



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

To: TDA Board
From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Date: August 15, 2022
Subject: Monthly Director's Brief

1. Hotel Trends – We are seeing some softening in occupancy compared to 2019 levels, which at its height was around 111 months of solid growth. Some slight softening is expected as we return to more normal levels given inflation, gas prices, and general consumer behavior. This is consistent within our region and not limited to Jackson County.

The ADR is above 2019 levels by a healthy amount but given inflation and increased costs of servicing hotel members and labor, it is likely that we are at or slightly above ADR for the same period in 2019. We will continue to monitor trends, but nothing at this point is out of the trend line that we anticipated. There was a national survey released last week that said with lowering gas prices consumers would be willing to take more road trips; this paired with constant flight cancellations and airport delays could be favorable to drive-to leisure destinations like ours.

2. New Staff Member – We are pleased to bring on Tiffany Collins to lead our Social Media & Digital Content position. She joined us August 1 and has already produced a significant amount of terrific content for social media. All the trends we've seen recently by industry leaders and panelists show that short-form video (Instagram, TikTok, and other video sharing platforms) will be key for the next five years. If you have ideas for content that would be fun for us to capture, send us a note and we'll add it to our list.
3. DI Annual, ESTO, & STS – Staff recently had the opportunity to attend Destinations International Annual Summit in Toronto and U.S. Travel's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Staff will attend STS Connections in Concord, NC from Sept. 5 – 9. At these conferences Caleb and I attend different sessions then share notes and share what we learned. Conferences do two things for us - first, we learn new so many things; second, we see that we are on track or ahead of the field.

The conferences are much appreciated by staff for furthering education, and they are an investment by the Board in the Destination's future success.

4. TCPF – Applications for the Tourism Capital Project Fund were due August 1. We had interest in the pre-submission conference from two parties, neither applied though, but mentioned during pre-submission that it may be too soon of a deadline, and they might apply during the next cycle. Another group, who did not attend the pre-submission conference, mentioned they would wait to apply during the next cycle. In this week's meeting, I will recommend from staff, that we modify the application and remove the selection committee that we instituted and have the board instead serve in that capacity. That streamlining will eliminate additional meetings and work in order to get these funds out in the community.

It had been a challenge to convene a majority of the inaugural selection committee, as everyone these days are tasked with more work than they can handle. Our board is familiar with our goals, objectives, how occupancy tax dollars should be spent, etc. so I see this as an opportunity in between the first cycle and future cycle to streamline the process for all.

5. Staff has been working with agency partners to launch the majority of our 2022-23 marketing plans over the past two months. With the begin of the new fiscal year, all our programs and new components come to life, meaning we must preview, proof, and distribute those materials to vendors. It's been a very busy two months, but we have great partners serving us to help us organize and get these programs launched. Again, these programs are an investment in our future.