



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting September 21, 2022 (Wednesday) @1:00 p.m. Zoom Teleconference

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Mr. Jumper. Mr. Jumper reminded attendees of Zoom meeting etiquette.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Robert Jumper, Chair; Daniel Fletcher, Vice Chair; Megan Orr, Secretary; Board Members Craig Smith, Julie Spiro, Mark Jones, Dale Collins and Darlene Fox
- **Members absent:** Ashlie Mitchell-Lanning and Stephanie Edwards
- **Others in attendance:** Caleb Sullivan, JCTDA Sales and Marketing Manager; Tiffany Collins, JCTDA Social Media and Digital Content Specialist; Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk, Anne Bernard, Lou Hammond Group; Rachel Covey, BGRM.

Approve Amended Agenda

The proposed Agenda was sent by email prior to meeting. There was an addition to the agenda, and an amended agenda was presented.

MOTION: Daniel Fletcher moved to approve the amended agenda. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Robert Jumper, Chair, had no comments.

Daniel Fletcher, Vice Chair, had no comments.

Megan Orr, Secretary, had no comments.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner, presented statistics comparing the amount of Short Term Rental Occupancy Tax revenues for 2020-2022 which show the significant increase in the units available and revenue; however, the number of short-terms rentals available takes away units that are long-term rentals/affordable housing in the county.

Review and Approval of August 18, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Aug. 18 meeting were sent via email prior to meeting. No changes were made.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to approve the August 18, 2022 meeting minutes. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval of August 31, 2022 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for August include Occupancy Tax collections of \$410,096.47 with penalties of \$853.17 and YTD collection totals of \$712,663.58, which is 34.60% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$51,654.48. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$85,592.84 and the VACASA, NC total was \$12,158.74. 98 accounts reported rentals for July rentals (decrease of 17 accounts from last year). Collections were down 2.12% from the same period in 2021. The August 31, 2022 cash balance is \$851,239.13 with investments totaling \$2,000,000.00. August expenses were \$141,240.91 with FYTD expenses totaling \$312,196.73 with encumbrances of \$123,629.83 for a combined total of \$435,826.56, equaling 16.41% of the budget.

Dale Collins questioned how inflation impacts the financials. Mr. Breedlove answered that although the average daily rate for room rentals has gone up, hotel expenses for labor, supplies and human resources have increased also. One hotelier stated to Mr. Breedlove that their costs have gone up almost 40%. Mr. Breedlove speculates that the true revenue for hotels has decreased or remained flat with 2019 levels. Megan Orr commented that her hotel has had to cut rates to get some occupancy and to stay competitive which decreases the profitability of the hotel.

MOTION: *Dale Collins moved to approve the August financial report as presented. Daniel Fletcher seconded. The motion carried.*

Budget Amendment

The budget amendment is needed to account for the contract with Crowdriff's Localhood platform which places TDA visual stories on Google's homepage on mobile devices. The contractual amount has already been accounted for; however, there is a fee for each impression that the story shows on Google. Staff in consultation with Crowdriff has estimated at a rate of \$5 / 1,000 impressions that \$13,000 should be budgeted. This fee would normally be included in the advertising budget, but, since this is a new nationwide program, an amount should be budgeted. The Executive Committee agrees that this is a necessary expense. The amount of \$13,000 will be allocated from contingency for this program.

MOTION: *Megan Orr motioned to approve the \$13,000 to be moved from contingency into the line item for Software. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

Grant Requests

A grant request was received from the Town of Dillsboro for Wi-fi to service visitors. The application was attached to the agenda for this meeting.

The Town of Dillsboro is requesting \$12,000 to complete funding for the installation of public Wi-Fi in Downtown. The Town is partnering with the Appalachian Regional Commission to provide funding but is asking for funding from JCTDA to cover fiber backhaul for the first year.

Wi-Fi access is crucial for both visitors and businesses in Dillsboro since is the last town in Jackson County without Wi-Fi access. The Town estimates that the project would serve 5,000 visitors each year. The Executive Committee agrees that this request is of utmost importance for the town and recommends it.

MOTION: *Craig Smith moved to approve the grant application from the Town of Dillsboro. Daniel Fletcher seconded. Motion carried.*

Proposed Bylaws

Suggested Procedures (updated version) for Local Appointed Boards

At the last meeting proposed Bylaws were distributed. The only change since they were presented is to clarify that if a board member serves an unexpired term, they would be eligible to serve two additional three-year terms when the unexpired term ends.

MOTION: *Daniel Fletcher motioned to approve the change in the Bylaws. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.*

Suggested Rules and Procedures

Attorney Heather Baker at last month's meeting proposed the JCTDA adopt newly-released Suggested Rules and Procedures from the N.C. School of Government to allow for remote meetings. In addition, she prepared suggested changes to those rules and procedures. The revised version fills in the blanks in the original document.

