



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting May 20, 2020 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m. Zoom Conference Meeting

Zoom Meeting Etiquette/Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Ann Self explained to mute your audio until you speak.

- **Members in attendance:** Ann Self, Chair; Kathy Korb, Secretary; Robert Jumper, Vice Chair; Board Members Dale Collins, Brad Herman, Andrew Harlfinger, Anna Thomas, Ron Mau, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards.
- **Members absent:** Megan Orr and Jay Grissom
- **Others in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove, Sales and Marketing Manager Caleb Sullivan; John Kautz, Lindsey Lubanski, Olivia Francese, Laurie Devore, Rawle Murdy; Deborah Stone, Melissa Webb, Brianna Reid, Pineapple PR; Rich Price, Director, Jackson County Economic Development; Dan Brown, Crossroads Chronical; and Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: *Kathy Korb moved to approve the agenda. Robert Jumper seconded. Motion carried.*

Public Comment: None

Recognize Vice Chair and Secretary

Mr. Jumper, Vice Chair, expressed his belief that the Executive Meeting went very well and that he looks forward to sharing the results with the Board.

Ms. Korb, Secretary, did not have anything to report.

Review and Approval of March Minutes

Minutes of the April 15, 2020. Minutes of the April Meeting sent via email prior to meeting.

MOTION: *Robert Jumper moved to approve the April 15, 2020 minutes. Kathy Korb seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval March 2020 Financial Reports

Ms. Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for April include Occupancy Tax collections of \$34,385.91, penalties of \$18.78, and YTD collection totals of \$874,648.61, which is 102.95% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$436.04. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$5,940.45. 59 accounts reported rentals for March (decrease of 56 accounts from last year). Collections were down 46.66% from the same period in 2019. The total decrease for the fiscal year is 3.67%. The April 30, 2020 cash balance was \$128,940.82 with investments totaling \$400,000. April expenses were \$46,054.79 with YTD expenses totaling \$901,895.12 with encumbrances of \$14,521.21 for a combined total of \$916,416.33, equaling 88.71% of the budget.

MOTION: Brad Herman moved to approve the April financial reports as presented. Dale Collins seconded. The motion carried.

Proposed Budget for FY 20-21

Mr. Breedlove and Ms. Fox reviewed the highlights of the proposed budget details which were included in the emailed agenda for this meeting as follows:

- Based on revenue for coming year the total proposed budget is \$868,362 which is down from last year's budget of \$1.2 million due to a decrease in occupancy tax.
- The TDA did not have to utilize significant fund balance reserves to continue operations when a fraction of Occupancy Tax collections are coming in. This allows us to begin FY 20-21 in a stronger fund position.
- Agency contracts with our PR and Advertising firms have been renegotiated to include reduced management fees and hours and ensure maximum dollars in our marketing and communication campaigns. Some duties have been shifted to JCTDA staff to maximize available advertising dollars. This includes blog creation and e-mail copywriting.
- Travel has been significantly reduced for staff educational offerings this fiscal year due to a restrictive budget.
- A 3-percent increase in rent for Visitor Center space at the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Cashiers Area Chamber is included. Both Chamber contracts are fully funded this year and include an additional \$500/Chamber in Personal Protective Equipment funding.
- Staff salaries: The Executive Director is waving the planned incentive program in his contract for this fiscal year; the compensation schedule for the Director will be as detailed in their contract. A 2-percent increase is included for the Sales & Marketing Manager.
- Two Visitor Guide printings are included in FY 20-21 budget. Two printings are a result of a smaller printing in April 2020 of 15,000 copies, recognizing that many items in the Visitor Guide may change, and it is best to do a larger, revised printing later in August/September. We plan to resume the annual printing as normally scheduled the following spring.
- COVID-19 goals have been included in addition to Annual Goals.

Schedule Public Hearing – FY 20-21 Budget

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to schedule the public hearing on June 17, 2020. Kathy Korb seconded. The motion carried.

Pineapple PR FY 20-21 Plan

Deborah Stone introduced Melissa Webb and Brianna Reid who made the presentation of Pineapple Public Relations with highlights of their performance in FY 19-20 such as coverage of Jackson County attractions in national publications and FAM trips.

The marketing plan for FY 20-21 is divided not three phases in these post COVID-19 times. The first phase will focus on local and in-state audiences who have a short drive to Jackson County to feel safe and comfortable with familiar brands and locations. Phase two will occur when travelers are more comfortable with travel and venture further so states nearby, such as Florida, will be marketed. Phase three will focus on longer drive states and possibly flights as restrictions are lifted.

The marketing focus will be Jackson County as being a safe, clean, and healthy travel destination by focusing on outdoor adventures, wide open spaces, and small-town vibe.

Rawle Murdy FY 20-21 Plan

John Kautz gave a presentation of Rawle Murdy's phased reopening plan for FY 20-21. Highlights of this plan include creative messaging, paid social media exceeded goals by 49%, paid advertising saw an almost 20% increase in goal completions.

John Kautz then introduced Lindsey Lubanski who presented the Rawle Murdy FY 20-21 strategic marketing plan. Highlights of the plan include emphasis on wide open spaces and small group activities. The paid media program can be turned on, off and up without penalty as conditions warrant.

Olivia Francese and Laurie Devore presented a breakdown of the four-phase marketing program and media plan highlights. John Kautz explained the FY 20-21 budget differences from FY 19-20.

