



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

To: TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Caleb Sullivan, TDA Sales & Marketing Manager

Date: May 14, 2021

Subject: Updates for TDA Board

Executive Director Report – Nick Breedlove

Budget

Attached to the Agenda for our meeting is the proposed FY 21-22 budget. Significant staff resources have gone into developing this draft. We will entertain any feedback/questions at our May 19 meeting, with it slated for a public hearing and approval at our June 16 meeting. The budget total is \$1.75 million. I mailed/hand delivered copies of the printed budget to board members this week.

Selection of new PR Agency

After careful and thoughtful consideration and in consultation with the Executive Committee, we have selected Lou Hammond Group as our new PR Agency to move things forward. We have two contracts to approve – one for a one month period in June to onboard them and get them familiar with Jackson County before they officially start July 1. We appreciate and commend Pineapple for the work they have done for us since 2014.

Contract approval

All contracts slated for approval on May 19 have been reviewed and approved by our legal counsel and the Executive Committee. We will need to approve each contract separately.

Grant program

As a reminder, we distributed a draft of the Grant Committee’s recommended revisions to the program at our last meeting. I would request each board member review the grant application and guidelines again prior to our May 19 meeting so we may have the program in place for July 1. A link to the grant program is on the agenda and also located [\[here\]](#)

Dillsboro Map

I worked with the town of Dillsboro and the Dillsboro Merchants Association on a reprint of the Dillsboro map for both the town, merchants, Visitor Centers, and Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. The updated map is now online and will be in our hands in about two weeks.

Heritage Walk Brochure

We negotiated rights to purchase the design and layout for the Sylva Heritage Walk Brochure from the Sylva Herald. The map has not been updated since 2015, and the Jackson County Chamber, along with the Main Street Sylva Association, has agreed to take on the required edits and printing of the popular brochure.

New Business Guide

The Town of Sylva noted that the 'New Business Guide' they have to hand out to new businesses needed significant updates. While we are awaiting a new County Economic Developer, I worked with the Chambers, all County Departments, and Small Business Center to update this brochure to help new businesses locating in the area. Link to guide [\[here\]](#).

Wedding Contest

Our Dream Wedding Contest has concluded, and we have five great finalists who want to get married in Jackson County! We will open up public voting on May 26, and the public will select the couple to receive the dream wedding, to be announced on June 9.

VisitNC Conference

Staff attended the annual VisitNC Virtual Conference and previewed Co-Op specials and made recommendations to RawleMurdy for the annual advertising plan.

Phase 2 advertising

We've rolled out Phase 2 of our Welcome Back messaging and advertising/social media assets. In addition, our homepage language reflects welcoming people back. A link to the new landing page is [here](#).

Zartico Data Review / onboarding

We are in the process of providing our data sets to Zartico to get our data dashboard set up for the new fiscal year. We've held a few calls with them, and today Friday, May 14, we are participating in a data review call.

CDTP

I am one of about a dozen participants nationwide selected to participate in the Certified Diversity Travel Professional credential. We held our second of six sessions today. I'm learning a great deal to bring back to our organization and our community/stakeholders how we approach Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Sustainability & Stewardship

This committee of the JCTDA has made extraordinary progress in working on several issues county-wide. We have a meeting scheduled with the Town of Webster to review our findings about the letter sent to the JCTDA last year with requests to look into. Also related to Sustainability, I reached out to WCU to partner with their arts and graphics department to produce sustainability signs similar to the below for elementary school education and trailheads.



Also, in Sustainability, I spoke with my counterpart in Cherokee, Mike Parker, about litter concerns from Soco Gap to Cherokee. The stretch of road is located in Jackson County; I relayed those concerns to the Blue Ridge Parkway to be addressed.

PDM

While you'll see a small mention later in this report, Caleb Sullivan obtained his Professional in Destination Management credential. As you recall, this is tied to one of our strategic goals to retain the highest skilled staff at our organization. We continue to be proud of Mr. Sullivan's many accomplishments on behalf of the organization and the work he does for our stakeholders.

National Travel and Tourism Week

For NTTW, we held a joint webinar with VisitNC's Director, Wit Tuttell, and Haywood & Transylvania Counties. We had approximately 30 stakeholders who received an update on tourism efforts statewide.

Vaccine Campaign

I worked with the Health Department Director and Deputy Director on campaign concepts related to increasing the number of people vaccinated in Jackson County.

Other engagement:

- Participated in a Financial Reserves Webinar with Southeast Tourism Society
- Worked with Smith Travel Research to update outdated and closed hotel properties, also connected STR with High Hampton.
- Worked with Bear Lake Reserve to get vacation rental data flowing into our new KeyData platform
- Recommend to Rawle Murdy we do DMARC verification, allowing more of our emails to not end up in SPAM folders of our e-news subscribers.
- Met with The Service Companies head of HR for the Casino to provide info on workforce, housing, etc.
- Worked with Dr. Mark Ellison on getting Pinnacle Park certified as a Certified Forest Therapy Trail; I coordinated these efforts with Sylva.