MOTION: *Craig Smith motioned to accept the Rules for Procedures for Small Government Boards. Daniel Fletcher seconded. Motion carried.*

MOTION: *Megan Orr motioned to accept the Revisions to the Rules and Procedures for Small Government Boards. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

Discuss Board of Directors Makeup/Industries Represented

Mr. Breedlove explained the background of this item. Lately there have been challenges in filling seats on the Board in terms of people who have not previously served and people who are available to serve. Currently there are several vacancies on the Board. In 2017 the Board makeup rule was revised to allow a broader group to be represented. In discussion with Chair Robert Jumper, it was suggested allowing others to serve may help with vacancies. Discussion centered around:

- (1) Allow previous board members or those with significant H&T Industry Experience to serve since these people could provide expertise into the industry
- (2) allow a short-term rental industry

representative to serve with preference for an individual who manages multiple vacation rentals. These changes would broaden the scope of candidates.

The TDA Executive Committee thought it would be valuable to ask the County Commissioners to consider these changes in the legislation to add greater flexibility for the TDA.

Mr. Jumper commented that a retired tourism industry person could also bring some level of experience and expertise to the Board.

Mark Jones asked what the official title of these Board members would be. Mr. Breedlove responded that this proposal is in the preliminary stage, and he is trying to get feedback from the Board before it is finalized. He stated that he would work on proposed titles and descriptions before the November meeting.

Craig Smith asked if someone who manages corporate retreats, weddings and events could be considered since these events have a ripple effect on local lodging and tourism communities. Mr. Breedlove said the first category of H&T Industry Representative would likely fit this and will work on firming up descriptions and titles for the November meeting.

JCTDA Director's Report/Staff Report

The director's report was emailed with the agenda. Mr. Breedlove gave highlights and updates.

- A strong tourism season for leaf viewing is expected in October.
- Mountain Heritage Day will be held on the 24th. Data will be collected by Zartico showing the demographics of the attendees based on cell phone information for a visitation analysis.
- Mr. Breedlove will be representing the TDA this weekend at Waterrock Knob in partnership with the Haywood County TDA for a public conservation event.
- Mr. Breedlove will also be representing Jackson County at the WCU Hospitality & Tourism Board of Advisors Meeting on Friday and will make a presentation on the success of the TDA in Jackson County.
- Panthertown Valley's trail counters are up and running and initially are yielding an unexpected increase of more visitors than were previously thought to visit Panthertown.
- Local guides Dale Collins and Matt Canter are working to establish a framework for a local fishing guides coalition to show best practices and to bring a level of professionalism to the industry. Currently anyone 16 years or older who pays an application fee of \$10 can become a licensed fly fishing guide.
- The Sustainability Committee is reviewing another DMO's sustainability and may have some recommendations to the Board at a future date.
- Mr. Breedlove reminded members to return their Oath of Office as soon as possible.
- Mr. Sullivan's staff report was sent along with the Director's Report. He has attended several successful sales events and has made some impressive contacts. The TikTok platform has been doing very well with over 7,000 views during the month of August.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director Report

The report was emailed as an attachment to the agenda. Ms. Spiro presented highlights.

- This Saturday is Mountain Heritage Day at WCU.
- Octoberfest in Dillsboro is October 1.
- November 3 is Friends Night Out in downtown Sylva. This event was successful last spring.
- November 4 is WCU Homecoming Parade in downtown Sylva and Pottery Festival at Bridge Park.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director Report

Ms. Edwards was attending a meeting on another hotel project and was absent. Mr. Breedlove gave an update from Ms. Edwards.

- The Chamber is preparing for the Cashiers Leaf Festival.
- They are working with the NCDOT for traffic visitor safety issues at Shadow of the Bear.

Updates from the Advertising and PR Partners

The BGRM representative could not attend as they were not feeling well. Mr. Breedlove gave a brief update on BGRM activities. A marketing report was sent to the Board. Advertising efforts have been focused on fall and secret season activities.

Anne Bernard of Lou Hammond Group highlighted their activities. They have hosted three travel writers who visited Jackson County. They are in discussions with other travel writers to have them visit and write about Jackson County.

New Business

None

Updates from Individual Board Members

Mr. Jumper noted that the Cherokee Indian Fair on October 4 has been moved from Swain County because the property is under renovation to Harrah's Event Center in Jackson County.

Announcements

None

Adjourn

MOTION: Daniel Fletcher Motioned to adjourn. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m. by Mr. Jumper.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held October 19, 2022 via Zoom Conferencing unless otherwise posted.

Megan Orr, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: November 16, 2022