

**Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
April 20, 2016**

MINUTES – PENDING APPROVAL

Present: Alex Bell, Ann Self, Ashley Iglesias, Clifford Meads, Darlene Fox, Henry Hoche, Jim Hartbarger, Julie Spiro, Kelly Custer, Ken Taft, Nick Breedlove, Noah Bell, Robert Jumper, Sarah Jennings

Absent: Cherie Bowers, Joey Laughridge, Mary Lanning, Stephanie Edwards, Vick Patel, Vicki Greene

Guest in Attendance: Deborah Stone (Pineapple Public Relations), Holly Kays (Smoky Mountain News), Mary Ann Baker (INNSights Marketing), Rich Price (Jackson County Economic Development Office)

Chairman Robert Jumper called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

March Minutes were approved with a motion by Sarah Jennings and a second by Ken Taft.

Finance Officer Darlene Fox presented the TDA's financial report for the month of March. Highlights include: February room occupancy tax collections of \$29,074 with \$40 collected for penalties. Year-to-date collections total \$647,153.53, which is 78.16-percent of the budget. 84 units reported for February. Collections are up 23-percent from the same period in 2015. The fiscal year to date increase is 8.34-percent. The cash balance as of March 31, 2016 is \$518,611. Expenditures for March were \$38,218. Year-to-date expenses totaled \$555,599, which is 72.19-percent of the budget.

The Financial report was approved with Alex Bell making a motion with Noah Bell seconding.

There was no report from the Marketing or Governance Committees.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director Julie Spiro presented her chamber's report to the board. "For the last eight months, we have been working on Jackson County being designated Trout Capital of NC. It brands the area, boost fishing, adding something to Jackson County's toolbox," Spiro said. Spiro then detailed the Chamber's efforts along with mentioning 1,245 visitors through the Sylva and Dillsboro visitor centers.

There was no report from the Cashiers Area Chamber and Visitor Center as Director Stephanie Edwards was absent.

In his Director's report, Breedlove provided an agenda packet. He then detailed the following:

- Received excellent hospitality during Fam Trip with Reid Ramsey, Jim Dykstra and Chris Chamberlain
- Received 18 grant applications; met with chambers to review their recommendations and is recommending to move forward after this report with 13 of those
- The 16-17 Visitor Guide should be ready next week. 10,000 rack cards have been negotiated due to delay in print from Smoky Mountain Living
- As part of Ad Agency RFP, three interviews have been set for May 9th to interview agencies for website design services. The interview panel consists of Robert, Mary, Sarah and Nick

- Working to compile a tourism fact sheet for Jackson County that can be shared with all our partners in the industry
- Having met with Jackson County at the side of Jadaculla Rock, restoration is underway for the current vandalism and a suspect has been identified
- Gave presentations to Sylva Rotary Club, Main Street Sylva Association, a WCU classroom studying rural economies and the Cashiers Area Chamber Board of Directors
- Contacted the N.C. DOT to determine if they had studied/assessed the area and they came back with a recommendation for pedestrian warning signage to alert drivers of pedestrian activity at the 'Shadow of the Bear' overlook. Also, shared the information with Jack Debnam to plan for a long-term fix
- Note change of meeting location for next month's TDA meeting, it is to be held at Western Carolina University's Dogwood Room, in the Hinds University Center on May 25th at 1 p.m.
- Dates of upcoming filming in Jackson County are as follows: Anglers & Appetites, May 3-6; Three Billboards, May 2-3, 10-13, 16, & 18-20; Dirty Dancing, May 8-13
- Will meet with Kelly Custer and WCU Associate Athletic Director for External Affairs Chad Gerrety to discuss challenges and opportunities related to sports promotion and furthering sports tourism in Jackson County
- Working with Pineapple to acquire digital copies of print publicity showcasing Jackson County. They've started out with a "greatest hits" collection of their top 10 articles for the media room on the updated website
- Attended several events and made photographs available to all area media outlets and partner agencies
- Working closely with the Greening Up the Mountains committee and will volunteer the evening before the festival and the entire day of the festival to assist with preparations and festival activities while capturing photographs for the JCTDA photo library
- Begun a partnership with Southwestern Community College to capture additional footage that can be used in tourism promotion. "There is no timeline for the creation of this video, so we can take our time and make this a piece that we can all be proud of"
- Offered services and office space as resources for Mountain Heritage Day festival
- Toured the Green Energy Park with Sen. Richard Burr's Western Field Representative Robin Ramsey on April 7th
- May 1st-7th, 2016 has been designated as National Travel & Tourism Week by the US Travel Association

Nick then presented a packet containing bios on the Jackson County Beer FAM Attendees and presented a video clip of the edited footage.

Under Action Items, the Board will review and vote on all Grants recommended by Nick Breedlove, with the Chambers endorsements, to move forward. Out of thirteen, ten items have met the requested requirements: Mount Artisan's does not meet the criteria as the event is for profit; Front Street Arts & Crafts 2017 needs to collect and provide more data before consideration for funding both 2016 and 2017 events; Cashiers Welcome Sign would best be suited for more potential funding. Nick then stated that he recommends funding for the Colorfest event, however, he would like to adjust the marketing component to require diversified advertisement. Discussion followed regarding printing applicants, with Sarah Jennings stating that "printing should be under special projects. Grants are the events." Discussion followed with Ken Taft stating that regarding printing he "would like to cover the cost."

Chairman Jumper then stated that the committee will continue to clean up the grant process. The decision to move the print applicants to special projects to be considered was approved with Ken Taft making a motion with Henry Hoche seconding. Clifford Meads opposed. The decision to move the Tucksasegee River Cleanup to special projects was approved with Alex Bell making a motion with Clifford Meads seconding.

A motion was made by Ken Taft, seconded by Clifford Meads, to approve all remaining grants presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Breedlove presented a draft policy of guidelines for Special Projects funding to directors asking for feedback by May 6, 2016 at 5 p.m. He stated that after incorporating director responses and revising, the next step will be to present the updated policy to the executive committee. Breedlove then mentioned implementing a Conflicts of Interest policy and suggested directors "weigh in" over the next three weeks.

Darlene Fox presented the proposed budget for the next fiscal year for director consideration stating that the actual budget and adjustments will be discussed and voted on at the next board meeting.

Executive Director Breedlove then discussed the upcoming event Greening Up the Mountain, April's publicity for Jackson County and presented the STR Report and analytics.

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.


Sarah Jennings, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: