

Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2023, at 3:00 pm
Holiday Inn Express – Boone, NC

Present: Sheri Moretz, Jerry Lamonds, Elisha Brown, Lenny Cottom, Lynne Mason, Jessica Auten, Mayor Tim Futrelle, and Brian Crutchfield

Absent: Tara Brossa

TDA Staff: Wright Tilley, Emily Neeley, and Hope Thingelstad

Guests: Jason Carpenter, Brady Combs, Amy Davis, Guy Miller, Kayla Trivette, and Shari Smith

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

Approval of the January 18, 2023 meeting agenda:

Brian Crutchfield, seconded by Jerry Lamonds, moved to approve the January 18, 2023 meeting agenda. The motion passed (8/0).

Chairperson Sheri Moretz let the board members know she will abstain from the discussion and vote concerning High Country Jazz Fest.

Approval of the November 16, 2022 meeting minutes:

Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Jessica Smith, moved to approve the November 16, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion passed (8/0).

Approval of December 7, 2022 meeting minutes:

Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the December 7, 2022, meeting minutes. The motion passed (8/0).

Audit Presentation FY 21/22

Jason Carpenter presented the audit report to the Boone TDA board, noting that they submitted an unmodified opinion stating that the financial statements were all in order. audio: 15:41

Amy Davis, town manager, offered to invite Jason Triplett to an upcoming board meeting to discuss money market options and other increased interest options.

Mayor Tim Futrelle, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the FY 2021/2022 audit report. The motion passed (8/0).

Treasurer's Report

Kayla first let Wright know that his personal social security number will need to be associated with any purchasing card issued for the Boone TDA. She also presented the Treasurer's Report to the board of directors. There was a beginning balance of \$1,056,959.42 on November 17, 2022. The total income was \$416,610.02 between that time and January 18. Expenses during that period totaled \$322,273.07 leaving an ending checking balance of \$1,151,296.37. The beginning money market balance was \$967,907.66, gaining \$1,736.16 in interest, to end at \$969,643.82. The ending cash balance for this time period was \$2,120,940.19.

Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Lynne Mason, moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion passed (8/0).

Jessica Auten left the meeting.

Old Business

- **Antlers & Acorns Songwriters Festival Update**

Shari Smith, with Working Title Farm, gave the Boone TDA board an update on the Antlers & Acorns Festival in September. She stated that most of their ticket purchasers are tourists from out of state, and even out of the country from Canada. Several meetups will be scheduled during the festival that are outdoor recreation focused and support local restaurants. The lineup will include James McCurdy, Radney Foster, Caleb Caudle, John Paul White, Mary Gauthier, and more. There will also be the premier of a new songwriter-focused show concept to be filmed on the first night of the festival. Board members stated that this festival would add to the variety of festivals now offered in Boone including the High Country Jazz Festival, App Summer Festival, and Boonerang. Brian Crutchfield requested Wright look into similar-sized TDAs' level of support for similar events, to see if the amount of Boone TDA sponsorships could be reasonably increased.

Mayor Tim Futrelle, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve an additional \$5,000 sponsorship for the Antlers & Acorns Festival. The motion passed (8/0).

New Business

- **Imagine Watauga – Scope of Work Change**

Eric Woolridge, Wright Tilley, Amy Davis, and Tim Futrelle met to prioritize the Boone infrastructure projects to add to the Boone portion of the Imagine Watauga Master Plan. The group chose to focus on Gateway and pedestrian signage, a Greenway signage package, and a town sculpture/public art plan. An illustrative Jaycees Park master plan is also included, but there are still questions about if this is included in the figure to be added to the original amount.

Lenny Cottom, seconded by Lynne Mason, moved to approve up to the additional \$26,000 to increase the scope of work for the Imagine Watauga Plan, pending Wright's clarification about Jaycee's Park. The motion passed (8/0).

- 2023 High Country Jazz Festival Sponsorship Request

The High Country Jazz Festival will be returning to Boone and Blowing Rock venues this spring, from June 9 – 11. There will be three headlining events including the Count Basie Orchestra at the Appalachian Theatre, the Emmet Cohen Trio at the Appalachian Theatre, and the Reggie Buie Group at Chetola Lake. The “Duke Ellington” level sponsorship benefits include company logo display, pre-show recognition, E-news blast inclusion, and more.

Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Tim Futrelle, moved to approve a \$10,000 event sponsorship for the 2023 High Country Jazz Festival. The motion passed (7/0). (Sheri Moretz abstained from the vote)

- Review and Approve closed Session Minutes

Lenny Cottom, seconded by Jerry Lamonds, moved to approve November 16, 2023, closed session minutes. The motion passed (8/0).

PR & Social Media Report

Emily Neeley outlined the Public Relations & Social Media report for 2022. She listed a handful of large national and international media mentions and outlined the 9 travel writer and blogger visits that the TDA hosted over the year. The top-performing posts for the year on Facebook and Instagram were also included in her report. Social Media metrics all looked good for the year. Emily completed 127 Facebook posts, 138 Instagram posts, and 10 Instagram Reels. Next year, she'll be working on posting on TikTok, promoting the Year of the Trail and Sustainability, as well as completing a photography audit and shot list for upcoming photo shoots.

Tourism Outreach Report

Hope Thingelstad presented the Tourism Outreach Report to the board. She outlined the amount of individual visitor guide requests and bulk visitor guide and adventure guide deliveries to local and regional visitor centers. Hope also included the analytics from the past 3 monthly newsletters that went out to almost 12,000 subscribers. Open rates were between 34% and 36%, which is phenomenal compared to the travel industry average of 20.44%. Click-through rates were also reported, which were a little low (between 1.2 – 1.4%) compared to the industry average of 2.25%. There were 545 partner accounts on the website and 162 web pages, which Hope has implemented a monitoring system to ensure each listing and page on the website is up-to-date at least once per year.

Executive Director's Report

- Occupancy Tax Report

The November STR report was included in board meeting packets, which showed a drop in occupancy and average daily rate for the national chain hotels. Boone is up about 2.6% for the year in occupancy tax collections, remaining basically flat compared to the previous year.

- Marketing & Promotion

2023 Visitor Guides will be delivered the third week in January, which will be delivered to NC Welcome Centers and regional visitor centers. The Brand Anthem video is still in development, but we should have a first or second draft to review by the next meeting. The “Inspiring Awe Since 1849” campaign will continue to evolve, with a new “faces” photoshoot scheduled in Dallas for early in February. The “Carvertise” campaign in Atlanta was extremely successful, resulting in 2,500 miles per car (with over 30 cars wrapped with “Ski Boone” messaging), and several “swarms” during events. The website will be undergoing a “Reskin” which will update the look of the website to match current brand guidelines.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 pm.