

**Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes**  
**March 20, at 3:00 pm**  
**Fairfield Inn & Suites – Boone, NC**

**Present:** Sheri Moretz, Lenny Cottom, Lynne Mason, Elisha Brown, Tara Brossa, Tim Futrelle, Brian Williams, Tim Futrelle, and Brian Crutchfield

**Absent:** Jerry Lamonds

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

**Guests:** Edie Tugman (Boone Town Council), Kayla Trivette (Town of Boone Finance), Guy Miller, Jason Carpenter, Ben McKethan, Natalie Jones, Marrena Greer,

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm.

**Approval of the March 20, 2024 meeting agenda:**

*Lenny Cottom, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the March 20, 2024 meeting agenda. The motion passed (7/0).*

Lynne Mason and Tim Futrelle entered the meeting.

**Approval of the February 14, 2024 meeting minutes:**

One small change to the agenda: Jason Carpenter's audit presentation was added after the treasurer's report.

*Lenny Cottom, seconded by Tim Futrelle, moved to approve the February 14, 2023 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed (9/0).*

**Treasurer's Report**

There was a beginning balance of \$190,645.58 on February 14, 2023. The total revenue was \$148,236.01 between that time and March 2024. Expenses during that period totaled \$308,102.38. The ending checking balance was \$30,779.21. The beginning money market balance was \$1,885,468.06, and interest gained was \$7,259.11, leaving the ending money market balance at \$1,892,727.17. The ending cash balance for this time was \$1,923,506.38.

Board members asked about an updated breakdown of infrastructure TDA funding available for specific town projects from the past few years.

*Tim Futrelle, seconded by Lenny Cottom, moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion passed (9/0).*

### **Presentation from Combs, Tennant, and Carpenter**

Combs, Tennant & Carpenter completed the FY 22/23 audit for the Boone TDA and submitted the highest level of opinion possible with no modifications. Mr. Carpenter detailed the expenses and revenue for the previous fiscal year and answered board member questions.

### **Presentation & Funding Request from SAHA**

Marrena Greer provided a report for TDA board members that included SAHA tax documents (2022), a marketing plan for the upcoming year, and ticket sales for the past year. Marrena also invited Natalie Jones from High Country Radio to explain their digital marketing and radio plan for SAHA for the upcoming year. Board members noted that the 2023 wrap-up report, a list of vendors, and the tax return were missing from the packets. Marrena let them know she would follow up via email with those missing documents.

### **New Business**

- Audit Acceptance

*Tim Futrelle, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to accept the FY 22/23 Audit. The motion passed (9/0).*

- Sponsorship Requests from SAHA

The board discussed the performance of the 2023 TDA-led \$10,000 digital campaign. In addition, they requested more information about the previous year's ticket sales, program sales, and SAHA's OOH and print campaign. The board also discussed the marketing for the museum side of the organization.

*Dependent upon Wright receiving all 2023 wrap-up report materials, Brian Crutchfield, seconded by Sheri Moretz, moved to approve a \$10,000 sponsorship to use on print and OOH marketing, as directed by the TDA. In addition, the TDA will lead a \$10,000 campaign on behalf of SAHA. The motion passed (9/0).*

### **Tourism Outreach Report**

Physical Visitor Guide requests were down year-over-year for January and up in February, when the new 2024 guides were delivered. Bulk visitor guide orders have been sent out to visitor and welcome centers throughout the state. Wright and Hope also distributed visitor guides at Travel and Adventure shows in Atlanta and DC, which were well attended. Almost 20 cases were delivered to local tourism businesses as well. Hope included E-newsletter subscribers and open rates from the latest general and partner e-newsletters. She also included highlights from the website page, partner accounts, and analytics.

## **PR & Social Media Report**

Emily reviewed recent media coverage of the Boone area, including articles in *Conde Nast Traveler* and *The Skim*. Emily also highlighted social media metrics for both organic and paid social. Reach and followers grew on Instagram and Facebook for the previous 90 days. She noted that the paid social campaigns are effectively doubling the social media reach. At the recent Visit NC Tourism Conference Emily was able to pitch stories about the area to three members of the state media.

## **Executive Directors Report**

- **Occupancy Tax Report**

Boone was up 11.66% for January occupancy tax collections, likely due to a lot of snowy weather. Wright also included the STR report for the board, reviewing the occupancy, ADR, and more from the previous 12 months.

- **Marketing and Promotion Update**

Explore Boone is onboarding the Lou Hammond Group, and getting them familiar with our brand and product. Members from their team will be in-market in early, to mid-April. The TDA has upcoming advertisements, a print ad in the magazine, and an e-blast, with *Our State Magazine*. The team will be heading to MerleFest as sponsors of the traditional stage in late April. Several influencer visits are scheduled for May – June through TripScout, which vets influencers and helps them create itineraries on our behalf.

- **Infrastructure Update**

The new office building renovations are going smoothly inside, and exterior renovations are pending COA approval. The largest exterior change will be the addition of a handicapped accessible parking spot and path to the front door. Additionally, there are a few trees that are dead and will likely need to be removed.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.**