

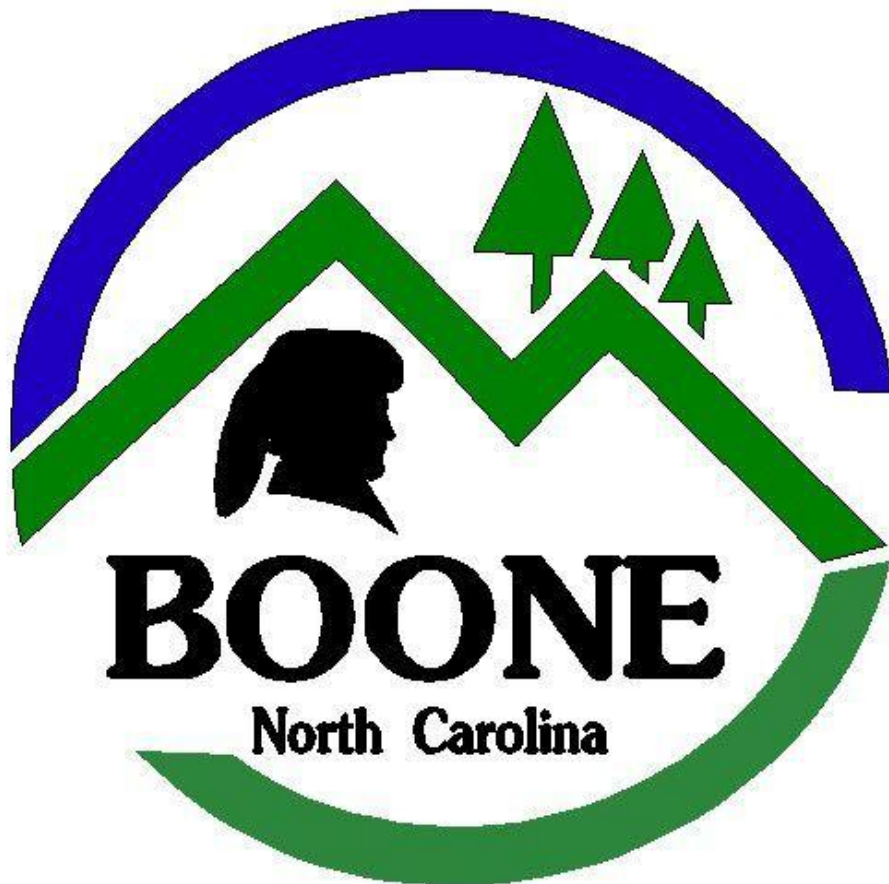
https://www.wataugademocrat.com/news/boone-council-clarifies-town-energy-goals-climate-neutral-by-2030/article_3b8eb817-10e4-5ef4-9c87-8861bcd8c10d.html

Boone Council clarifies town energy goals: Climate neutral by 2030

If sales tax revenue restored, it could help fund goals, council says

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BOONE — The Boone Town Council voted 4-1 on April 18 to establish clarified energy goals for the town: climate neutrality in municipal operations by 2030, 100 percent clean renewables in municipal operations by 2040 and 100 percent clean renewables

for the entire Boone community by 2050.

Boone Town Council Member Sam Furgiuele proposed the new goals and years at an April 10 special meeting of the council, noting that there has been confusion about the town's goals as previously stated. He noted that the goals were broad and could be fine-tuned through further study.

“This is a dire situation; it’s existential,” Furgiuele said. “(This) should be our No. 1 goal (and) ... a part of every decision we make.”



Council Member Marshall Ashcraft cast the dissenting vote, repeating concerns he voiced at the April 10 meeting that the goals were unrealistic and that the town should model its goals after those recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which recommended a 45 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 (from 2010 levels) and carbon neutrality by 2050.

“What does the science tell us and what do our realities in terms of town finances tell us?” Ashcraft said on April 18.

Council Member Lynne Mason indicated that an energy revolution would have to come from the ground up.

