



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting November 18, 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, Ashlie Mitchell-Lanning, and Darlene Fox
- **Members absent:** Stephanie Edwards
- **Others in attendance:** Caleb Sullivan, Sales and Marketing Manager JCTDA; Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk, Ann Bernard, Lou Hammond Group; John Kautz, BGRM; Tiffany Collins, JCTDA staff member and Morgan Coley, Martin Starnes & Ass., CPA.

Approve Amended Agenda

The proposed amended Agenda was sent by email prior to meeting.

MOTION: Dale Collins 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, announced that this meeting is his last as Chair, a position that he has enjoyed. Daniel Fletcher will be taking over as Chair. Mr. Jumper is looking forward to remaining on the Board and working in his new capacity.

Daniel Fletcher, Vice Chair, expressed his excitement at taking over the Chair position and thanked Mr. Jumper for his service and leadership.

Megan Orr, Secretary, expressed her thanks to Mr. Jumper.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner, expressed thanks to Mr. Jumper and commented on the recent Commission changes. He noted that the TDA team can offer assistance and education to the three new Commissioners. He noted that Mr. Breedlove will making a presentation to the Commission soon to outline the value of the TDA to Jackson County. He invited Board members to attend the presentation.

Review and Approval of September 21, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Minutes of both meetings were sent via email prior to meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: *Daniel Fletcher moved to approve meeting minutes. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval of September 30, 2022 and October 31, 2022 Financial Reports

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for September include Occupancy Tax collections of \$301,836.48 with penalties of \$86.24 and YTD collection totals of \$1,014,500.06 which is 49.25% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$51,102.73. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$47,186.71 and the VACASA, NC total was \$8,586.75. 88 accounts reported rentals for August rentals (decrease of 5 accounts from last year). Collections were up 1.77% from the same period in 2021. The September 30, 2022 cash balance is \$1,074,417.51 with investments totaling \$2,000,000.00. September expenses were \$83,210.25 with FYTD expenses totaling \$395,406.98 with encumbrances of \$111,376.87 for a combined total of \$506,783.85, equaling 28.81% of the budget.

MOTION: *Ashlie Lanning-Mitchell moved to approve the September financial report as presented. Megan Orr seconded. The motion carried.*

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for October include Occupancy Tax collections of \$235,256.31 with penalties of \$165.82 and YTD collection totals of \$947,184.26 which is 45.98% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$47,700.63. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$32,568.25 and the VACASA, NC total was \$4,937.96. 85 accounts reported rentals for September rentals (decrease of 8 accounts from last year). Collections were down 0.44% from the same period in 2021. The October 31, 2022 cash balance is \$67,572.10 with investments totaling \$3,000,000.00. October expenses were \$234,816.81 with FYTD expenses totaling \$630,459.62 with encumbrances of \$102,515.55 for a combined total of \$732,975.17, equaling 26.61% of the budget.

MOTION: *Ashlie Lanning-Mitchell moved to approve the October financial report as presented. Daniel Fletcher seconded. The motion carried.*

Audit Presentation/Basic Financial Statements

Morgan Coley of Martin Starnes & Ass., CPA, presented slides showing the results of the recent 2022 audit conducted by Martin Starnes. Highlights are (1) unmodified opinion (clean opinion) (2) no significant deficiencies or material control weaknesses identified (3) cooperative staff. Revenue has increased approximately \$500,000, mainly due to occupancy tax increase and expenditures have increased, mainly due to operating expenditures. The General Fund has increased by approximately \$700,000. There is an increase in the Available General Fund balance as a percent of expenditures by 142%, which will yield operating funds for about 18 months.

MOTION: *Craig Smith motioned to accept the audit report which was sent with the amended agenda. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

Budget Amendment

Mr. Sullivan is leaving the employ of the JCTDA. This budget amendment is for an appropriation for BGRM to temporarily take over Mr. Sullivan's social media duties until a permanent employee can be brought on board for an approximate three-month period. \$21,000 will be added to the BGRM contract. Mr. Jumper noted that the Executive Committee agrees with the plan, and it is the best alternative for performing the work.

MOTION: *Ashlie Lanning-Mitchell motioned to approve the budget amendment. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.*

Amendment to BGRM Contract

This amendment adds the above amount to the BGRM contract to carry out the social media duties for the next three months.