Approve FY 20-21 Contracts

Copies of each contract were emailed attached to the agenda for this meeting. Major changes are summarized below.

- Rawle Murdy – This is an annual standing contract that has been reduced to \$290K from approximately \$500K from last year. It also makes a provision for a digital signature.
***Motion:** Robert Jumper motioned to approve the Rawle Murdy contract. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.*
- Pineapple PR – The contract is the same as last year except Exhibit A has been altered to remove the FAM trip.
***Motion:** Dale Collins motioned to approve the Pineapple PR contract. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.*
- Smoky Mountain News – For the production of our annual Visitors Guide. The Contract is standard.
***Motion:** Robert Jumper motioned to approve the Smoky Mountain News contract. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.*
- Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement – This contract is the same as last year, except rent is increased 3-percent and \$500 has been added for personal protective equipment needed due to COVID-19.
***Motion:** Kathy Korb motioned to approve the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement. Robert Jumper seconded. Motion carried.*
- Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement – Increased the Visitors Center rent by 3-percent for Sylva's Visitor Center and \$500.00 has been added for personal protective equipment needed due to COVID-19.
***Motion:** Dale Collins motioned to approve the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement. Anna Thomas seconded. Motion carried.*

JCTDA Staff Report

Executive Director: Mr. Breedlove provided the board with a written report listing all the activities of the previous month prior to the meeting via email and presented the following updates that were not included in the report:

- The TDA received the "go ahead" from Jackson County to apply for the EDA Cares funding and we are asking for \$140,000.

- The TDA is updating our internet Home page to reflect the post COVID-19 phased reopening of tourism in Jackson County.
- Destinations International webinar showed that there is an upward trend in organic traffic to DMO websites, which is a positive indicator that people are beginning to be interested in travel.
- Mr. Breedlove showed a series of slides regarding the positive trends and indicators of post COVID-19 recovery and reopening of the economy.

Directors' Reports

Jackson County Chamber: Highlights of the Jackson County Chamber report, which was emailed prior to the meeting, was supplemented by Ms. Spiro as follows:

- The Chamber is trying to get relevant information about the current plans from the Chamber partners.
- A Facebook Shopping page for the Sylva Visitor Center has been instituted.
- The Chamber is partnering with the Cashiers Area Chamber to install Kleenstations (hand sanitizer) in local restaurants.
- More kiosks have been added in Northern Jackson and Sylva.
- The Chamber will be at the Dillsboro Farmers Market on Wednesdays and select Saturdays in Sylva.
- Concerts on the Creek has been cancelled for the next two weeks and the performer for the first concert will be rescheduled for August 22, which is Brew Hop Day in Sylva.

Cashiers Area Chamber: Highlights of the Cashiers Area Chamber report, which was emailed prior to the meeting was supplemented by Ms. Edwards:

- The Chamber has been responding to public inquiries and has added a new staff member, Thomas Taulbee.
- Seasonal workforce hiring in Cashiers seems to be challenging this year. The Chamber sent out a survey and is getting back feedback to verify this information.
- The Chamber is working with the Economic Development Fund to obtain funds for small businesses in Jackson County.
- Ms. Edwards described the situation with the placement of hand sanitizer stations in Jackson County.
- Tour de Cashiers is cancelled; however, the Chamber is looking for virtual alternatives such as a Peloton race.

Updates from Individual Board Members; Agencies

Ms. Self explained that this meeting was a good opportunity to hear updates on the activities of Board members and guest, Rich Price.

- Rich Price, Director, Jackson County Economic Development, reports that Jackson County had about 1,200 unemployment claims in March. Updated information has not been provided by the state for the month of April; however, they anticipate that the number will increase significantly. The ED office is closely watching the fate of local restaurants during the phased reopening. It is anticipated that the profit margins of local restaurants will be significantly reduced by the social distancing protocol of having reduced numbers of tables for indoor seating. Economic indicators for the county are strong with requests for new construction permits coming in.

- Mr. Mau reported that the County Commissioners have been getting inquiries about reopening county services. The pool will not be opened for Memorial Day due to social distancing problems with a pool situation.
- Brad Herman from High Hampton reports that High Hampton construction and development are moving forward with approximately 200 workers daily. April 21, 2021 is still the target for reopening.
- Dale Collins states that the Tuckaseegee Fly Shop reopened as of May 1 and have seen business increasing. The Fly Shop has instituted PPE and social distancing protocol in the shop per state guidelines.
- Anna Thomas of Comfort Inn says that the hotel has been occupied by construction workers and some motorcyclist coming through the area.
- Kathy Korb of Laurelwood Inn and Whiteside Brewing, thanked the Cashiers Area Chamber for the hand sanitizer station and thanked High Hampton for the construction workers who are staying at the Laurelwood Inn.
- Robert Jumper states that the Tribe reopened, and offices will be opened June 8 and that Harrahs is starting operations back up.
- Ann Self from the Village Green reports that sidewalks at the Crossroads (intersection of routes 64 and 107) and parking lot improvements are nearing completion. Live events have either been cancelled or postponed until June; however, virtually events have been well received by the community. The fireworks on July 4th is cancelled. The Plein Air Festival is proceeding as planned. The opening of the Arts Center is schedules for Labor Day with other patriotic events celebrating the end of WW2.

Announcements

None

Adjourn

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to adjourn. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Next Meeting

The Wednesday, June 17, 2020 TDA Full Board Meeting will be at 1:00 pm and held via teleconference.

Kathy Korb, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: _____, 2020