




NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: Full TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Director 

Date: January 12, 2018

Subject: Updates for TDA Board Meeting

Grant program revisions

A majority of the board provided feedback on proposed grant program changes. I received positive feedback on all proposed changes. I received additional feedback by Cashiers Area Chamber Director Stephanie Edwards who thought the County should be included as an eligible entity to apply for an advertising grant. A majority of the board wrote back and did not see an issue with this addition. Any application by the county would have to demonstrate the ability to grow tourism and room nights, as all applications do.

Map Projects

The Sylva Map project is well underway and content has been authored about the town's history and offerings for the reverse side of the map. It is currently in the design phase and should be finalized later this month, which means we should have printed maps in our Visitor Centers in six to eight weeks, in the perfect timeframe for the tourist season to open.

The map of Pinnacle Park has been postponed until a later date so that the trail to Blackrock can be rerouted due to erosion problems. Once that new trail has been blazed, we can finalize this map and get it in production.

With this change, our map creator is beginning work on the Cashiers Area attractions and waterfall map.

Great Balsam Relay

I was notified by race organizer Nate Kreuter, a special project funding recipient, of a change to the race format. The Great Balsam Relay (weekend of Aug. 11) will need to change format due to a competing race in Transylvania County, also staging the same weekend. The race/relay will no longer be a USARA qualifier, but will be an event spanning a few days, with registration starting Friday and the race taking place all day Saturday, ending at 9 p.m. I expect this will still draw room nights for us. Startup events are always a challenge and I am hopeful this event will be a success and turn into an annual draw. I would recommend and ask for board consensus Jan. 17 that we continue with our \$2,500 in Special Project funding for this event.

Reminder – February Board Orientation meeting

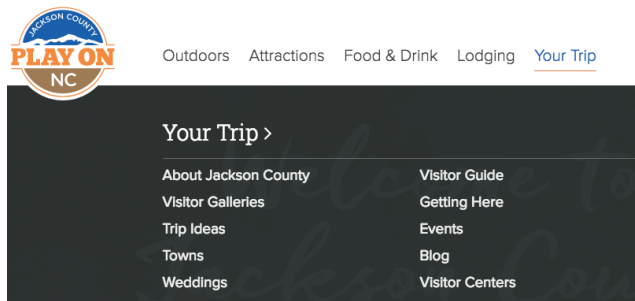
I received an RSVP from all board members (excepting Ann Self who will be out of town) that they will be attending our February 17 Board Member orientation session with Magellan Strategy Group’s Chris Cavanaugh. As a reminder, that session is at 11:30, and should last an hour, followed by lunch, then we will have our regular full board meeting. Cavanaugh is conducting this session at *no charge* to our board.

Workforce meeting

Recognizing the continued challenge we face in Cashiers with workforce recruitment, retention and development, I am working with Cashiers Area Chamber Director Stephanie Edwards to organize a meeting March 1 to further discuss the issue. Last year Edwards and her Chamber board held an initial discussion and this follows up on that meeting. At our March 1 meeting, we are expanding the dialogue to other stakeholders from WCU, SCC, small business centers, Region A RPO and Land of Sky MPO, and employers to hold a dialogue about the issue and potential solutions. The problem is by no means unique to Jackson County, but I think we can find a solution that will be. The session is planned from 10 a.m. to noon, location TBD. As soon as we have finalized details, I will share those with the board. Edwards and I will be working on the invitation list and outline of the meeting in the coming weeks.

Website updates

The ‘Your Trip’ module on our homepage is now complete, with a drop-down of information for potential visitors to utilize during the trip planning process. This includes our UGC Visitor Galleries, Trip Ideas, Town Information, Visitor Guide, Directions, Events, our Blog, information about the Visitor Centers and Weddings. We’ve seen a lot of use of this new feature already.



2018-19 Visitor Guide

Production is moving steadily on the 2018-19 Visitor Guide, which is due to the printing press by 3/15. I am currently in the stages of verifying all lodging listings and soliciting new lodging listings for potential inclusion utilizing the Finance Department database. This is a time intensive process to ensure all information is up-to-date. This will be much of my focus during the months of January and February. The marketing committee will review progress on the Visitor Guide mid-February.

Visitor Center visits

I will ask the Executive Committee to determine next steps in further analysis/studies/action related to declines in both on-site visits and phone calls at both of our Visitor Centers in Sylva and Cashiers over a two-year period.

