



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

November 13, 2019 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.

Holt Library Conference Room 112, SCC

447 College Drive, Sylva, NC 28779

Call to Order/Roll Call

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

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Ann Self, Chair; Kathy Korb, Secretary; Board Members Bob Williams (arriving after roll call), Megan Orr, Dale Collins, Brad Herman (arriving after roll call), Andrew Harlfinger (arriving after roll call), Jay Grissom, Ron Mau, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Eli Ramirez
- **Others in attendance:** Heather Baker, County Attorney; Debbie Coffey, Minutes Clerk

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the agenda. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Vice-Chairman and Secretary

No comments were offered at this time.

Review and Approval of September Minutes

Minutes of the September 18, 2019 TDA meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the September 18, 2019, minutes. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Review and Approval September and October Financial Report

Darlene Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for September include Occupancy Tax collections of \$133,034.86, penalties of \$137.16, and YTD collection totals of \$421,353.13, which is 42.15% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$17,464.32. 196 accounts reported rentals for August. Collections were down 12.76% from the same period in 2018, with a decrease of 13.90% for the fiscal year. The September 30th cash balance was \$120,200.26 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. September expenses were \$186,870.34 with YTD expenses totaling \$327,870.76. Encumbrances of \$9,985.40 make a combined total of \$337,856.16, equaling 28.07% of the budget.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the September financial report as presented. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Highlights for October include Occupancy Tax collections of \$128,241.50, penalties of \$2,670.97, and YTD collection totals of \$549,594.63, which is 54.98% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$18,018.26. 175 accounts reported rentals for September. Collections were up 22.53% from the same period in 2018, with a decrease of 6.25% for the fiscal year. The October 31st cash balance was \$149,562.19 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. October expenses were \$101,670.60 with YTD expenses totaling \$429,541.36. Encumbrances of \$8,522.38 make a combined total of \$438,063.74, equaling 41.73% of the budget.

MOTION: Kathy Korb moved to approve the October financial report as presented. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.

Audit Results

A copy of the fiscal year 2018-2019 Audit was provided for review prior to the meeting. The report was an unmodified opinion with total fund balance of \$541,937.00, with 34% available for expenditures at year end. The total net position increased by \$6,129.00.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the FY 2018-2019 Audit as presented. Brad Herman seconded. Motion carried.

Executive Director Contract

A copy of the Executive Director Contract was provided prior to the meeting for review. The contract will be effective as September 1, 2019 and will continue through August 31, 2022, unless terminated under provisions of the contract. The compensation structure of the contract was approved by this board at the August meeting.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the Employment Contract as presented. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Fund Balance Reserve Policy

A copy of the Fund Balance Reserve Policy was provided prior to the meeting for review. This policy was created to avoid cash flow interruptions, to provide funding for unanticipated, non-recurring significant expenses that could not be absorbed with annual revenues and cannot be avoided, and to allow for sustained operations during unanticipated emergencies.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the Fund Balance Reserve Policy. Brad Herman seconded. Motion carried.

HR Policy Revision

A copy of the HR policy revision was provided prior to the meeting for review. This revision will allow for non-exempt employees to accrue compensatory time in leu of pay for hours over the standard 40-hour week.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the HR policy revision. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Crisis Plan Final Draft

A copy of the Crisis Plan final draft was provided prior to the meeting for review. Mr. Breedlove expressed his appreciation to Caleb Sullivan, Andrew Harlfinger, Bob Williams, and Jay Grissom for their work on the plan. The plan has been reviewed and approved by Jackson County Emergency Management Director Todd Dillard and feedback has been received from many sources. The plan will be presented for adoption in December.

Strategic Plan Committees

A copy of the proposed committees was provided prior to the meeting for review. The Executive Board recommends establishing or restructuring the following committees:

1. Community and Visitor Engagement Committee
2. Product and Experience Development Committee
3. Sustainability and Stewardship Committee
4. Grant Program Committee
5. Crisis Management Team

All committee meetings will be considered public meetings and advertised as such. Each committee will be a working committee with five to eight members and will hold two to three meeting each year. Recommendations from the committees will be submitted to the TDA Full Board for approval.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the committee structure as outline in the draft. Bob Williams seconded. Motion carried.

