



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

To: TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Director *Nick*

Date: February 14, 2019

Subject: Updates for TDA Board

Visitor Guide and Maps

The 2019-20 Visitor Guide has been finalized and has been sent to the press ahead of schedule. We should receive it around the first week of March to get into the hands of visitors. Both Visitor Centers will have refreshed stock delivered to them, along with our Kiosks around Western North Carolina and in the Asheville Regional Airport.

The regional attractions strategy we approved at our December meeting is in this year's Visitor Guide in map and guide form. We are proud of the map Rawle Murdy developed for us to showcase all there is to do in the region.

The WNC Fly Fishing Trail® Map has been updated for 2019 and is also in reprint; I worked with Julie on updated content, photos and promotion of the Hook, Line & Drinker event on the map along with WNC Fly Fishing Trail® merchandise. We are delighted with the new design and should receive it within a week or so.

In other map-related news, and in conjunction with Executive / Marketing, we are going to work with the Town of Dillsboro and the Dillsboro Merchants Association on handling the production and printing of their map going forward. As we produce and print maps for Cashiers and Sylva, it is appropriate also to do the same for Dillsboro. I held an initial meeting with the stakeholders in January, and we expect to reprint their map for visitors in March.

Visitor Research & Strategic Planning

Responses to the Visitor and Resident Survey are now final, and we have gathered over 3,800.

The Accommodations Survey is now complete as well, with over 80-percent participation rate, which is above the threshold we needed and considered excellent.

The DestinationNEXT Survey has been deployed and will collect responses until Monday, Feb. 18; to-date over 130 have responded to that survey, which is intended for key stakeholders along with community and business leaders. We sent the survey to a list of approximately 400, and the completion/response rate we received is outstanding.

Young Strategies late last week deployed the Image Awareness Survey to our key markets to survey the travel preferences of people who visit mountain destinations and see whether they are familiar with our destination, brand, and gauge what inspires their visits. We will share this data with our marketing and PR firms to better target our potential visitors.

Grant Workshop

We had four people attend our first grant workshop for the July 1 – Dec. 31 grant cycle. I spent substantial time and resources compiling a media kit for grant applicants that will serve them well in media purchases to advertise their event. The media kit was requested by the Grant Committee to assist festival planners with determining the most appropriate publications and media outlets to share their event; it was very well received.

Reminder

Our March and April meetings will last from approximately 1 to 4 p.m. Please make every effort to attend as these are two crucial meetings for our organization. YSI will present research at the March meeting and in April, the board will begin its strategic plan. Light refreshments will be served at each meeting. These meetings and others this year will be at Holt Library at SCC.

Committee Work

Our committees will be very active committees this year and tasked with a number of work items. Current meeting dates include:

Grant Committee to Review Grant Applications - March 6, 2:15-3:45 p.m.

Marketing Committee meeting to review planning Brief - March 11, 2019 11:30am - 1:30pm

Marketing Committee meeting to review draft Plan - May 8, 2019 2:00 - 3:30 pm

We are making good progress with an outline of our **Crisis Communication Plan** and the JCTDA Intern, Caleb Sullivan, is making significant progress on that document. I have asked the Crisis Plan Committee to set a date to review the outline and provide guidance on the draft. We have also met with Jackson County emergency management to ensure our plan aligns with theirs.

I have provided a sample **Fund Reserve Policy** to the Governance committee, and Laura Bowers is working on a sample policy for the board to consider at a future date.

Community Stakeholder e-newsletter

In January I sent out our Tourism Partner Connect e-news to a list of 500 stakeholders to keep them apprised of the JCTDA's activities. A copy of that e-news is located at **this link**. I received several e-mails from people it was forwarded to asking to be subscribed to future issues, which is a positive indication of its value in sharing the work we do.

PR

- In PR-related efforts, I sent out our NC Beer Month Partner Request to assist with gathering information for April offerings by breweries and lodging partners.
- I worked with VisitNC to compile an itinerary for an Italian journalist to visit Sylva to do a story on Three Billboards. As I will be out of town March 31 for the VisitNC conference, Julie and our town manager are giving them a tour.

CDME Courses

I completed the Strategic Issues in Destination Management and Social Media courses this week in Washington, D.C. This leaves only one remaining course in the Certified Destination Management Executive certification, which is the highest certification available in the tourism industry. I will take those courses April 9-12. Our membership in Destinations International has proven invaluable in both networking and professional development and I look forward to more opportunities to work with them.

County Annual Report

I met with the County Manager Intern in January to provide them with tourism information for the County's new annual report. We are very appreciative to have the JCTDA's tourism impact and efforts shared with the County's citizens. I have also created a 'Tourism Impact' page with much of the same information on our JCTDA website.

Brand Leadership

We encountered a marketing firm from a neighboring county attempting to market a confusingly similar product similar to ours and sell it to area merchants. The visitor guide they produce only serves to confuse the visitor as to which guide is the official publication. We met with legal, conferred with Executive and also worked with Pineapple and both Chambers to let our partners know that the Chambers materials and our printed guides are the only official products of Jackson County to visitors and we would not distribute any other materials. It is crucial we vigorously protect the brand and intellectual property that we have invested millions in to-date to ensure it is not diluted or confused by competing publications or offerings.

Research-based Marcomm

We have delayed our regular annual planning meetings with Rawle Murdy and Pineapple related to our Marketing and Communication plan (Marcomm) until we hear findings from our Visitor research. This Friday, Feb. 15, I will be in Charleston to go over initial findings with both agencies and YSI which will profoundly influence our plans and align them with research, which will yield a higher return on investment with the work we do this coming year.

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Upcoming Networking

Presenting to VisitNC and NC Travel Guide publisher to pitch JC Co. offerings for 2020 – Feb 11

Presenting to Leadership Cashiers on March 5

Presenting to WNC Press Pass Conference March 6

Feb. 15 – Meeting with YSI and RM/Pineapple to discuss initial research findings, Charleston

Feb. 27 – Pineapple Planning Meeting for FY 19-20, Atlanta

March 18-21 – Southeast Tourism Society Conference, Daytona Beach, Fla.

Next BOD Meeting: March 13, 1 to 4 p.m. at Southwestern Community College, Holt Library