

**Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2023, at 9:00 am
Hampton Inn & Suites – Boone, NC**

Present: Sheri Moretz, Lenny Cottom, Lynne Mason, Elisha Brown, Tara Brossa, Tim Futrelle, and Brian Crutchfield (Virtual Via Zoom)

Absent: Jerry Lamonds

TDA Staff: Wright Tilley, Hope Thingelstad and Emily Neeley

Guests: Kayla Trivette, Amy Davis, Lane Moody, and Todd Moody

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m.

Approval of the November 15, 2023 meeting agenda:

“Auditor Contract” was added under New Business.

Lenny Cottom, seconded by Tim Futrelle, moved to approve the November 15, 2023 meeting agenda. The motion passed (7/0).

Approval of the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes:

Brian Crutchfield, seconded by Tara Brossa, moved to approve the October 4th, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion passed (7/0).

Treasurer’s Report

Kayla presented the Treasurer's Report. There was a beginning balance of \$144,043.34 on October 5, 2023. The total revenue was \$390,733.22 between that time and November 15, 2023. Expenses during that period totaled \$355,776.27. The ending checking balance was \$179,000.29. \$175,000 was transferred from Money Market to the checking account to cover expenses. The beginning money market balance was \$2,028,831.30, and interest gained was \$8,332.02 leaving the ending money market balance at \$1,862,163.32. The ending cash balance for this time period was \$2,041,163.61.

Elisha Brown, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report. The motion passed (7/0).

Town of Boone Request

The Town of Boone would like to use the remaining TDA infrastructure funds from FY 22/23 (\$27,589) to assist funding the construction of a public restroom in downtown Boone. Two family restrooms will be located in town hall, accessible by a separate entrance from the sidewalk.

Sponsorship Request (Antlers & Acorns) - Shari Smith

The 3rd annual Antlers & Acorns Songwriters Festival is scheduled for September 5-7, 2024. VIP ticket sales are already strong for 2024, reflecting strong ticket sales from 2023. They are requesting a \$10,000 sponsorship for the festival, including marketing expenses and travel expenses for Wright to assist with National sponsorship acquisition. Wright noted increases in Boone hotel occupancy for the week of Antlers and Acorns between 2022 and 2023.

New Business

- Town of Boone Request

Sheri Moretz, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the town of Boone's request for \$27,589 to be used for the public restrooms in downtown Boone.

- Antlers and Acorns Sponsorship Request

Board members discussed if it would be appropriate, or would set a precedent, to use sponsorship funds to send Wright to Texas to meet with potential sponsors for the event. Wright could meet with potential sponsors virtually, or send a packet of materials to be shared. The board also requested to see an outline of marketing spending and a wrap-up report for the 2024 festival.

Tim Futrelle, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to award \$10,000 for the Antlers and Acorns Songwriters Festival. A wrap-up report for the festival should be provided and Wright will attend sponsorship meetings virtually. The motion passed (7/0).

Tim Futrelle left the meeting.

- "Schaefer Center Presents..." Series Sponsorship

Lenny Cottom, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the \$5,000 sponsorship for the Schaefer Center Presents series. The motion passed (6/0).

- 2024 Meeting Schedule

The April Watauga Board Retreat Date had not been set yet. The June meeting was moved to June 18th. All other proposed dates were approved as submitted.

Brian Crutchfield, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the 2024 meeting schedule.

- Auditor Contract

Lynne Mason, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the auditor contract for \$5,000 for FY 23/24. The motion passed (6/0).

Old Business

- **High Country Soccer Association Sponsorship Request**

The High Country Soccer Association followed up with 2024 tournament dates and a breakdown of marketing expenses. The majority of past marketing expenses were allocated towards membership fees to NCYSA and SINC, and a small percentage went towards direct marketing. TDA marketing funds cannot be awarded for operational expenses such as returning the fields or referee expenses.

Lenny Cottom, seconded by Lynne Mason, moved to approve up to \$5,000 based upon marketing expenses, receipts to be provided. The motion passed (6/0).

PR & Social Media Report

Lynne Mason left the meeting.

Emily reviewed recent media coverage of the Boone area, including articles in *Outside Magazine*, *Our State Magazine*, and *Medium.com*. Emily assisted with planning media trips for representatives from Our State Magazine and Fodor's. Emily also attended a Media Mission with Visit NC to pitch the area to national publications. An RFP was sent to 5 PR entities and will be due back by the end of the year. Emily also went over social media highlights and metrics for both organic and paid social.

Tourism Outreach Report

Individual physical Visitor Guide requests decreased year-over-year in both September and October. Bulk visitor guide and adventure map distribution has slowed near the end of the year, and should pick up again in the new year. E-newsletters continue to show great engagement compared to the industry and audience size average. A new interactive map will be added to the website by the end of the month. The Discover Watauga Tourism Summit was on November 9th, and our partners who were able to attend have had great feedback about the event.

Executive Directors Report

- **Occupancy Tax Report**

Occupancy tax collections through September have been strong for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Actual occupancy was up year-over-year in September, according to the STR report, while ADR was down.

- **Marketing & Promotion Update**

Miles Partnership has changed up the personnel on the Boone marketing team. The Watauga County TDA has closed on a new building on Grand Avenue, which will serve as new offices, meeting space, and a visitor center. Elisha's and Brian's terms will expire in December, and there is an open lodging seat which will hopefully be filled in time for the January meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 p.m.