

Quint David
Candidate Questionnaire:

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

My vision is simple: People First. Boone must firstly take care of the needs of its people, then protect the beautiful mountain environment we all love, and finally ensure that our thriving local businesses community remains profitable during more than just the tourist season. All three are critical to creating and maintaining a long-term sustainable community here in the western mountains of NC.

Boone has been making moderate progress towards long-term sustainability and encouraging middle class growth over the last two years of my retirement from politics, but we can do better. I enjoy moving my vision of a walkable, bike-able, bus-able, vibrant, and community-focused small town forward from the sidelines, but in order to make that vision come true within my lifetime we need people with that vision on the council itself. Boone is a mountain community that places a high value on our environment and our independence, two values that work very well with our goals for creating a model sustainable community. If Boone wants to be a success we need to make sure our workers can find homes and success here as well.

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

Our town is currently designed for cars and concrete instead of people, and it shows every day during the traffic jam, and every time it rains and floods. We currently have a huge trade deficit of energy, food, employees, students, and affordable housing. This deficit uses asphalt, concrete, highways, and gas guzzling SUVs from other states to solve itself, just like the fabled "Anytown-USA" our town plans supposedly wanted to avoid. If Boone wants to be the vibrant and independent mountain community I know we are, at some point we must stop using asphalt to solve our problems. Asphalt has clearly created many more problems than it has fixed, so to go back from that will be a tough challenge but is clearly the only way forward.

If we want to improve the quality of life for the people in our community we have to place walking or riding the bus in front of using a car, simple as that. The most popular place in town is historic King street, and that exact same 3-story mixed-use walkable density with public parking options simply needs to start inching down 321 towards the hospital, uncovering the ugly paved-over and flooding prone concrete river along the way.

That is a much better solution than 67 foot tall mega buildings or mega SUVs and asphalt from years past. Dedicated multi-modal greenways are much better solutions than skinny dangerous unpainted bike lanes on major highways, and as part of our green infrastructure plan we need to start planning for how you can get from one side of

town to the other without having to cross a dangerous major asphalt highway. Almost 20% of the workers living in Boone WALK to work, and they need to be able to do it safely.

Ensuring that our workers have an affordable place to live and a safe way to get to work is the most important challenge facing Boone today.

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

I will assume that "incompatible development" is code-word for student or workforce rental housing. No. Student rentals continue to dominate what should be middle-class owned and family-oriented neighborhoods, and owner-occupied units are vacating at an alarming rate.

In the last 7 years it appears the town has lost around 1,000 citizens from owner-occupied housing to be replaced with rentals, or even worse, vacant 2nd homes. I believe that property ownership by the middle-class is critical to having people stay invested in their local community. Out in the county the owner-occupied rate is 57%, the state norm is of 65%, but Boone is an embarrassingly low 18%. Nearly 1/4 of the average.

If by "established traditional neighborhoods" we mean rental communities and 2nd homes for the wealthy, then yes we are protecting that status-quo unless changes are made. If Boone wants working families instead of college rentals and 2nd homes to fill our neighborhoods, the current level of 'protection' is obviously failing miserably as indicated by those numbers and must be addressed ASAP. This all ignores the other nearly 1,000 homes lost with the etj ruling by the state now open to 100% student rentals. The town attempted to protect those established areas, and the state decided to hand it to the county instead. More work must be done.

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

This is always a tough one~ As indicated by the housing study some years back the private market will have a tough time solving this issue. Telling workers and students they should not live in town, and that town is only for the wealthy elite, is not a solution I can endorse.

I believe all students and workers should live, walk, or ride the bus in town. I do not believe in asphalt and SUVs. The only way to get affordable housing in Boone is to get Appalachian State and the town to partner to create enough student housing for how many actual students they have. Building it out in the county and having them drive in clearly is not working, and it drives up the price of in-town housing forcing working families out. Off-shoring our affordable housing to Trade and West Jefferson is not working.

The town needs to set clear goals for how many workers and students they want in town vs out, and home-ownership rates we would want to see. With the recent etj loss, and the loss of the 2-unrelated person rule in that area, I suspect there will be less pressure on tax-paying Boone homes as student rentals can increase out in those neighborhoods (sorry folks! Please speak with your county commissioners!), but it will not solve the larger scale issue of too many workers, students, and too few beds within town limits.

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

Support in idea only. Since no developments have actually been built using this process, and I have never used it yet, it is a hope that allowing the council to negotiate demands with developers is better than the results we have seen from by-right development which is everything we see in town currently. I believe negotiating with projects from the beginning will give us the chance at something better. If we want to see no changes to our town, then we need to setup our ordinances for that. The Town Council gets to set the speed limit, but we cant give someone a ticket for going 67 in a 67 foot tall zone.

We could have negotiated some recent projects lower with the planned development process, and that hindsight and new opportunity to increase public input for projects should help us moving forward. All that said, if this process results in projects just as bad as the by-right method then we should stop allowing public input on these projects anywhere but the board of adjustment meetings just as before, but at least we tried to make things better.

