Helene, the Town had established water interconnects with the Town of Blowing Rock and Appalachian State University, installed generators at most critical Town facilities, created an Emergency Management Coordinator position, and established redundancies across departments to ensure uninterrupted critical communications.

He added that the Town had purchased equipment over the years that supported these redundancies and enabled assistance to other municipalities when needed. Chief Isaacs concluded by noting that he is currently exploring the purchase of additional generators for Town facilities and stated that, while repairs from Hurricane Helene are still ongoing, the Town is recovering well.

Councilmember Tait asked whether there were any preparedness blind spots that Council should be aware of. Chief Isaacs responded that workloads for Police, Fire, and Public Works have increased over the years, highlighting the need for ongoing support for staff. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter commended Chief Isaacs' approach of sending staff to assist other municipalities nationwide during disasters to gain additional experience in emergency response prior to disasters impacting Boone. Chief Isaacs thanked Council for their time.

Request for Discussion Regarding Council Chambers Audio/Video System

Councilmember Plaag began by explaining that the technology in Council Chambers was not functioning well and suggested that the issues were due both to technological failures and inadequate training. He recommended that the Town of Boone consider hiring a full-time IT position to allow Chief Isaacs to focus solely on his responsibilities as Fire Chief. Councilmember Roseman emphasized the importance of continuing to offer a hybrid option for Town Council meetings and asked whether a portable microphone system had been considered. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter expressed support for conducting an audio-visual audit of Council Chambers and making future decisions based on the audit. He also noted his interest in livestreaming meetings via YouTube, as other municipalities do.

Chief Isaacs clarified that he handles IT behind the scenes and has minimal involvement with the audio-visual system in Council Chambers. He explained that, due to decisions made in the past, the system had been piecemealed together, which contributed to its current performance issues. Councilmember Roseman asked if IT responsibilities were burdensome for Chief Isaacs, to which he responded that they were not.

Councilmember Tait stated that he would like to better understand options for streaming Town Council meetings to increase accessibility. Mayor George explained that the current system does not support the level of interaction needed for hybrid meetings. He added that he would like to see updates including: a public comment monitoring system, a timer for public comment, functioning microphones, screens throughout Council Chambers, an updated streaming system, and a system that staff could easily manage. A brief discussion followed regarding the Town's use of WebEx rather than Zoom for online participation.

Mayor George asked whether Council supported conducting an audio-visual audit, with Mr. Presnell tasked with identifying resources for the audit. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter noted that he had suggestions to share with Mr. Presnell. Councilmember Plaag asked whether the audit should focus solely on Council Chambers or address town-wide IT. Mayor George recommended beginning with an audit of the audio-visual technology in Council Chambers as a starting point. Attorney Meade requested that any consultant chosen for the audit speak with Council Chambers users to fully understand the system's shortcomings. Council provided consensus to approve an audio-visual audit for Council Chambers.

Follow-up Discussion Regarding Tenant's Bill of Rights

Councilmember Plaag began by explaining that the proposed resolution for the Tenant's Bill of Rights was tasked to both him and Mayor George to draft. Attorney Meade noted that she had reviewed the proposed resolution and had no issue with the content. Councilmember Plaag explained that the proposed resolution was meant to be informative, and Mayor George went on to say that the intent behind the Tenant's Bill of Rights was to empower renters within the Boone community. Attorney Meade asked how the document was intended to be disseminated and suggested that if the document was posted on the town's website or social media, language should be added that states that the information provided is not legal advice. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter noted that the Human Relations Commission was in the process of developing a strategic plan, and is planning to host a fair housing event in April where this information could be readily available.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, to approve the Tenant's Bill of Rights proclamation.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Follow-up Discussion Regarding Cut-through Traffic in Neighborhoods

Councilmember Plaag began by noting concerns regarding cut-through traffic through neighborhoods along Highway 105. A brief discussion followed regarding access on Homespun Hills. Mr. Moody explained that altering the traffic pattern on Dogwood Road and Highland Avenue would require encroachment agreements, which could take between one and two months to procure.

