



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

November 7, 2018 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.

Cordelia Camp Building, Room 143, WCU

Cullowhee, NC 28723

Call to order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Chairman Vick Patel; Vice Chair Kathy Korb; Board Members Bob Williams, Megan Orr, Dale Collins, Tom Garcia, Andrew Harlfinger, Ann Self; Finance Officer Darlene Fox
- **Members absent:** Secretary Laura Bowers; Stephanie Edwards, Julie Spiro, Ron Mau
- **Others in attendance:** Rawle Murdy representatives Jeff Webster, Ali Holiday, Lauren Creel, and John Kautz; Pineapple PR representatives Deborah Stone and Haley Barton; YSI representative Berkley Young; Robert Jumper, former Chairman; Debbie Coffey, Minutes Clerk

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Bob Williams moved to approve the agenda; Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment – none

Recognize Vice-Chairman

Mrs. Korb had no comments at this time.

Review and Approval of September Minutes

Minutes of the September 19, 2018, TDA meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the September 19, 2018, minutes. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of September and October Financial Reports

The September financial report was presented by Darlene Fox. Highlights for September include Occupancy Tax collections of \$152,337, penalties of \$313.37, and YTD collection totals of \$479,836.75, which is 43.14% of the budget. Collections were up 2.66% from the same period in 2017, and up 7.02% for the fiscal year. Airbnb collections totaled \$10,232.66. 177 accounts reported rentals for August. The September 30th cash balance was \$225,538.89 with investments totaling \$400,000. September expenses were \$35,673.21 with YTD expenses totaling \$256,907.18. Encumbrances of \$6,962.37 make a combined total of \$263,869.55, equaling 22.11% of the budget.

The October financial report was presented by Darlene Fox. Highlights for October include Occupancy Tax collections of \$111,239.78, penalties of \$217.13, and YTD collection totals of \$450,629.47, which is 40.51% of the budget. Collections were up 18.28% from the same period in 2017, and up 8.90% for the fiscal year. Airbnb collections totaled \$10,075.28. 169 accounts reported rentals for September. The October 31st cash balance was \$170,067.07 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. October expenses were \$163,011.60 with YTD expenses totaling \$419,918.78. Encumbrances of \$8,634.55 make a combined total of \$428,553.335, equaling 35.91% of the budget.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the financial report as presented. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. Motion carried.

Director's Reports

Jackson County Chamber Director's Report: In Ms. Spiro's absence, Mr. Breedlove noted the following highlights from the written report provided prior to the meeting.

- The September report included the following numbers: 1,745 direct inquiries fulfilled; 1,604 Visitor Guides mailed; 375 Fly Fishing Maps delivered to Welcome Centers; 54 direct fishing inquiries fielded; 2,017 visitors served at the Dillsboro and Sylva Visitor Centers; and 289 phone inquiries.
- The October report numbers were: 1,382 direct inquiries fulfilled; 2,112 Visitor Guides mailed to Welcome Centers; 705 Fly Fishing Maps delivered to Outfitters; 74 direct fishing inquiries fielded; 2,637 visitors served at the Dillsboro and Sylva Visitor Centers; and 303 phone inquiries.
- The Chamber set up a booth at Mountain Heritage Day, which included over 800 interactions and \$754 in merchandise sales.
- A popcorn machine has been purchased to provide popcorn for visitors as well as having Nantahala Brewing set up on the lawn of the Visitor Center.

Cashiers Area Chamber: A written report was provided prior to the meeting. Highlights include:

- The Annual Cashiers Leaf Festival was held October 5 – 7 and was very successful despite colors not being at their peak.
- The Village Green Mr. and Mrs. Clause festivities will be Thanksgiving weekend, with a traditional tree lighting on November 23rd.
- The 44th Annual Cashiers Christmas Parade will be held on December 8th.
- The Chamber, along with Balsam West and JCTDA, is working to facilitate a community Wi-Fi network in the new Arts and Culture facility.
- "Make Memories" choose and cut campaign is underway encouraging JCTDA website visitors to visit a local Fraser Fir Tree Farm this holiday season.

Project updates:

- A draft Community Development Plan was discussed by the Cashiers Planning Council that includes enhancements which will benefit the tourism industry.
- Workforce Development initiatives were discussed with the Jackson County School Board and included ideas for soft-skills training in K-8 schools.
- Drone video footage of the Shadow of the Bear was captured for marketing use, and stakeholder discussion continues for the proposed overlook.
- Mr. Garcia updated the board with closure information on High Hampton Resort for the 2019 season during the renovation process. This could have a short-term impact on occupancy tax for the next fiscal year.