MOTION: *Daniel Fletcher motioned to amend the BGRM contract. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.*

Grant Requests

Grant request application was received from Village Lights. The application was attached to the agenda for this meeting. The Village Lights in Cashiers is requesting \$5,000 to help sponsor the event which runs from November to February. This event drives visitation during the winter off peak season and is in its third year. The total cost of the event is \$33,000. Ms. Lanning-Mitchell, Village Green Director, further elaborated on the Village Lights which will remain lighted after Christmas to brighten up the town during the darkest time of the winter.

MOTION: *Megan Orr moved to approve the grant application from Village Lights. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

Discuss Board of Directors Vacancies

Mr. Breedlove explained the background of this item at the last Board meeting. 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 three vacancies on the Board of nine voting members.

The TDA Executive Committee thought it would be valuable to ask the County Commissioners to consider changes in the legislation to add greater flexibility for the TDA. Now that there are new commissioners who are not familiar with the JCTDA, the Executive Committee would like to ask the commission to fill a vacant seat with a prior board member who may have gone to another industry. Mr. Breedlove suggests having a work session with commissioners to brief them on how to fill vacancies that are difficult to fill.

No Board action is required on this issue. Mr. Jumper encouraged each Board member to attend meetings with the Commissioners and TDA Board meetings in 2023.

JCTDA Director's Report/Staff Report

Mr. Breedlove presented highlights of his report. He thanked Mr. Jumper for his service to the Board. He thanked Ms. Fox for her work on the recent audit and he thanked Mr. Sullivan for his work.

Mr. Breedlove plans to set up a Commissioner work session, hopefully in January, to explain the work of the TDA, particularly explaining the Capital Projects Fund since commissioners must approve projects. Mr. Breedlove plans to have applications for capital funds projects in January, with awards in April.

The Secret Season campaign is the focus currently, with plans to have a Bingo Card winter promotion and giveaways on social media. The Blue Ridge Parkway Association will have their next board meeting in Jackson County with the JCTDA hosting the event. The TDA is working with LHG on a influencer visit with Merrell Shoes. The Town of Sylva and Main Street Association had a Business Roadmap that was dated. The TDA and partners updated the brochure to benefit new businesses in Sylva.

Mr. Sullivan thanked the Board and Mr. Breedlove for their support during his employment with the TDA. Both organic and paid social media increased in September, but there was slight dip in activity in October. Mr. Sullivan traveled to NYC in October and met with six journalists who will be visiting Jackson County.

Ms. Collins attended a conference in Asheville to discuss the future of Google analytics and diversity. TikTok growth is going up and Ms. Collins hopes to have 5,000 followers by today. Holiday Gift Guides are available on TikTok and they'll focus on gifts under \$20 that can be purchased locally.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director Report

Ms. Spiro expressed thanks to Mr. Jumper and Mr. Sullivan for their work. The Chamber has been greeting the train in Dillsboro as passengers unload and encouraging the passengers to shop locally by explaining what is available. Holiday Fireworks will be on December 16. The Chamber Drop-By will be held tomorrow night 5-6:30 at the Comfort Inn. There is a new brewery, Angry Elk, in Cherokee (Jackson County before boundary) across from the Catamount Travel Center.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director Report

Ms. Edwards was absent. Mr. Breedlove gave highlights. Travel to Cashiers is up and the Chamber is preparing for Thanksgiving weekend with the Village Green. Two new hotels are under development with engineering and permitting on-going.

Updates from the Advertising and PR Partners

John Kautz of BGRM expressed his pride to step up to fill Mr. Sullivan's role with the TDA. BGRM has developed a plan for upgrading and enhancing the JCTDA monthly email capabilities. Visitor Guides requests are up 46%. They are excited about Secret Season and the new calendar year.

Ann Bernard, Lou Hammond Group, traveled to NYC with Mr. Sullivan. There is interest from magazine contributors to visit Jackson County and publish articles about the county.

New Business

None

Updates from Individual Board Members

None

Announcements

Mr. Jumper encouraged all board members to attend the December 15 board meeting in person.

Adjourn

MOTION: *Craig Smith motioned to adjourn. Ashlie Lanning-Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m. by Mr. Jumper.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held December 15, 2022 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.

Ashlie Mitchell-Lanning, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: December 15, 2022