

# Agenda Of Town Council, May 6, 1927

By Frank Ruggiero

On May 6, 1927, the Boone Town Council, then called the town board, appointed A. Y. Howell as town clerk.

As clerk, Howell was tasked with keeping the minutes of Boone's town board, chronicling the board's ayes and nays and issues of the time — and all by hand.

Sitting in the vault of Boone Town Hall are two ledgers chock full of Howell's handwritten minutes from 1927, granting readers a peak into the past, when "water rent," and not water shortage, was an issue.

The board consisted of Mayor W.R. Gragg and aldermen T.B. Moore, Clyde R. Green and Howell.

The earliest set of minutes dates back to May 6, 1927, when the board unanimously agreed to designate the first Tuesday night of each month their regular meeting night. Nowadays, council meets the third Thursday of every month.

"Water rent" was discussed at the May 6 meeting. Howell recorded that residents were to be notified to pay their water rent on the first day of each month.

Those who hadn't paid by the 10th of each month would be placed on a list to be given to the police. Failure to pay would result in service cut-off, and Howell wrote that public notice would be published in the Watauga Democrat.

At the time, street maintenance was not a public works responsibility, but instead fell on the shoulders of the Boone Police.

"The police is to supervise the cleaning of the streets and see that they are kept clean and trash cans emptied and kept in place," Howell wrote.

Despite their regular monthly meeting date, the board of aldermen, as it was then called, met frequently. At a May 21 meeting, the board laid out the boundaries of the town's fire district.

Howell recorded that the district would begin "At the center of Main Street opposite (the) west corner of (the) courthouse lot, extending 100 feet north and south on both sides of the Main Street, to the intersection of the Old Blowing Rock Turnpike Road."

The board agreed that no building would be erected or repaired within the fire zone, unless it's done so according to the "specifications of the requirements necessary to meet the state's insurance requirements.

"All persons desiring to build or make an addition or repairing a building in the town of Boone must get a permit before building or repairing."

At a May 24 meeting, the board appointed J.B. Moore "as street committee" to hear complaints and investigate the street in question and, if necessary, get some man to do a little repair job aid."

Clyde R. Green was appointed to the committee on water systems "to look after things that may come up pertaining to extension of water lines, etc.," Howell recorded.

Further touching on the water issue, Howell wrote that Charles Younce was ordered by the board to "make a canvas of town and determine who was using water and sewer and make a record ... and turn it into the board, who are using water and who sewer."

At a June 2 meeting, Boone Police Chief C.H. Garland took the oath of office, followed by the June 7 appointment of Charles Farthing as fire chief.

Also at the June 7 meeting, the board dealt with its first business regarding the pickle known as downtown parking. A parking ordinance passed the day before, stating that "no cars shall be parked on the north side of Main Street from the intersection with Daniel Boone Park to the intersection of Main and Depot streets," Howell recorded.

The one-hour parking rule came to pass in this ordinance, which allowed cars to park on the south side of Main Street within the mentioned zone for no longer than an hour between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Furthermore, drivers were instructed to park their cars at right angles, "provided, however, that no cars shall park closer than 10 feet to any water hydrant," Howell wrote. Violators were subject, upon conviction, to a fine of no more than \$10.

As street maintenance grew in significance, Moore, at a July 14 meeting, moved to prohibit heavy vehicles, such as "any tractor, steam shovel or any other vehicle heavy enough to injure the concrete pavement" from driving on city streets. Violators were fined no less than \$5 or more than \$50 at the court's discretion.

On Aug. 27, the board adopted an ordinance for a telephone franchise to the Watauga Telephone and Telegraph Company. Under the ordinance, the company was allowed to place and maintain telephone poles and posts "upon the public streets and alleys and upon the public grounds of said city," the ordinance reads.

Much as it is today, the status of Howard Street was a point of concern in 1927. At a Sept. 15 board meeting, a petition was submitted "asking that this board repair and make passable the street known as a part of Howard Street from Depot Street to the alley beyond Steam Laundry," Howell wrote.

Howell's minutes indicate that J.M. Moretz met with the board and proposed to furnish sand and gravel for the side streets at \$150 per square yard.

At a Dec. 8 meeting, the board reviewed a franchise agreement with New River Light and Power Company, owned and operated by Appalachian State Normal School. The minutes read that New River Light and Power operated a system in Boone since about 1914, and the agenda item was tabled until the next meeting.

Shortly after, another ordinance was passed authorizing the Watauga Telephone and Telegraph Company to sell all of its properties, including poles and posts in town to the Southern Bell Telephone Company.



This early 1920s photo of King Street in Boone, contributed by former Mayor Wade Brown, was taken from a postcard. The photographer was standing just east of the Jones house Community Center. To the right of the slanted roof is the Boone Drug Company building, beyond which, according to Brown, was an alleyway, "a good place for local drunks to sleep it off." Beyond that alley, which occupied the Our Daily Bread site, and stretching to the corner of King and Depot streets, was the Critcher Hotel, the social center of the town until the construction of the Daniel Boone Hotel. In fact, Brown had an office in a corner room under the hotel's porch. Roby Greer tore it down and put a filling station in on the old "dime store corner" now occupied by the Boone Mini Mall. However, Brown says the filling station failed because it was hard to make the turn into the station. Greer later built a building on the same site for the Belk-White Company. Across the street, meantime, Joe Todd's Esso continued to flourish. This side of Boone Drug, and under the slant roof, was Ralph Winkler's garage, which had a drive-in entrance. This side of the garage, you see the sign, "Restaurant," and beside it, the Ed Qualls Harware, later bought out by Farmers Hardware. The foremost Model T, Brown adds, "is almost exactly like the car I bought to drive the first year I practiced law here." He remembers buying it from a gentleman in Blowing Rock for \$50, then later trading it with Hamp Blackburn. Across from the Critcher Hotel can be seen the corner building of Farmers Hardware, which was the Watauga County Bank at the time and later became the Northwestern Bank. Under the huge tree at the farthest end of the street was the original office of the Watauga Democrat. In that day, every able-bodied man was expected to work on the paved roads for a prescribed period each year. In 1920, Cecil Miller remembers helping build a plank sidewalk from the then Post Office along King Street perhaps as far as the current Baptist Church. "The boys from the ASU dormitories helped," he said.

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