Executive Director: Mr. Breedlove provided the board with a written report prior to the meeting which included the following highlights:

- The Visitor Survey is live with a slow roll-out to capture residents, part-time residents, and visitors and destination travelers. A second survey will be out to accommodations managers to provide insight from that perspective into the research.
- Due to the growth of the director's duties, the workload to support an employee position is available and Executive has agreed to move forward with the process to hire an additional employee.
- Mr. Breedlove attended the TTRA Marketing Outlook Forum in Las Vegas, speaking at the Emerging Leaders Luncheon. It was noted that tourism is in the 111th month of a growth trend that is expected to cap around 120 months.
- Mr. Breedlove will attend the Destinations International Fall Learning CDME Week in Seattle next week.
- The Board has requested that Tom Garcia and Ann Self be appointed to another three-year term, and that Mrs. Self be appointed as chairman.
- Water quality and fly-fishing concerns were addressed with officials from NC Departments of Wildlife and Environmental Quality, Duke Energy, and local stakeholders to make sure accurate information was available. All issues appear to have been resolved.

- Website updates and improvements continue to be made and includes a listing of all 2019 events.
- Mr. Breedlove is working with event coordinators to expand the Valley of the Lilies Race into a destination race rather than a local event.
- It was the consensus of the Board to fund a popcorn machine at the Jackson County Chamber and Visitor Center and water service for visitors at both Visitor Centers at a cost of approximately \$700 annually.

Employee Position Request (Ann Self)

Mrs. Self presented the need to create an employee position to allow the Director adequate time to address his duties, and to meet the demands of the growing tourism industry in Jackson County. The position would be a minimum of part-time, but more likely full-time, geared toward marketing and sales.

MOTION: *The Executive Committee moved to create a staff position for the TDA. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried. The board will work with the county on next steps as Commissioner approval is required.*

Grant Program Changes (Ann Self):

The Grant Program Review Committee provided a written outline of the proposed Grant Program changes prior to the meeting.

MOTION: *The Grant Committee moved to amend the proposed grant program changes to include a conflict of interest statement. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.*

Regional Marketing – Nick Breedlove / RM & Partners

Mr. Breedlove is working with Rawle Murdy and other partners to develop a policy on Regional Marketing. This would leverage identified strengths in Jackson County such as location, brand, and affordable lodging to expand visitor experiences with unique regional attractions such as Biltmore, NC Arboretum, Brevard Music Center, and others that do not overlap our county's offerings. Additional information will be provided in December.

Rawle Murdy Updates to Board

A written update for September and October were provided before the meeting. Highlights of the report were provided by the Rawle Murdy representatives in attendance. Analytics show month over month improvements for 2018 as compared to 2017 in most months from January to October. Jeff Webster explained that goal completions of website sessions are measured by three factors: newsletters signups, visitor guide requests, and visitor guild downloads. Website improvements are continuous to better capture these leads, such as making the site more mobile friendly, adding user-generated content, and adding several new pages to the website. A live dashboard has been developed to gauge the effectiveness of the website content and allow the content to be better leveraged.

Pineapple PR Updates to Board

Written updates for September and October were provided before the meeting. Pineapple PR representatives in attendance reported this year Jackson County has received over \$9 million in editorial earned media value and has reached over 148 million potential viewers to date. The focus has been on quality as well as quantity media views and increased blog posts geared toward targeted markets.

YSI Updates to Board

Mr. Young provide an update of the development of the Tourism Master Plan, noting that the survey rollout was on schedule for two months into the projected seven-month completion target.

New Business:

Mr. Breedlove recognized Chairman Vick Patel with a plaque honoring his service as Chairman.

Announcements/Adjournment

Bob Williams announced that Dillsboro Chocolate Factory has secured a second location in Waynesville and will display Jackson County brochures and Visitor Guides there. Dale Collins noted that Duke Energy would have several more water releases in the coming weeks. This should not cause any disruptions to fishing.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to adjourn.* The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Next Meeting

The December 12, 2018, TDA Full Board Meeting will be at 1:00 pm in the WCU Cordelia Camp Building, Room 143, WCU, Cullowhee, NC.

Kathy Korb, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: December 12, 2018