

**Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes**  
**May 15, at 3:00 pm**  
**Courtyard by Marriott – Boone, NC**

**Present:** Sheri Moretz, Jerry Lamonds, Lynne Mason, Elisha Brown, Tara Brossa, Brian Williams, and Edie Tugman

**Absent:** Brian Crutchfield and Lenny Cottom

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

**Guests:** Kayla Trivette

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

**Approval of the May 15, 2024 meeting agenda:**

*Brian Williams, seconded by Jerry Lamonds, moved to approve the May 15, 2024 meeting agenda. The motion passed (6/0).*

Elisha Brown entered the meeting.

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

One typo was corrected in the meeting minutes.

*Lynne Mason, seconded by Edie Tugman, moved to approve the March 20, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed (7/0).*

**Treasurer's Report**

There was a beginning balance of \$30,779.21 on March 20, 2023. The total revenue was \$445,464.13 between that time and May 2024. Expenses during that period totaled \$297,804.87. The ending checking balance was \$178,438.47. The beginning money market balance was \$1,892,727.17, and interest gained was \$15,360.52. Kayla also transferred \$175,000 from the money market account to cover expenses leaving the ending money market balance at \$1,733,087.69. The ending cash balance for this time was \$1,911,526.16.

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

*Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Lynne Mason, moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion passed (7/0).*

**Review of Preliminary FY 2024/2025 Budget**

Wright laid out the preliminary budget and discussed each line item category with the board of directors. He also let the board know they would be voting on the budget ordinance at the June meeting.

### **Tourism Outreach Report**

Individual physical Visitor Guide requests increase year-over-year in March and April. Bulk visitor guide distribution has begun and 74.5 cases have already gone to regional visitor information centers. E-newsletters for March and April showed great engagement and growth, but new Gmail requirements are going into effect and may affect open rates. Hope reviewed the number of partner accounts and pages on the website and the recent partners' newsletter, which had great engagement. Hope also recapped website analytics from GA4 for March and April.

### **PR/Social Media Report**

Emily reviewed recent media coverage of the Boone area, including an article in *Garden & Gun* about Valle Crucis, coverage in *Travel + Leisure*, *Men's Journal*, and two articles in *Essence Magazine*. Lou Hammond Group has created a 90-day plan, crisis communications plan, and two fact sheets for Boone. Several influencer and media trips are upcoming. Emily also recapped social media highlights and metrics for both organic and paid social.

### **Executive Directors Report**

- **Occupancy Tax Report**

Watauga County District U occupancy tax collections remain up nearly 6% for the FY23/24 year compared to the previous fiscal year. Blowing Rock collections are also up over 8% compared to last year. Boone collections were down in March, almost 11% year-over-year, but the fiscal year is still up a little over 1%. Wright and the board discussed possible reasons for the decline, including a decrease in occupancy and average daily rates, and possible delinquent payments.

- **Marketing and Promotion Update**

The MerleFest traditional stage sponsorship had a very successful year with great weather. NC Welcome Center managers recently visited with High Country Host to experience the area. Wright joined the group for dinner and gave them Explore Boone swag. The Miles partnership team is working through the next fiscal year's media plan. EDPNC will be hosting its annual board meeting in Boone, and Wright will be taking them to see Rocky Knob Mountain Bike Park as an example of a great tourism infrastructure project that benefits both tourists and residents. Office renovations are moving along and are expected to be completed around mid-July.

**The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.**