



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Meeting

November 15, 2017 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.

Cordelia Camp Building Room 143, WCU, Cullowhee, NC 28723

Public comment

Public comment was opened at 1:00pm by Robert Jumper. No members of the public were present.

Call to order/Roll Call

Chairman Jumper called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. A quorum was present for the meeting.

Members in attendance: Mary Lanning, Vice Chair; Ann Self, Gareth Daley, Laura Bowers, Mark Jones, Megan Orr, Darlene Fox, Kathy Korb, Ron Mau, Vick Patel, Robert Jumper, Nick Breedlove.

Members absent: Sarah Jennings, Secretary; Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards, Henry Hoche, Joel Sowers, Bob Williams.

Others in attendance: John Kautz and Susannah Runkle, Rawle Murdy; Dale Collins, future Board member; Joyce Pope, minutes.

Executive Director Breedlove distributed a revised version of the Bylaws of the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority. The revisions include:

- Group lodging properties have been regrouped as defined in Article II – Membership, Section 2, Subsection A
- The terms of appointments have been revised to staggered terms
- The number of board members has been revised to consist of nine members
- A quorum has been changed from a specific number of voting members to a simple majority

Executive Director Breedlove asked the board for approval of these changes to the bylaws.

MOTION: Ann Self made a motion to approve the revised version of the Bylaws of the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority with an amendment date of November 15, 2017. Mary Lanning seconded. Motion passed.

Recognition of Vice Chair and Secretary

Chairman Jumper recognized the Vice Chair, who had no comments at this time.

Review and approval of September 20, 2017 Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes.

MOTION: Lanning made a motion to approve the minutes. Gareth Daley seconded. Motion passed.

Review and approval of year-to-date financial report – September and October

The Financial Report was presented by Darlene Fox.

September: \$148,461.72 with \$240 collected in penalties. The YTD collection total was \$329,194.00, or 30.48% of budget. 161 units reported for rentals in August with collections up 9.62% from the same period in 2016. Total increase for fiscal year is 2.95%

Cash balance on 9/30/17 was \$485,094.54. September expenses were \$116,445.37 with YTD expenses totaling \$320,178.14 with encumbrances of \$22,153.18, for a combined total of \$342,331.32 – 29.91% of budget.

October: Room Occupancy Tax collections totaled \$90,169.60 with \$160 in penalties. YTD collection total is \$419,363.60- 38.83% of budget. 160 units reported for September rentals, Collections were down 4.01% from the same period in 2016. Increase for the fiscal year is 1.79%. \$592,424.61 cash balance 10/31/17.

Expenses for October were \$81,768.89. The YTD expenses totaled \$401,947.03 with encumbrances of \$22,153.18 for combined total of \$424,100.21.

Lanning asked about the drastic drop in resort breakdown figures from last year. Because a remitter was late, the amount will show in the next month's report.

MOTION: *Mary Lanning moved to accept the financial report; Gareth Daley seconded. Motion passed.*

Audit Report

Darlene Fox provided highlights of the audit report. The fund balance as of 6/30/17 is \$575,908. \$121,855 is restricted by state statute. \$454,053 is available by appropriation. Fund balance was 45% vs. 52% last year. Managements comments are also included in the report. There were no findings in the audit.

Revenues \$1,029,963 room taxes. Up 10.49% from prior year

Expenditures are \$1,006,650, up 23.42% from prior year

There is a \$29,791 change in net position.

Motion to accept: Mau made a motion. Lanning seconded. Motion passed.

Committee reports:

Personnel & Governance – none

Chairman Report – none

Marketing Committee - none

Chairman report - none

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce activity report and Cashiers Chamber of Commerce activity report

Neither Julie Spiro nor Stephanie Edwards were able to attend the meeting. They submitted written reports that were made available with the agenda online.

JCTDA Director Report Highlights

Executive Director Breedlove gave highlights of his report.

- The TDA now has its own website www.jacksoncountytlda.com, offering documents, including Chamber Reports, Director Reports, financial reports, tourism fact sheets, grant and special project applications, B2B resources, monthly lodging statistics provided by Smith travel research, meeting minutes dating back to 2013, and meeting schedules and agendas.
- New content sections have been added to the website for Spas which are located online under "Attractions" and "Relaxation".
- A new feature launched: trip ideas/itineraries to provide a curated experience when visiting Jackson County. There will be a total of nine itineraries and the first six have been loaded into the site.
- Matt Van Swol, a social media influencer, visited Jackson County October 18-25 on a trip coordinated by Pineapple PR. He had a diverse itinerary and has already produced a blog post detailing his trip, along with stunning imagery and video.
- Taralynn McMitt, a blogger out of Charlotte, was hosted 10/27-29 at Balsam Mountain Inn. She did an amazing job of showcasing her visit, as part of a FAM trip, on her blog. McNitt has 75,000 followers on Instagram.
- A screening was held for *Three Billboards* Nov. 14. Local media and residents had the opportunity to attend. Fox Carolina ran a segment on the screening with live video of people waiting to get into to Quin Theaters and interviews with attendees, and with the extras casting director. The film spent more than \$12.6 million in Western NC. Many involved with the film's production were in attendance.
- There is a need for some contract labor in January for website and visitor guide-related updates. The board approved contract hours for as-needed work. No hourly rate has been set yet, but most likely would be \$10/hr. Funds would come from contingency.

