

Boone Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2017

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance: Eric Plaag-Chairman, Teresa Pearman-Vice Chairperson, Loretta Clawson, Rennie Brantz, Bettie Bond, and Bill Dixon

Town Staff in Attendance: Christy Turner-Senior Planner, John Ward-Town Manager, and Brenda Henson-Board Secretary

Call to Order

Chairman Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held in the Planning & Inspections upstairs conference room located at 680 West King Street, to order at 3:03 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Ward offered to give an update on the Rivers Walk project. Chairman Plaag suggested adding this update under Old Business as the first item of discussion. Commission Member Brantz made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Clawson.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

The motion passed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commission Member Clawson made a motion to approve the February 7, 2017 meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Bond.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – None
 Abstain – 1 (Dixon)

The motion passed.

Old Business

Rivers Walk

Mr. Ward stated that the deadline for submittal of a building permit for the Rivers Walk project was February 23, 2017 and this deadline was met. The project submittal is now under review. Mr. Ward noted there had been some questions about the elevator and he explained that the Department of Insurance and the State Fire Marshall's office had to review the plans for this project and that was currently underway. Mr. Ward stated that if items in the submittal were found to be deficient, staff would prepare a list of those items and send that to the applicant for corrections but noted that the submittal was still considered to be a complete application.

It was noted there was public conception that the project was approved based on the fact that the application was deemed complete. Ms. Henson explained that the term 'complete' application meant that appropriate application paperwork and plans were submitted in order to begin a permit review process.

Chairman Plaag asked if, under the Conditional District approval, modifications could be made to accommodate the elevator shaft that would exceed the approved 40' limit. Mr. Ward replied that, in his opinion, the Conditional District approval was a specific approval so the height could not be modified within the approved CD. Mr. Ward stated that no 10% administrative adjustments had been authorized or approved at this time.

Commission Member Dixon asked if the elevator shaft was a project killer. Mr. Ward felt that would greatly depend on the Department of Insurance's review, the applicant's investment, and a willingness to adjust.

The review time period was discussed. Ms. Turner stated that staff had a 20 business day review period in which to return to the applicant any deficiencies or the issuance of a permit. The applicant then has 30 calendar days to respond to the comments regarding deficient items.

Chairman Plaag stated that Glenn Weaver had asked him why he was against development on this property. Chairman Plaag stated he was not against development on this property and had offered some design suggestions that Mr. Weaver was not receptive to.

Boone Cemetery

Chairman Plaag noted that one of the survey bags was missing from Town Hall. Vice Chairperson Pearman stated that she had the bag. She explained that she had signed it out a few weeks ago when the weather was pretty in hopes of doing some more survey work, but then the weather turned bad.

Chairman Plaag stated that he and Mr. Ward met with two representatives of the Junaluska Heritage Association regarding the fence. Chairman Plaag stated he got the impression from the meeting that the changes were acceptable but he had since gotten a call from another member of JHA who was seeking some clarification.

Mr. Ward added that both JHA members were verbally understanding and supportive and there was no negative communication from them.

Chairman Plaag stated they also had conversation during the meeting about the May 6 dedication ceremony and asked the JHA members if they would be willing to postpone the ceremony in order to complete the tree and fence work. Chairman Plaag stated there was not much enthusiasm from the JHA members about the idea of postponing the dedication. He added that they had not met their fundraising goal at this time.

Mr. Ward stated that tree trimming started last week and was being done in-house at this time. He stated there would be some tree work that would require hiring a tree company. Mr. Ward noted that the design for the wall had been ordered and the Town still needed to acquire an easement but he did not think that would be a problem. He added that he thought the Town might be able to build the wall in-house.

Chairman Plaag stated that the JHA only had a guarantee on the monument price for a certain amount of time. He stated he would follow up with the JHA regarding their plans for the dedication ceremony. Mr. Ward stated the Town needed to make sure that the placement of the JHA marker did not go on top of a gravesite and hoped to have this resolved with the remainder of the sonar work.

Chairman Plaag noted that the Union stones had arrived and asked about the rededication ceremony. Commission Member Brantz felt strongly that the Union soldier stone dedication should come after JHA's dedication ceremony.

