



MEETING MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
October 18, 2023 (Wednesday) @1:00 p.m.
98 Cope Creek Rd., Suite D
Sylva, NC 28779

Call to Order/Roll Call

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

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Daniel Fletcher, Chair; Megan Orr, Vice Chair; Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary; Board Members Robert Jumper, Craig Smith, Darlene Fox, Dale Collins, Mandy Cantrell, Mark Jones, County Commissioner and Thomas Taulbee.
- **Members absent:** Julie Spiro
- **Others in attendance:** Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Carter Long & and Aneska Walrath, Lou Hammond Group, Kara Addy, TDA Social Media Manager; John Kautz, BGRM; Adelaide Simpson, Dallas Miller, Christian Mayfield of Love Communications; Adam Tebrugee, member of the public; Matt Lardie, freelance travel writer; Morgan Coley, Martin Starns & Associates CPA

Approve Agenda

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the agenda. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: Adam Tebrugee thanked JCTDA for their support of the Cleaning Up the Mountains fall litter clean-up which was recently concluded. Mr. Tebrugee is also with the Caliopee Stage which he believes aligns with the business of the TDA.

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Mr. Fletcher welcomed attendees and thanked Mr. Tebrugee for joining us today. Mr. Fletcher introduced Thomas Taulbee who is Stephanie Edwards replacement on the Board.

Vice Chair, Megan Orr, had no comments.

Secretary, Ashlie Mitchell, had no comments.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner, had no comments.

Review and Approval of August 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Minutes of meeting is available on the JCTDA website. They were also attached to the agenda for this meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to approve meeting minutes. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of August 31, 2023 Financial Report and September 30, 2023 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for August include Occupancy Tax collections of \$376,418.22 with penalties of \$60.12 and YTD collection totals of \$376,418.22 which is 15.06% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$57,850.28. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$80,488.78 and the VACASA, NC total was \$11,667.91. 89 accounts reported rentals for July rentals (increase of 9 accounts from last year). Collections were down 8.39% from the same period in 2022. The August 31, 2023 cash balance is \$724,522.06 with investments totaling \$3,000,000.00. August expenses were \$112,655.44 with FYTD expenses totaling \$321,008.26 with encumbrances of \$8,258.99 for a combined total of \$329,267.25, equaling 9.57% of the budget.

M. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for September include Occupancy Tax collections of \$289,116.07 with penalties of \$0 and YTD collection totals of \$665,534.29 which is 26.62% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$57,535.92. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$42,351.28 and the VACASA, NC total was \$7,692.19. 93 accounts reported rentals for August rentals (increase of 5 accounts from last year). Collections were down 4.24% from the same period in 2022. The September 30, 2023 cash balance is \$903,026.84 with investments totaling \$3,000,000.00. September expenses were \$125,629.42 with FYTD expenses totaling \$446,637.68 with encumbrances of \$0 for a combined total of \$446,637.68, equaling 12.98% of the budget.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the August and September financial reports as presented. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. The motion carried.

Grant Request – Adaptive Wheelchair Seat for the Green Energy Park

Mr. Breedlove explained the grant request which was attached to the agenda. The Shepherd Center requested a grant for an adaptive wheelchair station so that people with disabilities could learn glass blowing, blacksmithing, ceramics. The original request was for \$2,500 to pay for supplies and registration fees to accommodate 10 participants. The Executive Committee recommended \$1,500 to accommodate the building of the adaptive station but not fund registration fees or supplies.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the grant would encourage disabled individuals to visit Jackson County. Mark Jones asked how the wheelchair station could also benefit Jackson County residents. The Green Energy Park could contact local groups, such as Disability Partners, to advertise the wheelchair station availability.

MOTION: Craig Smith motioned to approve the Shepherd Center for Green Energy grant request. Since the grant request has the approval of the Executive Committee, a second is not required. Motion carried.

Audit Report

The audit report was presented by Morgan Coley of Martin Starns & Associates CPA. A copy of the report was attached to the agenda for this meeting.

Highlights of the report are as follows:

- Unmodified opinion (clean opinion)
- No significant deficiencies or material control weaknesses identified.
- Cooperative staff
- Revenue increased by approximately \$28,000 due to investment earnings.
- General funds have shown consistent growth in the last few years.

Ms. Fox gave a summary of the internal controls policy and bonding for Board members. There was a brief discussion of best practices.

