

**JACKSON COUNTY**  
**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2013 10:00 a.m.**  
**Cashiers Glenville Recreation Center**

**MINUTES**

*Attendees: Alex Bell, Bob Dews, Stephanie Edwards, Ken Fernandez, Darlene Fox, Vicki Greene, Jim Hartbarger, Debby Hattler, Mary Lanning, Mickey Luker, Clifford Meads, Vick Patel, Brien Peterkin, Julie Spiro, Merrily Teasley, John Woods. Absent: Cherie Bowers, Russ Seagle, Julie Stockton. Guests: Mary Ann Baker, Quintin Ellison of the Sylva Herald, Commissioner Mark Jones, George Ware*

Chairman Clifford Meads called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Mike Hopkins, manager of the Cashiers Glenville Recreation Center, welcomed the group to the county's new facility, introduced his colleague Eric Farmer and provided a brief update on membership and activities.

A motion was made by Mickey Luker, seconded by Bob Dews, to approve the minutes as presented which was unanimously approved. Subsequently, it was noted that the minutes incorreccted showed the next meeting as March 3 instead of March 6.

The financial report was postponed until Darlene Fox's arrival.

Brien Peterkin inquired about future meeting dates for planning purposes. It was agreed that meetings would be held every other Wednesday through June, at 1:00 p.m. alternating between Cullowhee and Cashiers. In the future, it was expected that meetings would be held monthly.

Stephanie Edwards provided a current activities update including continued development of an area visitors guide, a staff visit to the Jackson County Chamber for an overview of its tracking system, and facilitation of an industry effort to promote the Cashiers Area as a wedding destination. Julie Spiro updated the group on inquiry statistics and public relations activities including media responses, VisitNC.com information and event coordination with local merchants.

Clifford Meads shared High Hampton Inn's recent success in partnering with the North Carolina Division of Tourism at a recent New York travel media show where their public relations representative met with 57 travel writer to pitch stories regarding local interests. Spiro further reported that Craig Distl, public relations consultant, will represent Jackson County in the upcoming Governor's Conference on Tourism and meet with Southern Living and six other appointments.

Fox presented a Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2012-2013. Meads advised that Finance Committee Chair Russ Seagle, who was unable to attend today's meeting, met with Fox and Spiro on Tuesday, February 12, for a financial review. Fox described the ordinance as a consolidation of the accounts of the now-dissolved Jackson County and the Cashiers Travel and Tourism Authorities. Section 2 shows estimated revenues with individual sources identified as: Jackson TDA Room Tax Revenue, Cashiers TDA Room Tax Revenue, Fund Balance/Transfer, Jackson TDA – Penalty, Cashiers TDA – Penalty and Cashiers TDA – Interest, for a total of \$216,838.21. She reported a cash balance of \$307,622.47 at the end of January, with some monies held "in reserve" for later use.

A motion was made by Luker, seconded by Vick Patel, to combine the revenue accounts in the ordinance. Edwards raised concerns about the resulting loss of detailed tax district tracking data saying that it would be very valuable in the evaluation of marketing efforts and useful to make targeted adjustments for improvements in a future campaign. Fox reported that once the accounts were combined, it would be difficult to identify sources of tax revenue other than through manual analysis. Edwards suggested that since none of the finance committee members had participated in yesterday's meeting (other than Seagle) and because the TDA board members had not received the proposal in advance, it may be helpful for the full finance committee to consider the issue. A vote was taken with 9 attending in favor, 1 opposed (Fernandez) and 2 absent for this portion of the meeting (Hattler and Teasley) and the motion carried.

Fox presented a budget amendment to reflect the 1% occupancy tax increase which became effective January 1, 2013, and which is estimated to raise an incremental \$96,000 for the TDA budget. A motion was made by Brien Peterkin, seconded by Ken Fernandez, to approve the amendment which was unanimously approved by those in attendance (Hattler and Teasley absent for this portion of the meeting).

Fox requested acceptance of the budget calendar for the upcoming fiscal year to align with the County's calendar. She said the TDA FY2013-2014 budget should be proposed by June 1, 2013. A motion was made by Luker, seconded by Peterkin, to continue with the July 1 thru June 30

fiscal year calendar which was unanimously approved by those in attendance (Hattler and Teasley absent for this portion of the meeting).

Luker commented that given his participation in the Governance Committee meeting held on February 12, he is comfortable that the board is financially solvent. Fox advised she would transmit the documentation to the local government.

A discussion of the BCF timeline was held, including explanations by Meads of the stakeholder and advocate interviews and visitor intercepts which will take place starting on 2/18 and run for six weeks. He said BCF would interview as many of the TDA board members as available, individually or in group(s), and asked each lodging representative to submit ten customer names by February 22 for BCF contact. He agreed that in the interest of consistency, talking points would be developed in the next day or so and shared with the board. John Woods asked who would have access to the names and expressed concern about corporate privacy requirements. Luker said a confidentiality agreement should be made. Meads said customers' names would be limited to BCF staff and agreed to share BCF's planned interview questions with board members by February 20.

Dews stated it would be beneficial to have feedback from one-time visitors who do not return for another stay. Spiro responded that BCF may use the 14K inquiries as well as tap another database. Patel responded that it was up to individual properties to ensure repeat business. Teasley suggested it is a mistake to try to "be something to everyone" and said the group needs to focus on why people come.

Discussion continued as to where intercepts would take place (Meads identified Buck's Café, ski slopes), which "boroughs" were to be represented (shown as Dillsboro, Sylva, Cullowhee and Cashiers) and how BCF's competitive set of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Asheville, Helen and Dahlonaga was established. Members suggested geographic areas to be equally represented should also include Sapphire, Glenville and Balsam and that other competitive comparisons should be added including Highlands, Blowing Rock/Banner Elk, Blue Ridge (GA), Brevard and Hendersonville. Meads agreed to convey input to BCF on these issues.

Discussion continued about stakeholder selection. Meads said BCF wanted to hear about the culture of the county and proposed that someone who owns 15,000 acres has a different perspective. Hattler responded that they should use at least two people from each area of the county for more diversity. Guest Mark Jones suggested having BCF respond directly via speakerphone. Meads concluded that he would obtain BCF's list of questions and address the issue with them.

Alex Bell reported the Governance Committee had met briefly on 2/12/13 to review bylaws and board member rotation. Because reappointments may be made for up to three additional years, they determined staggering terms was not problematic. He said the TDA resolution was comprehensive although a quorum may be better set at six. Meads indicated he would contact County Manager Chuck Wooten for advice.

Luker reported he had been contacted by the media regarding the TDA and had referred inquiries to Meads as chair. Jim Hartbarger recommended that all media calls be referred to the chair. Peterkin recommended agenda items be identified as action items where appropriate.

Hattler reported that the first Marketing Committee meeting was postponed but was to be held following today's TDA board meeting. They intended to address organizational issues.

Meads relayed that Seagle had recommended that the County provide a stenographer to prepare meeting minutes. Vicki Greene objected on the grounds county personnel have other responsibilities. It was agreed that a stenographer would be contracted and paid for from the TDA budget.

Guest George Ware commented that the TDA was doing a great job. He recommended that the Authority better inform accommodation owners of its activities; questioned where the incremental tax revenue would be directed; and commented on his own and Jones' attendance.

At 11:27 a.m. a motion was made by Luker, seconded by Hartbarger, to adjourn the meeting which was unanimously approved.

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Mary Lanning, Secretary

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