After some discussion, Commission Member Brantz made a motion to table setting the date for the Union soldier stone rededication until the JHA makes their dedication arrangements. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Clawson.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairman Plaag expressed the need for press coverage for the dedication events. Mr. Ward felt an article in the newspaper containing activities in the Boone Cemetery would be an interesting local story and stated he would contact Anna Oakes at the Watauga Democrat.

Mr. Ward suggested that HPC might be able to request from Town Council that a donation be made to the JHA marker from any remaining funds budgeted to HPC. Chairman Plaag explained that fundraising efforts were going through the Mennonite Church and this might cause a problem with the Town making a donation to a religious organization. Mr. Ward stated he was not aware that donations were to be made to the church.

Chairman Plaag stated he would like to speak with the press regarding Cemetery activities on behalf of the HPC but would need authorization from the Commission. Commission Member Brantz made a motion to authorize Chairman Plaag to speak to the press on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairperson Pearman.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairman Plaag stated that, when the weather cleared, survey work needed to resume. Commission Member Bond suggested survey dates of April 21, 22, and 23 in hopes of completing all survey work as a group. Commission Member Brantz felt he might need a refresher course on how to do a survey. Chairman Plaag offered to hold training sessions on Friday, April 21 at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Mr. Ward stated he had an intern he would mention this to that might be able to help.

Mr. Ward mentioned that the Downtown Boone Development Association has put out the call for public art and asked HPC members to spread the word.

Mr. Ward left the meeting.

Phase I Survey

Chairman Plaag stated he is still writing the survey reports and is working hard to complete them because he does not know how much longer Paul will be available.

Boone Flood Marker Update

Chairman Plaag stated that Paul sent him a revised draft of the marker application just before he left to come to this meeting so an update will be provided at the next meeting. Chairman Plaag noted that in the research, they learned there were 24,000 landslides in Western North Carolina during the 1940 flood with 20,000 of them being in Watauga County alone.

Linney House Update

Chairman Plaag stated he would have an update at the next meeting.

New Business

Power House

Chairman Plaag stated that Dan Alion had been trying for months to get a response from Ed Miller with New River Light and Power regarding their plans for the Power House. Mr. Alion finally got an appointment to meet with Mr. Miller on Wednesday, March 15 at 1:00 p.m. and Chairman Plaag and Kristen Deathridge were asked to attend. Chairman Plaag stated he would provide members with an update at the next meeting.

2017/2018 Budget

Chairman Plaag felt there was probably about \$30,000 left in the 2016/2017 budget for HPC that needed to be carried over to the 2017/2018 budget. Vice Chairman Pearman made a motion to request that the remaining balance in HPC's budget be carried over into the 2017/2018 budget year. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Brantz.

VOTE: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairman Plaag noted the 5 sites on the designation priority list and felt these designations would require about \$15,000. The Union soldier dedication event would require about \$3,000. Chairman Plaag stated there would also be a need for a fall and a spring intern position.

Chairman Plaag stated that a couple of years ago the HPC suggested hiring a full-time staff member that was sufficiently trained to work in the Cultural Resources Department and in consultation with Planning & Inspections but that did not happen. Chairman Plaag stated he would like to make this recommendation again. He suggested that this position could prepare historical reports and survey materials in response to requests from the HPC. Commission Member Brantz suggested the position could possibly be a part-time curator of a cultural museum at some point. Chairman Plaag felt the person must have a master's degree, suggested the Post Masters office as an office location, and thought the position would present a total cost to the Town of about \$45,000-\$50,000 per year.

Commission Member Brantz made a motion to recommend to Town Council the creation of a full-time position with a minimum requirement of a master's degree in history or historic preservation whose role would encompass historical report writing, historic interpretations, programming, walking tour coordination, and architectural survey work on behalf of the HPC. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairperson Pearman.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

The motion passed.

Other Matters by Commission Members or Staff

The next meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2017, with the May meeting scheduled for May 9, 2017.

Set agenda for next meeting

- Boone Cemetery
- Phase I Survey Update
- Boone Flood Marker Update
- Linney House Update
- Power House Update
- Rivers Walk Update

Adjournment

Commission Member Clawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Brantz.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaa, Chairperson

Brenda Henson, Board Secretary