Councilmember Plaag noted that he was surprised that no members of the public were present to provide public comment regarding the potential conversion of Dogwood Road and Highland Avenue into right-in/right-out streets at Highway 105. Attorney Meade suggested that it may be beneficial to solicit public comment on the issue at a public hearing. Mayor George asked whether Council wished to set a date for a public hearing during this meeting or at a later time. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter recommended scheduling the public hearing at a future meeting. Council reached consensus to set the public hearing date at a later meeting.

Consideration of Town Council Liaison Appointments

Mayor George moved to the item entitled *Consideration of Council Liaison Appointments*, as Councilmember Plaag had stepped out of the meeting briefly. Mayor George read the following liaison appointments:

Mayor George:

- High Country Council of Governments Executive Board
- RPO Rural Transportation Advisory Committee
- Town of Boone Sustainability Committee
- Town of Boone ABC Board
- Downtown Boone Development Association

Councilmember Tait:

- Downtown Boone Development Association
- Watauga County Economic Development Commission
- High Country Council of Governments Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee
- Boone Chamber of Commerce Stakeholders Meeting

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter:

- AppalCART Board
- Town of Boone Human Relations Commission
- Boone Tourism Development Authority

Councilmember Roseman:

- Town of Boone Historic Preservation Commission
- Town of Boone Human Relations Commission
- Watauga County Parks and Recreation Commission
- Town of Boone Cultural Resources Advisory Board (CRAB)

Councilmember Plaag:

- Town of Boone Cultural Resources Advisory Board (CRAB)
- Town of Boone Sustainability Committee

Mayor George noted that an additional Town Council member would be appointed soon, at which time committee assignments could be adjusted based on schedules. Councilmember Plaag returned to the meeting.

Councilmember Roseman noted that she would need to attend meetings with set times due to her work schedule and was initially unsure if she could actively participate on CRAB. Mr. Freed

explained that the CRAB meetings had been changed from an ad-hoc schedule to a quarterly schedule. Councilmember Roseman thanked Mr. Freed for the update and stated that she could attend all assigned committee meetings as currently scheduled.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Request to Advertise for Town Council Vacancy

Mayor George explained that applications for appointment to an open Boone Town Council seat currently follow the same format as applications for Town of Boone board positions. He stated that he believed applications for a Town Council seat should be more in-depth, including questions regarding Boone Next, a cover letter and resume/CV, as well as questions asking why the applicant would like to serve on the Town Council and what their top three issues would be while serving. Attorney Meade suggested that the application clearly state that applicants must be at least 21 years of age and have lived within the Town of Boone corporate limits for at least 30 days. Mayor George noted that he would like applications to be reviewed during the first meeting in February and requested that Ms. Wise draft an application for review. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter asked whether the application would need to be reviewed by Council prior to publication, to which Attorney Meade replied that it would not.

Council provided consensus directing Ms. Wise, under Mayor George's guidance, to draft a Boone Town Council application so that applications could be received and reviewed at the first Town Council meeting in February.

Request for Discussion Regarding Regular Town Council Meeting Times

Mayor George asked for Council's input on starting the second Boone Town Council meeting at 5:00 p.m. instead of 6:00 p.m. The intent would be for the Council Work Session to run from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., with official business beginning at 6:00 p.m., and Town staff not required to attend until 6:00 p.m. Councilmember Roseman noted that, due to her schedule, it may be difficult to arrive at 5:00 p.m. for the first meetings if this change is implemented. Attorney Meade asked whether this change would eliminate work sessions from the first Council meeting of the month, and Mayor George confirmed that it would.

Councilmember Tait made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, to approve the updated Boone Town Council meeting schedule.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Request to Allocate $15,000 Sponsorship to Boonerang

Mayor George introduced the item by explaining that there is a potential lapse in funding for the 2026 Boonerang Music & Arts Festival. He stated that he would like the Town of Boone to sponsor a stage for Boonerang and noted that members of the public often do not associate Boonerang with the Town, even though it is a Town-sponsored festival.

