

# Cullowhee Planning Council

## Minutes

August 5th, 2019

6:00 p.m.

Conference Room 101A, Cordelia Camp Building  
Western Carolina University

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Rick Bennett	X		Myrtle Schrader	X		Mike Byers		X
Scott Baker	X		Joel Setzer	X		Jim Lewis	X	
Jack Debnam	X		David Claxton	X				

### Staff Present

Michael Poston, Planning Director  
Caroline LaFrienier, Planner II  
Heather Baker, County Attorney  
Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant

### Call to Order

Chairman Scott Baker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and a quorum was present.

### Additions to Agenda

David Claxton made a motion to approve the agenda as written, and the motion passed unanimously.

### Approval of Minutes

Joel Setzer requested under "DOT Update on Road Improvement Projects" to change "Steve Woods" to "Steve Williams," and the project number under the second paragraph on Page 2 to "R-4753." In addition, Mr. Setzer requested to add under "Cullowhee Small Area Plan" the discussion of high-speed internet and cell phone service being a factor for individuals not to consider relocating to the Cullowhee area.

*Jack Debnam made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 18th, 2019 as amended. Rick Bennett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

### Public Comment- Sign-up sheet- 3 minutes per speaker

Pam Krauss (Citizens for River Road Safety): Ms. Krauss stated she was a resident of South River Road in Webster, and is the acting spokesperson to inform the Council of the Citizens for River Road Safety campaign and goals to relieve road traffic. She stated Webster is a neighboring town, and many residents of the Cullowhee area use South River Road as a scenic drive or shortcut. Ms. Krauss informed the Council there were issues of the road being too narrow, having shoulder issues, and speeding. She stated the group formed when neighbors began to notice speeding, heavy traffic of dump trucks, and wide load vehicles on South River Road. Residents of South River Road have placed approximately 13 signs on the road with the university colors that say "Please slowdown, cyclists, runners, etc.", and they are communicating their concerns with residents on North River Road. The Group appealed to the County Commissioners by asking for a form of relief, and asked if they could work with the Sheriff's office, NCDOT District 14, Highway Patrol and Western Carolina University to discuss a solution. Ms. Krauss stated the group had conducted unofficial studies, reviewed alternate roads, and it appears South River Road is the shortest route for projects in the Cullowhee area. They are concerned for those using the river for recreation and share the road with cyclists. There is the concern South River Road may be similar to Ledbetter Road and someone must be hurt before a solution is made. Ms. Krauss informed the Council they have a petition to sign for those interested. She stated there would be continual growth from the

university and is hopeful there is a solution to manage the growth. She asked the Sheriff's department to help with the speeding issue and a speed calming light on the road. However, they did not have the resources and Ms. Krauss plans to ask the Commissioners to provide those resources.

## New Business

### **a. Cullowhee Small Area Plan**

Caroline LaFrienier discussed the first draft pages of the Cullowhee Small Area Plan (Introduction, and Existing Conditions & Analysis), and asked for feedback from the Council. Jack Debnam asked staff to bring clarification of how the average salary for the Study Area was determined as he believed the number was too high. Mike Poston stated the consultants are crossing multiple census blocks, and these data figures may be the best available. Esri is a GIS online mapping software that combines data analytics to deliver location intelligence that allows staff to create Jackson County maps (ArcGIS). He stated the consultants use an algorithm to customize a Study Area which provide snapshots of the census data based on the selected area. Mr. Poston stated he would ask the consultants to provide information of the data they used to determine the average salary and reference in the plan. Myrtle Schrader stated the term "pristine" was used to describe the Tuckasegee River and felt that term was incorrect as pristine means "pure, clean, in its original condition, and not corrupted by human alteration." She stated she cared a lot about the Tuckasegee River and dislikes how it is abused, and concerned for the natural resources with the rapid growth of the university.

In addition, Ms. Schrader asked to correct the typo on Page 14 from "quite" to "quiet." Chairman Baker added "this is a caption" was left below on some of the pictures in the document. He stated the flow of the document was an easy read and the professional drawing were a good touch.

Mr. Poston stated on Page 13 the section "Plan Open House" would be completed later as it would be the final public input portion in the process before holding public hearings for adoption. He stated both the consultants and staff would schedule an open public meeting for additional feedback from the community. He asked the Council to email any additional feedback regarding the draft document.

Joel Setzer stated the introduction sets the tone of the document, and it required him several times reread the quote from the Cullowhee Vision Plan on Page 4 to fully understand it. He requested to add the words "*of the community*" at the end of the sentence to give more meaning.

Jack Debnam asked for clarification of the demographic snapshot of the Study Area versus Jackson County. He believed the diversity index population would be greater in the Study Area than the entire county. Mr. Poston stated staff would ask the consultants to provide information of the data they are using to provide better clarity.

Myrtle Schrader stated her name needed to be added on Page 2 to the Cullowhee Community Planning Council and on Page 12 change "7-member" to "8-member."

Ms. LaFrienier asked the Council to review the Vision Statement and Goals from the 2014 Cullowhee Vision Plan. She stated the consultants requested the Council identify the missing themes that were identified during the Cullowhee Small Area Plan engagement process. The Council completed the vision statement exercise and gave feedback, direction to staff, and asked to include the missing themes such as Housing, Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation, and revitalization of Old Cullowhee.

Chairman Baker inquired from staff when the target date for the Cullowhee Small Area Plan is to be completed. Mr. Poston stated they are considering around September/October timeframe for the plan to be completed. In addition, he stated they are not required by state statute to hold a public hearing, however staff plans to hold these hearings for additional feedback and input from the public. Mr. Poston informed the Council there would be a public hearing for the draft at the Cullowhee Planning Council level then for the Board of Commissioners.

Myrtle Schrader inquired if CuRvE was still active and meeting. Rick Bennett stated he and Mike Byers are members, and they meet the second Monday of the month. Mr. Baker asked Mr. Bennett to invite CuRvE to the public meeting for the Cullowhee Small Area Plan that would most likely be scheduled in October. Mr. Poston stated staff would publish and release the draft document for public review on multiple outlets (Planning Department Website, Facebook) and emailed out to

stakeholders, and those signed up on the email list. In addition, the Council reviewed the goals from the 2014 Cullowhee Vision Plan and provided feedback and direction to staff to add the continuation of Jackson County's Greenway Plan as a goal.

Ms. Schrader reminisced before the development of Bear Lake Reserve on Bear Lake there was a community lake beach. Mr. Setzer stated it is disappointing the community does not have a lake beach to utilize like they did in the past, however there is less activity, drinking, and trash in the area. He stated the area had changed, but there has been improvement with less motor boats, crowds as they did not have regulations on camping and trash.

Mr. Poston asked the Council to call or email any additional comments and feedback regarding the draft document.

### **Informal Discussion**


Ms. Schrader inquired if the Council could encourage those building within the area to have their dump truck drivers respect the speed limit. Mr. Debnam stated there was a road study that determined South River Road supports a 50 mph speed limit, and it is currently posted at 40 mph speed limit. Mr. Setzer stated the county discussed improved accessibility in transportation infrastructure. Many community members made the decision to pave both North and South River Road to solve the problem. He stated from this decision we are seeing the results, and there will be more pressure as time goes on. From a planning viewpoint, the answer is not to go through a different road to get to Webster, therefore the county has a lot of planning to do in transportation.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business, Chairman Baker adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Allison Kelley  
Administrative Assistant- Planning

  
Scott Baker  
Planning Council Chair