

UPDATE: Police Issue Release on Lot Assault

Written by Steve Frank
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Boone Police issued a release yesterday on the incident Friday that led to charges for one of the parking lot monitors at the King Street parking lot of the Marketplace. The incident came to a head around 7 Friday night as thousands of locals and tourists were packing downtown, enjoying the first First Friday Art Crawl of the summer season. Police say that at about 6:50 pm, a verbal dispute began between the on-duty LMS parking lot attendant, James Faron Cooke, 57, and a woman whose vehicle had been booted while visiting a nearby business. This woman and her two young children were visiting Boone from Florida and she was very unhappy about the circumstance, her argument based on the lack of signage in the parking lot. Police say Cooke and the woman both raised their voices at times during this dispute, according to the release, but neither party used any profanity or abusive language. Cooke explained many times that she was parked in a private lot and at one point Cooke told the woman that if her vehicle was still there in two hours that the vehicle would be towed and she would then owe more money to cover the tow bill.

Charles Brady III, local attorney with an office across the street was walking by, according to police, and observed this verbal dispute. Brady told police he saw an agitated man involved in a dispute with a woman and two small children. Brady called the woman out of the parking lot and away from Cooke and began explaining the town ordinance concerning vehicle booting to her. Police say Cooke became angry and shoved Brady. At the time of this assault, Brady was standing on the public sidewalk between the parking lot and Water Street with Cooke shoving Brady towards the street. Officers witnessed this assault and immediately responded and took Cooke into custody for assaulting Brady. Cooke was transported to the Magistrate's office and was charged with one count of Misdemeanor Simple Assault. Cooke was allowed to sign a written promise to appear in District Court on July 30th. Incidents at the lot have been controversial for at least a couple of years, with complaints of those with their cars booted heard on numerous occasions before the Boone Town Council, but also the operators of the lot watching service making their case of trying to prevent abuse of a private lot by those not patronizing the businesses of the Marketplace who are allowed to use the lot. The issue will likely be back on the Boone Town Council agenda this month again.

Photos: Brent Frank; Boone Police