

Boone Best Western Poised to Reopen

Written by Steve Frank
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It appears that the Boone Best Western Hotel, where three died this spring from carbon monoxide poisoning, could be ready to reopen. A number of local sources say that the hotel is being prepared for resumption of business. Planning and Inspections head Bill Bailey said this morning that the company asked about what could lead to the natural gas service being restored, and that last Thursday, a permit was issued after the pool heater gas supply was capped off, allowing other gas service to be restored. Bailey said other aspects beyond that would be up to the Appalachian Regional Health Department, and that we are awaiting word from them as to where they are in the permitting process. Boone Police Cpt. Andy LeBeau said they still have some aspects of their investigation underway, but that they turned the building back over to management a few weeks back. Since that time, the parking lot has been dug up, repaved and relined, and a number of other service trucks have been seen on the property. Housekeeping staff was seen busy on the property today, but the 'closed' signs were still on all the outside of entrances to the building.

This activity comes as Wednesday is the deadline for a response from the owners of the Boone Best Western to Boone Planning and Inspections, who sent a letter last month with a 30-day requirement for response about what permits were obtained that allowed the installation of a pool heater at the facility. Boone planning department head Bill Bailey said last month that his department inspected the original heater in 2012 when it was changed from propane to natural gas, but it was not the same heater discovered there after the three deaths at the hotel. Bailey said at that time that his department had no permits issued for such a change and no inspection of any new work. He said that the ventilation requirements of the new heater did not match the exhaust system in place. This morning, Bailey said they have not received a response from officials of the company, and that if there is no response by the deadline, a hearing on the matter would be set with a 10-day notification period then in place, and ultimately, the Planning Department could seek condemnation of the property on that violation.