

(1) Why are you running for Boone Town Council (or Mayor) this year? What is your overall vision for the Town?

I am running for Town Council as a way to serve and give back to this community. It is an exceptional place to live, work, and play, blessed with a beautiful environment, strong public schools, and caring, supportive people. My family and I are fortunate to be a part of it and we want to preserve and strengthen it for those who live here now and those who will live here in the future. I also believe that my experience and skills in local government could be of value as a member of the Town Council.

My vision for Boone is that it will be a healthy, safe, sustainable community where all are welcome and everyone is valued.

(2) What do you consider to be the most important challenge facing Boone and what are your ideas for addressing it?

The most important immediate challenge is striking the right balance between promoting economic development and preserving Boone's special qualities and livability. This is a key element of the longer term (permanent!) challenge of creating an environmentally and economically sustainable community.

To address these challenges, we need to continually monitor our planning standards and how we implement them through the decisions of our Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and Town Council. There is no "magic bullet" solution that will address all of the issues for all time; there is to some degree a built-in tension between creating the most enticing and profitable setting for development to thrive, and creating the most enticing and pleasurable community in which to live. This tension requires that we listen to each other and make decisions with a long term perspective. Human nature being what it is, we will not always reach consensus on the issues we face, but the further out in time we push our focus, the more likely we are to agree on our priorities.

Our responsibility for creating a sustainable community also includes the need to assess our physical infrastructure – our water and sewer lines and treatment plants and our streets and sidewalks – to make sure that our long term maintenance and improvement plans, and the funding to implement them, are being put in place.

(3) Do you believe the Town is effectively protecting established, traditional Town neighborhoods from incompatible development? Please explain.

I think we are trying, but it is an ongoing challenge. In a relatively small town with a growing student population, a shortage of affordable workforce housing, and a limited supply of land that is buildable and has water and sewer services, we face constant pressures for tradeoffs. This is an issue that we must continue to address as we face decisions about requests for rezonings, variances, and other matters that affect the health of our neighborhoods. Maintaining the opportunity for citizen input is an important element in making such decisions.

(4) What are your ideas for providing more affordable workforce housing in Boone?

We need to look for opportunities to combine creative partnerships with builders (and possibly Watauga County), appropriate regulations, grant funding when available, and reasonable incentives (such as help with public infrastructure on highly desirable projects) to make progress on a small scale. Creating real momentum on the ground, however modest, will be more important than making big plans that are not feasible. We need to recognize that we cannot address this issue just through regulatory approaches and that it is simply too complex and costly for the Town of Boone to handle on its own.

(5) Do you support or oppose the Town's "Planned Development" ordinance? Please explain.

I support it in principle but am not completely satisfied in application. We need some flexibility in our zoning and development ordinances to allow for creative and innovative developments, and this ordinance is helpful in providing that. The question is whether we are making appropriate use of that flexibility without making too many tradeoffs that affect the quality of local development. The ordinance is essentially as good as our process for reviewing and approving projects submitted under its guidelines. It may be time to conduct a reassessment of the ordinance in light of recent and pending developments to ensure that it is effectively promoting the kind of development Boone wants and needs.

(6) Do you believe Boone is approving too many/too few high-density, rent-by-the-bedroom housing developments? Please explain.

It certainly feels like we are approving too many. Given the pressures on the local housing market and the economics of residential development, the growth of these developments is understandable but not, in my view, desirable. I will be interested in hearing from the Affordable Housing Task Force and others about their suggestions to address this issue.

(7) Do you support or oppose building developments of over four stories in height (*approximately 43 feet*) in Boone? Please explain.

For most of Boone, limiting buildings to four stories or less is certainly appropriate, but I do not support an absolute four story limit on a town-wide basis. With proper standards for green space, setbacks, acceptable slope, parking, viewshed impacts, and other development/landscaping measures, it's possible a taller building could be appropriate, and it might provide a valuable opportunity to help create affordable workforce housing.

(8) What does "a sustainable environment" mean to you? And what specific steps would you take to move Boone forward towards your vision of sustainability?

To me, a sustainable environment on a global scale means one in which we consume resources at a rate that is consistent with maintaining a safe and healthy planet and the diversity of life. No town, or even country, can do this alone, but we need to do our part. For Boone, this means that we should model efficiency and resource conservation in providing town services. As appropriate, we should also use incentives, regulatory powers, and partnerships to encourage resource conservation by residents and businesses.

(9) Do you support or oppose committing the Town to million dollar or more expenditures without a referendum? Please explain.

This question probably needs to be answered at two levels. On its face, the answer should be yes. We do this every time the Town Council adopts a budget, and that should be the norm. On a second level, the specific topic of major capital expenditures that require bond financing is a somewhat different issue and requires a more conditional answer.

NC law establishes the standards for when voter approval is required for a bond issue and a state body known as the NC Local Government Commission must approve the issuance of debt by local governments. This process works well and provides good protection against excessive indebtedness and the issuance of debt for inappropriate purposes by local governments. Still, we can do more.

As a matter of good public policy and good faith with the public, I would favor a referendum on bond issues that require a tax increase or significant hikes in town fees. Outside of this situation, I believe the Council should have a good deal of discretion to approve large expenditures without a public referendum. In a representative democracy, our job as citizens and voters is not to directly decide each issue, but to hold accountable those whom we elect to represent us. If we are unhappy with the results of our elections, we should get involved and change our representatives.

(10) Do you believe that the Town of Boone should follow its own ordinances in public property development? Please explain.

Of course, and I don't think obeying the law requires much explanation. If an ordinance is inappropriate for what Boone needs, then the Town Council should discuss it, with the usual opportunities for public input, and then amend or repeal the ordinance as appropriate.