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

Boone is in the middle of a housing crisis with owner occupied units vacating in favor of rentals. An estimated ~15,000 people are driving to town for school and work. Boone badly needs medium/"Goldilocks" density ownable housing for its workers who are currently driving from many miles away, AND rental housing for students. At less than 1/2 the ownership rate of the county and almost 1/4 of the state average, this needs to be addressed. Our population doubles every day clogging our roads and streets.

If we want the county to remain a beautiful mountainside we need to turn the concrete river in town into a new King street, and partner with the county to prevent sub-urban growth in what should be a rural community. While I think every worker and student should be able to walk to school and work, this number would be terribly hard to accommodate. A goal of 1/2 our workers in town and 3/4 our students would be a good attainable improvement. I would be curious to see what ratio other candidates have in mind for cars vs people. Is Boone only for the wealthy and retired, or should workers and students live here too? I think they all should.

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

Oppose on corridors, support further back near already tall buildings.

Boone needs to maintain the 'small mountain town feel' even though we have 16,000 workers and an award-winning university. To do this we need the same human-scale density as king st on corridors, and taller buildings pushed back where they are less noticeable. Boone is a small city in the mountains, and unless we want to turn our surrounding mountains into housing developments we have to go up somewhere. I just don't believe it should be on the main roads or on our beautiful mountainsides. I support the recent changes made to limit the height on primary streets down to 3 stories/45 feet, but this needs to extend to corridor areas as well.

(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?

It means more parking for SUVs and more asphalt highways to get to town as is the current plan. Hah! But seriously the word we should be looking at is 'Regenerative City'. Restoring our relationship with nature instead of asphalt is critical, and admitting that a city in itself can never be sustainable unless the area surrounding it is maintained and sustained in a way to support the city. We are all in this together and we must work together or we will end up with a big mess.

The current petroleum based model has our food driven in on trucks from who knows where, but the 'Ecopolis' model has most of our food and energy coming from our own county and the counties surrounding us. If Boone wants to become 'sustainable' we have to fix our import deficit of food, energy, and people, and start growing as much of those as possible right here in Watauga county. I am a little bias on the food part from my work with the local food council, and the town's sustainability committee, but it needs to happen sooner than later and the leadership of Boone needs to help it move forward.

Check out what the progressives in Iowa city are putting together. I hope I can get Boone there one day soon.~ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeff-biggers/iowa-city-mayor-issues-re_b_9838340.html

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

The town has a ~58 million a year budget passed yearly, so arguably the town does this every year. The town spends over a million dollars a year on electricity and fuel alone, without a referendum. The sales tax change which removed over a million dollars from Boone's budget, crippling the town first by Republicans and then by Democrats at the county level, was done with no referendum.

Do the citizens get to vote on a referendum for every million-dollar expenses? No, they do every November when selecting their representation at election time. There are state laws about what expenses need a bond or referendum vote, and what expenses are day-to-day choices of our leadership elected each November. I would hope those

elected would put people in front of petty partisan politics, but unfortunately I have not seen that to be true.

I assume this question is actually in regards to the water intake project whose costs continue to balloon after being stalled by both Republicans and Democrats at this point. I cannot in good faith support removing 80-90% of the flow from a river when the current environmental standard is 10%, and subjecting every home owner, business, and visitor of Boone to the danger of running out of water during a drought, as was made aware to us by the state democratic Gov. Mike Easley. After a multi-million dollar referendum had already passed by the people, my question would be why did it take so long for this project to get started which has thus resulted in millions more in expenses? Those racking up millions in additional expenses for partisan political reasons should be held accountable for their actions. This is not a game, this is millions of taxpayer dollars people have wasted just to make a political point.

The budget should have as much public input as possible, and expenditures that require a referendum should obviously use a referendum, but once that referendum has passed the politicians who needlessly stall and increase the cost to the public should be held accountable for their actions.

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

Legally the town does not have the option to not follow its own laws. Just like the state can apparently remove Boone zoning or etj, or the county can remove sales tax, if it is not within the rights of the town to ignore its own rules then it cant, simple as that. As a representative of the people I will be more than glad to investigate any ordinance or ethical issue where we think this has happened, but in order for me to do that I have to actually be contacted by an aggrieved citizen explaining the situation.

I assume this question is in regards to the single family homes recently purchased by the town where some trees were burned during the removal of a dilapidated structure. This is a tough question since single family homes are normally exempt from the tree requirements of our code, but 'public' property is not. Unless there was a vote from the town council that changed the zoning of this area from nothing, the county zone, to whatever the towns annexed zone was, it is hard to determine what, if any, ordinances were violated. As of right now I have had a single day since you, Pam, presented your itemized list to the council so it is a little soon to try and pretend like I have had time to figure or determine anything. I will be glad to now that I have a list I can respond to.

Of course the town should follow its own ordinances for trees, ethics, speed limits, zoning etc. To not do so would open up the town to needless litigation that wastes our taxpayer dollars that are badly needed to pay for other much more beneficial items. If we want to maintain an average or below average NC property tax rate we cannot allow violations to happen, and every alleged instance must be investigated to the fullest extent possible.