MOTION: Lanning made a motion to authorize Breedlove to use up to \$3500 from contingency. Megan Orr seconded. Motion passed.

Pineapple PR Report – September and October

Advertising Update

John Kautz and Susannah Runkle with Rawle Murdy have been working closely with Breedlove on marketing and advertising. A PowerPoint presentation was shown to provide the board with a marketing update through October 2017. Highlights include:

- Leads up 75%, website traffic up 170% vs. October 2016.
- 287 visitor guide signups/downloads and 94 newsletter signups in October. These figures are in comparison to the old website. The new website launched in mid-November of last year.
- Newsletter signups have gone from 4,000 to about 12,000.

Social Media Highlights July – October 2017:

- Average Cost per website lead \$0.43
- Average cost per Facebook lead form \$1.08 (national average is \$1.73)
- Average cost per Page like \$0.32
- Average cost per video view \$0.002

- Channels driving traffic and leads: social media, display, organic search, paid search, referral, other, email. (in order)
- During July and August 2017, social media highlights: 864,000 total video views: 9322 new fans across FB, Ins and Twitter; 9,427,478 impressions (# times JTDA content shown on screen); 265,695 engagements (# actions taken on JCTDA posts); 2727 goal completions, a 100% increase year over year; 28983 website sessions

Advertising Highlights (October 2017):

- USA Today Travel dedicated eblasts have been tested out and we will probably continue to use
- VisitNC.com Travel Insider eblast – banner ads for holiday season
- Atlanta Magazine- we won a December Bonus ad

Website Highlights (October 2017)

- WCU athletics website banner ads focusing particular on trout fishing
- Partners Database update; database migration and final testing complete
- Drop-down menu promo ad on our website for local events
- The power of User Generated Content is tremendous: powered by a robust tool, which provides aggregation of user generated content based on locations and hashtags; streams content into curated website galleries; about 122,000 pieces of content have been received so far.
- Currently have six galleries on the website using the user-generated content. Some images have been selected to contain a call to action. The galleries have been live for about a month.

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

Breedlove thanked the board members who are rotating off of the board for their time and input. Mary Lanning has been on the board since 2012; Robert Jumper since 2013; Henry Hoche and Sarah Jennings since 2015; and Joel Sowers since 2016. Breedlove gave highlights of the accomplishments of the board since 2012:

- 2013: merged 2 TTAs into one entity achieving operational efficiency. Clifford and Robert helped during this period, steering the TDA into a great place today. The JCTDA underwent strategic branding effort to provide a single brand for JC. Now we have a cohesive advertising platform which has brought us significant return on investment.
- Created a Director's position.
- Recognized annual growth through unified marketing efforts, from \$750,000 to \$1,080,000 in collections this year, which represents \$18.75 million in accommodation sales growing to \$27 million, a 44% increase.
- Instituted more data driven decision making with advertising buys.
- Began utilizing 'Leave No Trace' messaging and began donating to environmental groups impacted by tourism.
- Captured authentic images and video of Jackson County through a photoshoot with its ad agency.
- Executive Director Breedlove proud of launch of new tourism website that is robust and user-friendly. It is leaps and bounds above the TDA's past website. That process took over one year to build the new site.
- Implemented a new blog focusing on content that is sharable driving a call to action, and searchable.
- E-newsletter program is a new program generating excellent click-through and open rates.

- The Chambers move to fiber optic networks are in process, will be complete next month. This move will reduce our future communication bills by almost half in future fiscal years.
- We have generated significant PR for Jackson County, totaling over half a billion impressions and \$20 million in earned media.
- We leveraged the eclipse in such a way to encourage future visits.

Chairman Robert Jumper was presented with a plaque in recognition of his leadership of the JCTDA from 2013 to 2017. Jumper encouraged board members to think in terms of strategy and let the Executive Director work on tactics.

Jumper thanked Julie Spiro and the Jackson County Chamber who asked him to take the appointment. He also thanked the Board of Commissioners who appointed him to be the chair. Jumper expressed his pleasure at having worked with the board for 5 years. He dissolved all existing committees and Patel will set up new committees when he takes the Chair December 5. Jumper also Thanked Breedlove for his tireless effort on behalf of Jackson County.

Announcements

December 5, 1:00 pm, organizational meeting will be held at the Cordelia Camp Building.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.



Laura Bowers, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: January 17, 2017