Media:

- Coordinated media visit for Jess Hoffert at High Hampton. Hoffert produces content for the official state Travel Guide.
- Met with Journalist Bill Bauer who was on a FAM trip in destination, and provided feedback on the draft article.
- The Bitter Southerner interviewed me for a feature on the Green Energy Park
- Facilitated getting updated factsheet to Sylva Herald on the impact of BRP
- Provided comment on occupancy tax proposed for Sylva to Smoky Mountain News
- Declined to comment on Blue Ridge Public Radio feature related to social districts because the bill has not been approved, and it would be premature to offer comment on draft legislation.

- Attempted to secure Airbnb for Pineapple PR visiting travel writer re: culinary scene
- Worked with Wesley Wofford to secure info for a press release on the Harriet Tubman sculpture coming to Sylva this fall. Sent to Pineapple, who wrote release and distributed.

Other:

- Reviewed Social, Blog, e-news content
- Participated in 2021 Futures Study with DestinationNEXT
- Participated in STS Coffee and Conversations
- Attended CREATE Bridges Steering Committee; sent out an event invite on Facebook to Dillsboro, Sylva, and Cashiers business community about May 11 forum in Sylva.
- Sourced new imagery for the Cashiers Visitor Guide and proofed a draft copy of the guide
- Provided hotelier prospect tourism statistics for potential project
- Worked with County attorney to review all contracts; renewed building lease for JCTDA

Upcoming:

- Work with Town of Dillsboro on Land Use Plan
- Attend Destinations International CEO Summit, DI Annual Convention, ESTO

Social Media & Blog Status Report – Caleb Sullivan

Cross Channel Report April 1 – 30, 2021 vs. March 1 – 31, 2021

- Total Audience Growth increased by .5% MOM (235,871)
 - Total Instagram Followers (23,211)
 - Total Facebook Page Likes (210,534) – Organic Increase of (1,305)
- Total Impressions increased by 65.1% MOM. (2,800,303)
- Total Engagement increased by 92% MOM (156,653)
- Facebook Post Link Clicks increased by 60.2% (14,894)

Google Post/Event Platform

- Total Impressions for April totaled 58,171
- Total Engagements for April totaled 1,745


Pinterest

- Total Impressions for April totaled 56,200. (13% Increase MOM)
- Total Engagements for April totaled 1,640. (21% Increase MOM)


Updates

- Earned Professional in Destination Management (PDM) Credential.
- Created strategy for paid social media efforts to begin on July 1
- Attended Destinations International Marketing and Communications Summit (virtual)
- Attended VisitNC 365 annual Conference (virtual)
- Created Pet Friendly Itinerary for our “reopening page”
- Began discussions with Facebook SMB representative to optimize ad strategies
- Completed Digital Marketing Certificate Program from Western Carolina University


Top Performing Posts for April

 North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...
Sun 4/18/2021 5:04 pm PDT


Golden Hour. 🌿🌸🌻🌷🌹 @sarahmleek




Total Engagements	44,301
Reactions	30,965
Comments	2,700
Shares	2,907
Post Link Clicks	3
Other Post Clicks	7,726

 North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...
Wed 4/28/2021 2:14 pm PDT


Morning in the N.C. Mountains. 🌄🌿🌸🌻🌷 @ashleylee.co




Total Engagements	16,378
Reactions	11,572
Comments	664
Shares	1,285
Post Link Clicks	3
Other Post Clicks	2,854

 North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...
Wed 4/21/2021 2:33 pm PDT


Views like this can only be found in the WNC Mountains. 🌄
📸 Check out our 'Top 8 Golden Sunset Spots' here:
<https://jax.onl/GoldenHourSpots> 📷 WNC Photo Tours




Total Engagements	8,152
Reactions	5,601
Comments	343
Shares	694
Post Link Clicks	246
Other Post Clicks	1,268

 discoverjacksonnc
Thu 4/22/2021 12:06 pm PDT


Happy Earth Day from the most beautiful place on earth! 🌍
🌱 Thank you to everyone who helps keep our mountains Clean and Green. 🌿🌱




Total Engagements	1,127
Likes	1,063
Comments	14
Saves	50

 discoverjacksonnc
Sun 4/18/2021 8:10 am PDT


Golden Hour. 🌿🌸🌻🌷🌹 @sarahmleek



Total Engagements	1,072
Likes	1,018
Comments	9
Saves	45

 discoverjacksonnc
Sat 4/24/2021 10:17 am PDT

Views like this can only be found in the WNC Mountains. 🌄
📸 Check out our 'Top 8 Golden Hour Spots.' Link in Bio. .
📷 @wncphototours



Total Engagements	874
Likes	817
Comments	6
Saves	51

Blogs

Authored two blogs in April:

[8 Great Picnic Spots in the NC Mountains](#) – 4/2/2021

[Enjoy Wildflower Hikes in Jackson County, NC](#) – 4/27/2021

E-News

Authored e-Newsletter for April - Deployed on 4/7/2021:

[Spring Has Sprung in the Mountains](#)