

JACKSON COUNTY
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2013 1:00 p.m.
Cashiers Glenville Recreation Center

MINUTES

Attendees: Alex Bell, Cherie Bowers, Bob Dews, Stephanie Edwards, Ken Fernandez, Vicki Greene, Jim Hartbarger, Mary Lanning, Mickey Luker, Clifford Meads, Vick Patel, Brien Peterkin, Russ Seagle and Julie Spiro. Absent: Darlene Fox, Debby Hattler, Julie Stockton, Merrily Teasley and John Woods.

Chairman Clifford Meads called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Discussion occurred about the level of detail necessary and appropriate for meeting minutes. Brien Peterkin then made a motion, seconded by Ken Fernandez, to approve the minutes of March 20th and, in the future, to produce a concise written summary of proceedings for distribution to the Board and to maintain an audible recorded version for the permanent record.

No finance report was made in Finance Director Darlene Fox's absence.

Stephanie Edwards, Executive Director of the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce, reported on current activities including: A noticeable increase in visitor center inquiries at the start of the season; favorable response to the recent Garden & Gun advertisement; and her work with Marketing Committee Chair Debby Hattler to identify and compile fourth quarter 2013 committed placements and recommended first quarter 2014 insertions pending further brand development.

Julie Spiro, Executive Director of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, reported on current activities including: A monthly inquiry report; public relations consultant, Craig Distl's, media contacts and press release schedule; Trout City, fly fishing articles and Easter Hat parade coverage; Facebook referrals, and her work on fourth quarter 2013 and first quarter 2014 advertising expenses. Group discussion occurred about Mountain Heritage Trout Streams and license requirements and opportunities.

Peterkin inquired about details of Duke Energy's plan for multiple whitewater releases beginning mid-April. Dews commented on the value of targeting constituencies such as that for specialized activities which was generally agreed with.

Two written resolutions were presented on the subject of the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad (attached). Mickey Luker made a motion, seconded by Vick Patel, to accept his resolution as presented. During the following discussion, Dews inquired as to the purpose of the resolution, which received comments, and Vicky Greene updated the board on the Jackson County Commission's continuing deliberations about the railroad company's request for public funding.

Further, the TDA's involvement in political issues was debated and the validity of the Western Carolina University's economic impact data was questioned. Greene stated that she understood a commissioner had asked Luker to introduce his resolution and in response, he acknowledged he had talked to a commissioner about it. Concerns were raised about the public interpretation of TDA support for the resolution as an endorsement of the financial subsidies under consideration, particularly since the due diligence period was not yet concluded. Jim Hartbarger voiced his support for the resolution saying the train was very important to Jackson County and he has seen the recent impact of its riders on Dillsboro.

Luker called for a vote on the pending motion. Those in attendance were in favor with the exception of no votes from: Dews, Fernandez and Meads. The motion carried at 1:45 p.m.

Meads announced that BCF would present their research findings to the Board at its next meeting on April 17th. Stakeholder interviews have been scheduled on April 17th and 18th and the TDA will be interviewed as a group during the regularly-scheduled meeting. It was clarified that Hartbarger was the only TDA member who will be interviewed individually in addition to his group participation. Individual interviews will be conducted by BCF with: Kim Albritton, David Belcher, Jay Coward, Jim Hartbarger, Henry Hoche, Will McKee, Heather Menacof, Kathleen Rivers, William Shelton and George Ware. Luker offered appreciation for the time Meads has devoted to the project.

Under Other Business, Luker asked what the next agenda priority will be for the TDA board. Meads advised that the intent is to review a proposed marketing plan, currently under development by the Marketing Committee, and address funding issues as imposed by the County budget process. Seagle clarified that according to Fox, the TDA budget can be managed independently on its own schedule if necessary.

Peterkin asked about the value of attempting to expand the tourism season and focusing on doing so in the future.

Luker raised questions about the grant process. According to Seagle, the application form has been created, circulated and the Chambers will serve as collection points for all requests. The Finance Committee will review all qualifying applications and bring recommendations to the Board for approval. Discussion occurred on the Board approval of the process itself; whether or not to publicly advertise the opportunity; and the qualification of towns rather than townships. It was agreed that the current format would be used and reviewed for improvement in the future and that no advertising would occur this year. Board members were invited to email additional comments to the Finance Committee Chair.

Guest Ralph Slaughter offered his personal observations about the Greenbrier's success with its "Catch & Cook" trout promotions.

The next meeting of the TDA Board will be held on Wednesday, April 17th, 1:00 p.m. at the Jackson County Recreation Facility in Cullowhee. A motion was made by Alex Bell, seconded by Hartbarger, to adjourn and was unanimously passed. The meeting concluded at 2:05 p.m.

Prepared by:

Mary Lanning, Secretary

Approved by the Board: _____

(SLE 4/08/13)