



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

December 18, 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/Staff in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Chair Ann Self; Board Members Megan Orr, Dale Collins, Brad Herman, Andrew Harlfinger, Jay Grissom, Robert Jumper, Anna Thomas, Ron Mau, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards, Caleb Sullivan
- **Members absent:** Kathy Korb, Secretary
- **Others in attendance:** Commissioner Gayle Woody; Pineapple PR representatives Deborah Stone, Brianna Reid, and Melissa Webb; Rawle Murdy representatives Laurie Devore and Estelle Lampela; EDPNC/VisitNC Interim Marketing Director Guy Gaster; Minutes Clerks Debbie Coffey and Cheryl Osborne

Introduction of New Members:

Chair Self introduced Anna Thomas and Robert Jumper as new members to the TDA Board. Ms. Thomas is the general manager for the Comfort Inn of Sylva and Mr. Jumper was a founding member of the Jackson County TDA and has served two previous terms on the board.

Special Presentation

Guy Gaster works primarily with the film industry and is responsible for bring Three Billboards to Jackson County. Mr. Gaster provided a brief overview of VisitNC. He noted that tourism impacts all other sectors of the economy in North Carolina, and that partnerships with local and regional tourism development offices are key to marketing travel in our state. In 2018 VisitNC had 172 county and local partners in co-op programs, allowing the ad budget to be tripled. North Carolina ranks as the sixth most visited state in the US, but 27th in terms of budget spending. Visitor spending in 2018 was recorded as \$25.3 billion dollars, with Jackson County's share being nearly 206 million dollars. Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Pennsylvania have the highest number of visitors to our state. Following the overview of Visit NC, Mr. Gaster presented the board with a poster size copy of the VisitNC travel guide cover, which features Jackson County and the Jackson County Fly Fishing Trail®.

Approval of Agenda

A copy of the Agenda was provided prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the agenda. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Appoint Vice Chair, Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

Robert Jumper was named to serve as Vice Chair. He had no comments at this time.

Review and Approval of November Minutes

Minutes of the November 13, 2019 TDA meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Andrew Harlfinger moved to approve the November 13, 2019, minutes. Robert Jumper seconded. Motion carried.

Review and Approval November Financial Report

Mrs. Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for November include Occupancy Tax collections of \$129,236.84, penalties of \$31.50, and YTD collection totals of \$556,504, which is 55.67% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$15,952.43. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$4,148.76. 167 accounts reported rentals for October. Collections were up 1.51% from the same period in 2018, with a decrease of 4.78% for the fiscal year. The November 30th cash balance was \$205,905.72 with investments totaling \$400,000. November expenses were \$73,995.55 with YTD expenses totaling \$503,536.91. Encumbrances of \$7,672.38 make a combined total of \$511,209.29, equaling 42.47% of the budget.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to approve the financial report as presented. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. Motion carried.*

Approve 2020 Meeting Schedule

A copy of the 2020 Jackson County TDA Meeting Schedule was presented prior to the meeting for review. Chair Self encouraged board members to make meeting attendance a priority as attendance is critical for an engaged board.

MOTION: *Dale Collins moved to approve the 2020 Meeting Schedule. Jay Grissom seconded. Motion carried.*

Crisis Plan Adoption

A copy of the final draft of the Crisis Plan was provided prior to the meeting for review. Dale Collins expressed appreciation to all the committee members and to Caleb Sullivan for their work on the plan.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to adopt the Crisis Plan as presented. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. Motion carried.*

Strategic Plan Committees Creation

An outline of committees outlined was provided prior to the meeting. The committees include Community and Visitor Engagement, Product and Experience Development, Sustainability and Stewardship, and Grant Program Review. Each committee will be made up of six to eight members and will strengthen and support the work of the board as a whole. Applications for the newly recommended committees should be submitted to the Executive Director by January 6th.

Directors' Report

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

- By-the-numbers: 1,596 Visitors were served at our Dillsboro and Sylva Visitor Centers; 931 direct inquiries were fulfilled; 181 Phone inquiries were fulfilled.
- Participating in the Winter Market held in Sylva was successful with several dining guides and Ale Trail maps being distributed. We will also participate during one of the December Farmers Market events for additional exposure.
- The Chamber hosted the inaugural Kris Kringle Mingle in Dillsboro on Dec. 5th. The event was well attended and will be reworked for next year to become an annual event for Dillsboro in addition to the Lights and Luminaires Festival.
- A new women's event will be announced soon, along with updates to the Hook, Line, and Drinker Festival.

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

- The 45th annual Cashiers Christmas Parade held on December 14th was a huge success. The event was live streamed on www.wnclive.com and is posted on YouTube for viewing.
- Development of a Cashiers to Highlands Trail is still being discussed. The Chamber is hosting a meeting in January to bring several originations to the table to keep moving forward with the project.

- The Jackson County Commissioners held their December 12th meeting at the Cashiers-Glenville Recreation Center which included an update on expansion of that facility.
- The 2nd Annual Gobble on the Green 5K was held on Thanksgiving morning and had nearly 600 participants. The Village Lights and Cashiers Tree lighting was held on November 29th and included several retailers extending hours for holiday shopping.
- New members of the Chamber Board of Directors were installed at the November meeting.
- The kiosks have been cleaned and restocked for holiday traffic.

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

- November financial reports show a 1.51% increase over November 2018 (based on October stays) which is a positive marker with High Hampton Resort closed.
- The new lodging specials are available online and should add to growth of Winter Season Travel. The link has had more than 475 views so far.
- Jackson County branded Eno Hammocks are now available and will be used in future social media campaigns.
- 2019 accomplishments include two capital improvement projects at the Visitor Centers, expanding the staff to include a second employee and development of an HR Policy, and completion of the Visitor Profile Research, DNEXT and Strategic Plan.
- Four new video projects were completed in 2019, including Dillsboro's Lights and Luminaires, for future marketing purposes.
- New visitor publications produced in 2019 include maps for Sylva, Cashiers, and Dillsboro, Motorcycle Guide, Wedding Guide, and Accessibility Guide for the county.
- Website and media improvements include implementation of new Voice Automation, Virtual Reality, and Artificial Intelligence. Mr. Breedlove provided an Alexa demonstration with embedded Jackson County facts and visitor information.

Announcements/Adjournment

Chair Self noted that the new Village Green Community Center is almost complete and should be online in the next month.

MOTION: *Robert Jumper moved to adjourn. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Next Meeting

The Wednesday, January 15, 2020, TDA Full Board Meeting will be at 1:00 pm in the Holt Library Conference Room 112, Southwestern Community College, 447 College Drive, Sylva, NC 28779.

Kathy Korb, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: January 15, 2019