Three Billboards promotional materials

Three Billboards continues to generate interest with its recent win at the Golden Globes. The film won four Golden Globes: Best Screenplay, Best Motion Picture, Frances McDormand Won Best Actress in a Drama, and Sam Rockwell Won Best Supporting Actor.

I am working on a print collateral piece to promote a tour of the film locations throughout Sylva and Dillsboro that should be complete this month for distribution at our Visitor Centers. Leveraged properly, this film can continue to generate visits to Jackson County for some time.

Three Billboards also has the chance to garner additional awards:
Screen Actors Guild Awards - January 21, 2018 (4 nominations)
71st British Academy Film Awards - February 18, 2018 (9 nominations)
Oscars - March 4, 2018

The state film office recently launched a *Three Billboards* itinerary, with great mentions of Sylva:
<https://www.visitnc.com/trip-idea/explore-authentic-locations-from-three-billboards-outside-ebbing-missouri>

Marketing Committee

The Marketing Advisory Committee will meet mid-February to go over advertising planning, PR objectives/goals and review progress on the Visitor Guide. The meeting should take about two and a half hours and be held at my office in Sylva.

Please check your calendars for the following dates/times so that we may schedule a date at our Jan. 17 meeting:

- 2/20: 12:00-2:30
- 2/22: 10:00-12:30 and 12:00-2:30
- 2/23: 12:00-2:30

As a reminder of the timeline for planning:

- I will meet with both Pineapple and RM at their offices in late January to begin early discussions
- We will meet as a Marketing Committee in February at one of the above TBD dates
- The Marketing Committee will preview 2018-19 advertising and PR plans the week of 4/30
- Rawle Murdy and Pineapple PR will present their plans to the Board for comment/approval on 5/16

Litter problems affecting rivers/fly fishing

As a result of giving a presentation to the local Trout Unlimited chapter, and in talking with Board Member Dale Collins, I was alerted to a significant litter problem along Skyland Drive in the Dark Ridge area near the train trestle and new bridge. After visiting the site, I distributed photos of the issue to Public Works, the NC DOT and the Sheriff's Office. View photos [here](#). There is everything from chairs, to anti-freeze, to couches being dumped over the bank, that will ultimately make it downstream, and could impact trout fishing, which is a huge draw to Jackson County. Trout Unlimited is conducting a Jan. 27 cleanup and my hopes are that any of the larger items can be cleaned up by a joint effort between public works and NC DOT. The NC DOT has been receptive and has ordered signage advising that dumping is illegal.

International Fly Fishing Film Festival

The International Fly Fishing Film Festival®, or IF4, will be held in Sylva, NC at the Quin Theater on February 24, 2018 at 7 p.m. Tickets to the festival are \$15 and are available for purchase online (<https://www.showclix.com/event/if42018sylvanc>) and through the Tuckasegee Fly Shop in Sylva. Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the local trout in the classroom program. The JCTDA worked to distribute a press release to promote this event as it closely aligns with our brand and generating awareness for the WNC Fly Fishing Trail.

Conferences/Travel

To remind the board of upcoming networking and conferences on the Director's Calendar this fiscal year:

- Regional TDA Directors meeting, Jan. 23, Transylvania County
- Meeting with Pineapple PR, Atlanta, Jan. 25-26
- Meeting with Rawle Murdy, Charleston, Jan. 31-Feb. 2
- VisitNC365, Winston Salem, March 3-6
- STS Connections, Myrtle Beach, April 23-25
- STS Marketing College, Dahlonega, Ga., June 24-29

Other Director engagement:

- Attended two Cashiers Area Chamber Mountain Biking meetings, provided maps of potential properties to consider.
- Attended Jackson County Parks and Recreation meeting re: trails and development of countywide listing of trails
- Tour De Cashiers – spoke with S. Edwards and recommended other timing services/full event staffing for the race.
- Worked with Pineapple PR on a number of PR-related tasks for the Travel Channel, Travel and Leisure and upcoming media visits for the Outhouse Races.

2018-19 Budget

Work has begun on the 2018-19 budget and this will continue to be a focus until we pass the budget in May. As the draft budget continues to take shape, I will ask for the Executive Committee's to hold a budget session to review.

Winter STR performance

Positive growth - our STR data shows we are up 15.8 percent in hotel revenue (for properties that report) for the most recent 28-day period (Dec. 10 – Jan. 6) as compared with the prior year.