“We have to begin by showing people how we can live differently,” Mason said. “One of our goals has to be by showing people they can be less dependent on vehicles. That really needs to be a part of every road project.”

The council also voted 4-1 on a motion by Furgiuele — contingent on the county commissioners restoring the per capita method of local sales distribution — to commit all of the additional sales tax revenue over the next 10 years to achieving the town’s climate and energy goals, after accounting for revenue losses from the Municipal Service District and fire taxes.

In 2013, the Republican-led Watauga County Commissioners decided to switch local sales tax distribution from a per capita method to an ad valorem method, resulting in a loss of about \$2 million in annual sales tax revenue to the town of Boone. The Democratic-led Boone council has requested meetings with the county commissioners (which now has a 4-1 Democratic majority) about restoring the per capita method, but county leaders have declined to meet on the matter.

Boone Town Manager John Ward called the proposal an “interesting approach” to encourage voters and citizens to contact the commissioners about the sales tax issue.

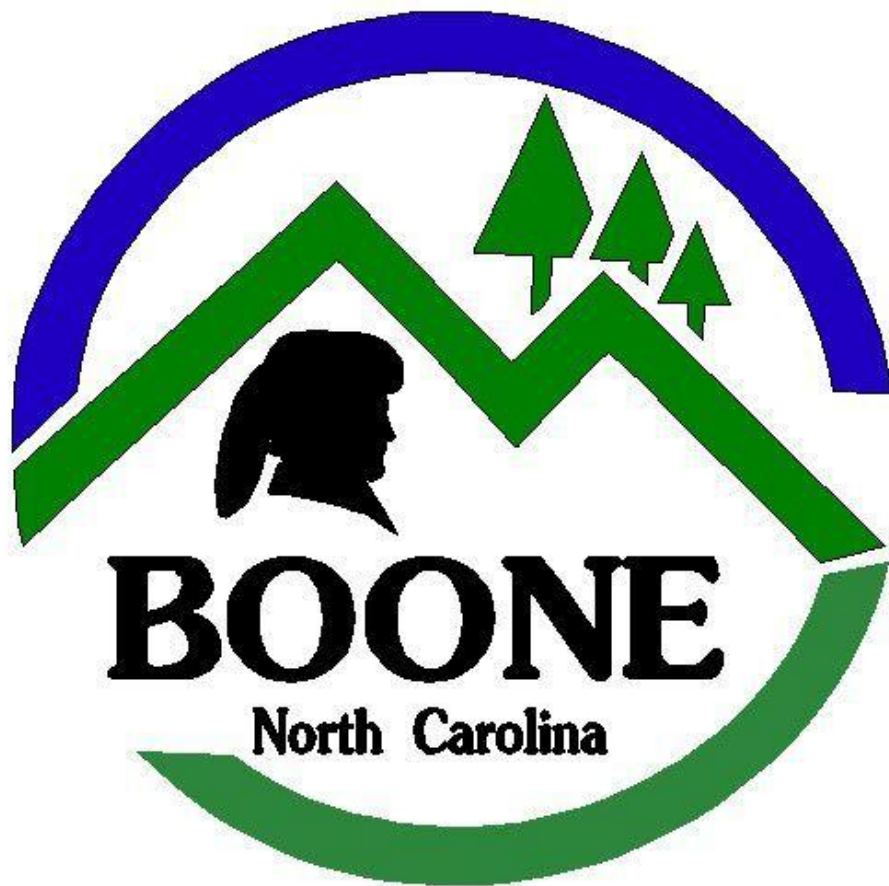
Council members acknowledged that the motion could not be legally binding on future councils. The next municipal election is in November of this year.

Ashcraft again voted against this motion, stating that even if climate action is the No. 1 priority, the town has other needs as well, including public safety and infrastructure.

He suggested that the town may want to consider a tax increase to fund its energy goals.

The council also voted unanimously to direct the town sustainability to develop a plan for meeting the new energy goals.

MORE INFORMATION



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Anna Oakes

Editor