Mayor Pro-Tem Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to approve sponsoring a stage for the 2026 Boonerang Music & Arts Festival for $15,000.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Request to Schedule Daniel Boone Park Summit

Councilmember Plaag introduced the item by explaining that, during a Boone Town Council meeting last year, he proposed hosting a Daniel Boone Park Summit where all stakeholders could meet to discuss their needs and the needs of the Town. He noted that he had been tasked with developing a draft agenda for the meeting, which was being presented for Council's review. Councilmember Plaag added that, for the summit to be productive, time limits for stakeholder comments would need to be adhered to.

Mayor George asked Mr. Freed whether the proposed agenda would be appropriate for the invited stakeholders, and Mr. Freed confirmed that he felt it was. Mayor George then asked if March 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers would work for Council. Councilmember Tait asked whether public comment would be included on the agenda. Councilmember Plaag explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide stakeholders a space to discuss their needs. Mr. Freed requested that it be clarified that this meeting would not fulfill the annual report requirements. Councilmember Plaag asked Mr. Presnell to ensure that the appropriate Town staff could attend. Ms. Shook inquired how invited committees could best prepare, and Councilmember Plaag suggested that committees discuss how Daniel Boone Park contributes to Boone and what improvements stakeholders could help implement.

Council provided consensus to schedule the Daniel Boone Park Summit for March 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Town of Boone Council Chambers.

Request to Schedule Annual Budget Retreat

Council provided consensus to schedule the Annual Budget Retreat for March 4th at 9:00 a.m. at the Town of Boone Council Chambers.

MAYOR REPORT

Mayor George began by explaining that he would like to open the Mayor's Office to all councilmembers. He stated that he plans to work in the office every Thursday and that Mayor Pro-Tem Carter would be in the office on the first and third Tuesday of each month. While

participation is not required, Mayor George highly encouraged councilmembers to take advantage of this opportunity if possible.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Presnell provided the following updates:

- Chief Duckworth had implemented a co-response unit within the Boone Police Department.
- Construction for the Deck Hill Water Tank Project was set to begin soon, with completion anticipated in July.
- Phase 2 of the Horn in the West project was underway.
- Ms. Moody hosted a meeting with the North Carolina Department of Commerce and was in the process of applying for an ARC grant to assist with building internal capacity for the DBDA.
- New carpet was being installed on the walls of the Jones House art gallery.
- JAM Spring Session music lessons were open for applicants.
- Recruitment for the third annual Boone's Got Talent event was underway, with shows scheduled for March 22 and April 13.

TOWN ATTORNEY REPORT

Attorney Meade had nothing to report.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

The following councilmembers provided reports:

- Councilmember Plaag: Nothing to report.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Carter:
    - No AppalCART Board meeting was held in January.
    - The Human Relations Commission had begun a strategic planning process. Mayor Pro-Tem Carter requested Council approval to hold elections for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the Human Relations Commission.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Tait, to begin the process of recommending a Chair and Vice Chair for Council approval. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE:

Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

- Councilmember Roseman:
    - Councilmember Roseman noted that Keron Poteat, Director of Parks and Recreation, would be retiring, with a retirement party scheduled for January 29.
    - Members of the Historic Preservation Commission were taking classes to learn more about quasi-judicial meetings. She also noted that the Stoneman's Raid panel would be presented to Council at the next meeting.

Mayor George noted that he was working with Transition Blue Ridge to remove invasive species from public properties. Councilmember Plaag asked if Mr. Presnell needed direction on implementing a Fourth Amendment–compliant workplace, and Mr. Presnell stated that he would continue following Council guidance. Attorney Meade clarified that Council did not need to approve the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary for the Human Relations Commission.

Councilmember Plaag made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to rescind his previous motion.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

Councilmember Plaag made a subsequent motion, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Carter, to allow the Human Relations Commission to appoint its own Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Pro Tem Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Roseman, to enter into closed session, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat.§ 143-318.11(a)(1) and N.C. Gen. Stat.§ 143-318.11(a)(3).

VOTE:
Aye: Todd Carter, Virginia Roseman, Eric Plaag, Adrian Tait
Nay: None
Absent: None

POTENTIAL ACTION FOLLOWING CLOSED SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

The January 14th, 2026 Boone Town Council meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m..