JCTDA Director's Brief

Mr. Breedlove sent the Director's Brief by email with the meeting agenda. Highlights of the report are as follows:

- There has been a decline in hotel occupancy; however, the decline was not as much as expected in the budget for this year.
- Short-term rentals are holding steady.
- The capital projects fund has approximately \$1,000,000 available for the remainder of the year.
- The Town of Dillsboro had requested grant funds for a bridge project; however, they received a grant from the state to fund the entire bridge project. They will modify their grant request to the JCTDA for funding to install restrooms at Monteith Park. The application has not been received yet.
- Social media views and interactions have increased significantly.
- The Pinnacle Park trail counters have proven to be a great success and have counted more people utilizing the trails than anticipated.
- There is a capstone project by WCU in coordination through the JCTDA along with the Town of Sylva to explore sustainability practices in the town.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director

Ms. Spiro was absent. Mr. Breedlove presented the reports for August and September, which were attached to the agenda for this meeting. Highlights are as follows:

- The Chamber August golf tournament was a success.
- The Chamber has been very busy with visitors in Dillsboro greeting train riders and answering questions.
- The Chamber celebrated their 100 years anniversary in August.
- In September the Chamber was present at the Mountain Heritage Day and gave away a case of Visitor Guides and over 400 trail hiking maps.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director Report

Mr. Taulbee presented the report. He introduced himself and Susan Gregory, the new Visitor Center Manager.

The Chamber hosted many events in September. There was a pop-up event on September 27 with Elevated Kitchen Food Truck. Over 250 meals were served in two hours.

Business After Hours will be held in October hosted by Whiteside Brewing. Nominations for the annual Spirit Awards have been sent to Chambers members to recognize various community contributors to be recognized on November 15 at an award ceremony.

The Christmas Parade preparations are finalized with the Grand Marshall, Mary Kay Andrews, a well-known author, who will have a book signing on December 1, prior to the parade on December 2.

Love Communications Presentation on SEM

Mr. Breedlove introduced the representatives from Love Communications, Adelaide Simpson, Dallas Miller and Christian Mayfield, who are visiting from Utah to get familiar with Jackson County. Love Communications is a full-service advertising agency recently hired for search engine marketing. Since being hired in July, Love has launched Display and YouTube campaigns to reach target audiences. They are currently testing to see if ads featuring nature or people experiencing Jackson County perform better.

In September and October there has been strong engagement with paid search ads, 617,155 account-wide impressions. Google search ads are exceeding expectations; however, there is room for improvement. YouTube videos of Jackson County are performing well. In the period from September 1 to October 7, there were 50,139 views of one-minute videos with 84.85% of the viewers watching the entire video. For the remainder of the year, Love will focus on winter content to inspire viewers about Secret Season.

Partner Update – BGRM/LHG

John Kautz presented the update from BGRM. They are starting to run a new campaign “Capture the Moment.” They are having two photographers come to Jackson County in the next week to take professional photos for fresh photographs to tell the stories of the campaign.

Mr. Breedlove commented that the High Hampton Give Away campaign in coordination with BGRM and LHG is underway with positive responses so far.

Carter Long of LHG reported on their recent activities, the highlight was a National Geographic article on Forest Therapy at Pinnacle Park. Ms. Long thanked Matt Lardie, who was also in attendance, for his articles on culinary experiences in Jackson County.

Matt Lardie introduced himself and explained that he is working on culinary focused articles highlighting Iida and Tembo. He has been focusing on how the county can submit names of various chefs for the James Beard Awards for recognition nationally.

Kara Addy, Social Media Manager, gave an update on the social media activities during the past two months. All indicators were up in September compared to the previous year. The strongest ads were promoting the luxury market.

New Business

None

Updates from Individual Board Members

Ashlie Mitchell announced that The Village Green had a very successful Leaf Festival. Cashiers was featured in 14 articles and publications. The next big event is the Gobble on the Green, which already has over 400 runners signed up. Ms. Mitchell thanked the TDA for their support in helping The Village Green and Cashiers grow.

Mr. Jumper commented that the Cherokee Indian Fair was a success. He invited all attendees to the Halloween event on the 31st and to the costume contest sponsored by One Feather on October 30 at noon at the Qualla Java Coffee Shop.

Announcements

None

Adjourn

MOTION: Dale Collins motioned to adjourn. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:07 P.M by Mr. Fletcher.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held November 15, 2023 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.



Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: December 20, 2023