



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

To: Full TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Director *Nick*

Date: September 9, 2018

Subject: Updates for TDA Board Meeting

New Tourism Spend Numbers

We are thrilled to share that tourism spending in 2017 hit a record at \$195.44 million, which supported, sustained and employed 1,850 people. Tourist spending also generated \$9.08 million in local sales tax, which is returned to Jackson County's budget, saving each resident \$462.46 (or household \$718) in taxes per year. Put another way, if it was not for the robust tourism economy and tourist spending, each person or household's taxes would be that much more a year.

A revised Tourism Factsheet for 2018-19 has been created and is available to partners **here**.

July Occupancy Tax

The JCTDA set an all-time record for highest month in occupancy tax collections for the month of July 2018, with \$191,736 collected, which bests last year's collections by over \$10,000. The total increase for the fiscal year is 8.4-percent.

Grant Program Review

The Grant Program Review Committee met Aug. 29 and held a productive dialogue and will be formalizing its recommendations to the committee that reviews grant applications in the new future. We will set that meeting date at our September 19 Board meeting. We hope to have any changes made in time for the January application process.

Lodging meetings with YSI, Onboarding

Following our Aug. 15 board meeting I met with the Young Strategies team to go through an onboarding process to discuss every facet of our operations. I prepared binders for the team along with digital copies for their reference. We held two meetings in Sylva and Cashiers for the team to meet with accommodations to begin a dialogue about Visitor Profile Research. Many of

our board members had the opportunity to attend one of the meetings. At our Sylva meeting, lodging partners represented include: Balsam Mountain Inn, Best Western, Bear Lake Reserve, Dillsboro Inn, Woodland Inn, Smoky Mountain Getaways, Chalet Inn & Suites, Comfort Inn, Quality Inn, Microtel Inn, and Dillsboro Inn. In Cashiers, lodging partners included High Hampton Resort, Hampton Inn and Suites, Wyndham Fairfield Sapphire Valley, Laurelwood Mountain Inn, Innisfree, Landmark Vacation Rentals, Hattler Properties, Blue Green Vacations.

Visitor Center Digital Trip Planner

In line with our discussions Aug. 15 at the Executive Board meeting with Chamber Directors related to our Visitor Center study, the TDA purchased a smart television to display destination imagery within our Visitor Center. Following the approval from Executive, I purchased, installed and programmed the equipment that cycles through beautiful photos with descriptions of area attractions. The new pilot program in Sylva has been received very well by visitors to the center thus far. We plan a similar program in the Cashiers Visitor Center.

Enhanced SEO on Visitor Center pages

We have enhanced the SEO terms on our Visitor Center website pages to boost those centers visibility in search and drive more visitors to those centers.

Media

In the past few weeks we've been blessed to have many opportunities to work with media. I worked with Pineapple PR to prepare items for both the Raleigh and DC media mission including branded takeaways for media at both events. We recently hosted iExplore writer Corinne Edmiston on a sponsored content promotion and I had the opportunity to meet with her over lunch.

Over Labor Day, we had Julia Sayers from Birmingham Magazine in Cashiers. Next week (weather pending) we host VisitNC for a social media spotlight of Jackson County.

Citizens Academy - Oct. 25

In upcoming engagement, I will present to the Jackson County Citizen's Academy on October 25. Some former board members and community leaders are in the class, and I look forward to sharing our program of work with them.

Upcoming Professional Development

October 23-25 – Marketing Outlook Forum – Las Vegas, Nev.

November 12-16 – Destinations International CDME – Seattle, Wash.

Website Projects

We are continuing our work to optimize our website for visitors. In the past few months we've seen significant traffic to our site. All of our digital programs are working in concert to convert leads into in-destination visitors.

Letter of Support – Appalachian Women’s Museum

Appalachian Women’s Museum has requested we author a letter of support for a grant they are applying for. Normally this request would go to Executive, however with an executive meeting this month, I will request the full board’s consensus to issue that letter next week. There is no funding commitment attached to the letter of support.

New Video for Bass Fishing

While a large focus of our marketing is fly fishing, I recently worked with a local guide to create a bass fishing video for promotion of bass fishing within Jackson County. We partnered with local guide Austin Neary on the video, which I’ll share at our full board meeting. The video we produced ran on Instagram and Facebook as ads and garnered significant viewership at a low cost per action.

New Social Media Campaign

During the past few weeks, we have been working on a new video series for social media. This includes scenes in both Sylva and Cashiers and will debut soon. I’ve seen an early draft and I know the board will be pleased with the finished product.

Hurricane Lodging

My office has been working closely with VisitNC and lodging partners to place hurricane evacuees the week of September 10. We have a great process in place we setup after Hurricane Irma last year allowing lodging partners to update their availability with us, which then, in turn, we pass along to the state.