MINUTES - SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
APRIL 26, 2004

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m., Monday, April 26, 2004, in the Agricultural Conference Center, 252 Poplar Grove Road, Boone, NC. Mayor Velma C. Burnley presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Loretta Clawson, Graydon Eggers, Lynne Mason and Dempsey Wilcox.

The purpose of the meeting was to present information to the public on the proposed Howard Street project.

Mayor Burnley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Town Manager Greg Young presented the following information on the Howard Street project: **(EXHIBIT A)** Mr. Young said the Town developed drawings and a streetscape plan for Howard Street in 1999. Public meetings were held and Council was ready to proceed with the project then if all the necessary easements were given. Mr. Young said the Town did not receive all the easements and at the same time the State of NC retained revenues from the Town, so the project was dropped. Last year, Council decided to work on three capital projects with Howard Street being the number one project. Mr. Young said the engineering firm of W.K. Dickson was hired earlier this year to take a fresh look at the project. Mr. Young said preliminary estimates are for a $3.7 million dollar project that will require about 36 months to complete. Mr. Young said at this time, New River Light & Power has not agreed to bury its utilities underground at no charge.

Council member Wilcox asked if the Town could borrow money without going to a bond referendum. Town Manager Young said yes, but approval from the Local Government Commission (LGC) will be needed no matter, whether using installment/purchase; 2/3 debt rule or a bond referendum. If LGC approval is needed, final design plans must be completed before getting approval.

Roger Wright questioned the million-dollar commitment previously made by New River Light & Power. Town Manager Young said that New River did previously commit to putting its utilities underground at no cost to the Town; however, the company has not again made that commitment yet.

Council member Eggers asked if the Town has all the easements this time. Town Manager Young replied that he was unsure, but that he included funds for purchasing easements this time. Downtown Boone Development Association Director Randy Feimster said the number of property owners willing to participate has increased since the 1999 project. Mr. Feimster said he only had three properties that has not verbally committed to the project.

Ron Dunbar, Property Owner of Ivy Hall, said he has not committed to the project yet because of his concern about losing parking spaces. Mr. Dunbar said this project will be detrimental to businesses along Howard Street and that he may change his mind after seeing the actual design.
Donna Duke asked if the Town has considered completing just the one block of Howard Street

between Water and Depot Streets. Council member Eggers pointed out that much of the infrastructure is tied together on both blocks. Council member Wilcox agreed and said, regardless of the project, the stormwater and water and sewer lines will be replaced.

Trey Watkins, Engineer with W.K. Dickson, pointed out that, as part of the project, a traffic study will be completed that will include vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Pam Williamson suggested that before the Town places a large investment, proper zoning should be investigated. As presently zoned, the focus may shift to apartment rentals instead of business, unless there is a requirement for mixed-use retail. Ms. Williamson then asked how much of a tax increase would be needed to pay for the project and how much money will be invested before going to a referendum. Ms. Williamson also commented that this project should be voted on at a referendum. Town Manager Young responded that it would be about a one or two-cent tax increase in the General Fund, and that some funds would come from the water and sewer and Powell bill funds. Mr. Young said the Town will invest about $400,000 ($300,000 for design work and $100,000 for bond counsel) before ever taking the project to a referendum.

Pete Catoe said he did not understand why a bond referendum was needed for sidewalks and water and sewer lines.

Ron Dunbar suggested increasing the sales tax to pay for the project. Town Manager Young said there has been discussion about increasing the hotel/motel tax.

Hanes Boren said he would like to see the project move forward, citing that it would be a benefit to King Street businesses, too.

Roger Wright agreed and said, if the Town is going to undertake the project, then do it now.

Council member Wilcox said he wanted to have this meeting in order to gauge public support for the project.

Mary Hooks, President of the Downtown Boone Development Association, said the DBDA wants the project to move forward.

David James of RBC Centura said this was an excellent opportunity to preserve downtown.

John Cooper agreed and said downtown Boone is a jewel and that revitalizing Howard Street would set a tone by creating jobs and development. Mr. Cooper did reiterate that the zoning should allow for mixed-use retail.

Mayor Burnley again thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

_____ _____

Town Clerk Mayor