Consensus to Repurpose Grant Line Item Funding

Mr. Breedlove outlined repurposing \$10,000 in grant funding to focus on off-season visitation for the remainder of this fiscal year. He proposed using \$3,000 for Smith Travel reports to provide analytics on the impact to Sunday night and mid-week stays. \$7,000 would be used for social media advertising campaign that would target mid-week and unsold weekends from December to March.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to approve the change in grant funding. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.*

Directors' Report

Jackson County Chamber: Highlights of the Jackson County Chamber report that was emailed prior to the meeting include:

- By-the-numbers: 2,713 Visitors were served at our Dillsboro and Sylva Visitor Centers; 357 Visitor Guides were distributed to Welcome Centers; 1,071 Direct inquiries were fulfilled; 264 Phone inquiries were fulfilled; and 1,150 Fly Fishing Maps were disbursed to select outfitters.
- October retail sales for Mountain Heritage Day and the Sylva Sidewalk Sale were \$675, with hundreds of Visitor Guides, Fishing Maps, Dining Guides and Ale Trail Maps handed out during these events.
- An area in the Visitor's Center has been designated for the Wedding Guide and includes information on local vendors and has proven to be very popular with guests.
- The Kris Kringle Mingle is a new event to be held on Thursday, December 5th with a Dillsboro focus. It will include a tree lighting, light refreshments, and a tour of the refurbished "Santa's Parlor" with Santa and friends available for pictures.

Cashiers Area Chamber: Highlights of the Cashiers Area Chamber report that was emailed prior to the meeting include:

- The annual Cashiers Valley Leaf Festive was held October 11 -13. The event was very popular and has been named on the Top 20 Events in the Southeastern US.
- Discussion continues for the Cashiers to Highlands trail project.
- Construction of the Village Green Arts and Cultural building is nearing completion and the grand opening is being highly anticipated to provide a year-round facility for public and private group events.
- The Clean and Green anti-litter campaign was very successful with volunteers focusing on popular visitor destinations including Panthertown Valley and Lonesome Valley.
- The Retail Roundtable has purchased 1,500 daffodil bulbs that will be planted around the village to create a visual statement of hospitality and welcome to Spring visitors.
- Old Edwards Hospitality Group is developing the former "Burt Farm" as a 175 plus acre development with an emphasis on an active and healthful lifestyle.
- Applications are being accepted for the 2020 Leadership Cashiers class slated to begin in February.
- Upcoming November events Gobble on the Green 5K Run/Walk on the 28th and the Christmas Tree Lighting with Santa and Mrs. Claus on the Village Green on the 29th.

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

- September collections were up significantly over last year, helping close the fiscal year budget shortfall due to the HHR closure. This increase is likely due to a more strategic marketing and communication plan and the very pleasant weather we experienced.
- VRBO has begun collecting and remitting tax on behalf of its property owners through the NC DOR, who will then remit collections to the county. It will take some time to see the effect this will have on collections and the number of non-reporting owners. It may take several months to study trends related to this change.
- Video footage was captured at the WNC Pottery Festival to help create more engaging content to encourage visitation during the need periods. Additional video capture will take place during Dillsboro's Lights and Luminaires and winter hike scenery for use in winter campaigns on social media.

- New website features that have been launched include: Accessible Jackson, the Motorcycle Guide, and a full featured Wedding Guide. Lead Capture has been expanded to collect information on requests for the Ale Trail Guide and the WNC Fly Fishing Trail Map that are requested in addition to the Visitor's Guides. These requests will be fulfilled by the TDA office.
- Soon to be launched features include the Interactive map project which showcases all attractions, lodging, restaurants, and other draws in the county. A Sustainability and Stewardship page is being developed as well as chatbot feature.
- New print products include an updated Dillsboro map for GSMR passengers, the initial Ale Trail Map, and the revised Hiking and Waterfall Map.
- Sustainability projects include stocking the Visitor Centers with JCTDA branded recycled paper bags and an inaugural donation of \$500 to the "Keep our Mountains Clean and Green" litter initiative.

Announcements/Adjournment

Mr. Breedlove presented Bob Williams with a plaque in appreciation for his service on the TDA Board. Mr. Williams shared two chocolate creations from the Dillsboro Chocolate Factory with the board that were entered in the Taste of North Carolina competition sponsored by *Our State Magazine*.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to adjourn. Jay Grissom seconded. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Next Meeting

The Wednesday, December 18, 2019, TDA Full Board Meeting will be at 1:00 pm in the Burrell Building, Room 102A, Southwestern Community College, 447 College Drive, Sylva, NC 28779.

Kathy Korb, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: December 18, 2019