

**Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes**  
**May 17, 2023, at 3:00 pm**  
**Community Room at the Appalachian Theatre – Boone, NC**

**Present:** Sheri Moretz, Jerry Lamonds, Lynne Mason, Elisha Brown, Jessica Auten, Tara Brossa, and Brian Crutchfield

**Absent:** Tim Futrelle and Lenny Cottom

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

**Guests:** Megan Kevorkian, Bettie Bond, and Kayla Trivette

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

**Approval of the May 17, 2023 meeting agenda:**

*Lynne Mason, seconded by Jerry Lamonds, moved to approve the May 17, 2023 meeting agenda. The motion passed (6/0).*

**Approval of the March 15, 2023 meeting minutes:**

*Lynne Mason, seconded by Jerry Lamonds, moved to approve the March 15, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion passed (6/0).*

Brian Crutchfield entered the meeting.

**Presentation & Funding Request from Bettie Bond**

Bettie Bond, on behalf of the Watauga County Historical Society, presented a funding request to get a downtown Boone historic walking tour map produced in print and online. The historical society will be paying for website hosting fees and will keep the information on the site up-to-date. The physical maps will be printed in two rounds, just in case corrections need to be made.

**Presentation & Funding Request from Megan Kevorkian**

South End Brewing co-owner Megan Kevorkian introduced herself and her business, which is a new brewery in the previous Ransom location in downtown Boone. She requested TDA promotional funding for an Oktoberfest event, which will be a collaboration between the two downtown breweries. The event will be a walkable, family, resident, and tourist-friendly, fall beer and food festival, scheduled for September 30, 2023. Ideally, the Downtown Boone Development Association will continue the event as an annual tradition.

**Treasurer's Report**

Kayla presented the Treasurer's Report to the board of directors. There was a beginning balance of \$1,106,935.08 on March 16, 2023. The total revenue was \$271,986.48 between that time and May 17th. Expenses during that period totaled \$302,816.36, and Kayla moved \$1,006,000.00 to the money market account, leaving an ending checking balance of \$70,105.20. The beginning money market balance was \$975,719.40, and with interest gained and the moved checking funds totaling \$1,012,806.49, the ending money market balance was \$1,988,525.89. The ending cash balance for this time period was \$2,058,631.09.

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

### **New Business**

- Review of Preliminary FY 2022/2023 Budget – Wright Tilley

Mr. Tilley presented the preliminary FY 22/23 budget to the board members, estimating a conservative number for revenue, considering occupancy tax collections have been falling slightly. He did point out that he did not budget for interest. The contract fee with the county TDA was raised, which is due to increasing the TDA staff and potentially increasing contract fees with Miles Partnership. Promotional items were also increased because there are an increasing number of events Explore Boone attends to give away those promotional items. Health and Dental insurance did increase slightly, and the travel and educational expenses line item is also increasing in the new fiscal year to allow for educational experiences. The budget will be voted on at the June board meeting.

- Funding Requests:

- Betty Bond – Historic Walking Trail

***Sheri Moretz, seconded by Brian Crutchfield, moved to approve a \$5,000 sponsorship for the Watauga County Historic Society to produce the Historic Downtown Boone Walking Tour. The motion passed (7/0).***

- South End Brewing - Oktoberfest

***Jessica Auten, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the full \$3,808.40 funding request for South End Brewing's Oktoberfest event in downtown Boone. The motion passed (6/0).***

Lynne Mason recused herself from the vote.

- Winkler's Creek Project

The Imagine Watauga plan identified a potential project for the Boone TDA to support, which has had some interest from the community and town council. The Boone Area Cyclists and the town of Boone recently met to sign an agreement

about trail and parking lot maintenance. The project is still early on in the planning process and has not identified funding sources as far as TDA staff can tell, but they will keep the board updated as more information about the park and its uses is revealed.

### **Tourism Outreach Report**

Visitor Guide requests were up 2.62% YoY in March, and up 7.75% in the month of April. Bulk visitor guides have been distributed for the year, and will only be going out as we get more requests for the rest of the calendar year. “Preserve the awe” rack cards and banners have also been distributed downtown and at the regional visitor center. E-Newsletter subscribers have continued to increase month over month by around 100-200 subscribers. April’s fly fishing-themed newsletter had a 33.4% open rate and a 2% click-through rate, and May’s Mountain biking-themed newsletter had a 28.5% open rate and a 1.5% click-through rate, as of May 4<sup>th</sup>. The next partners’ newsletter is going out later in the week.

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

Emily reviewed recent coverage of the area including several mentions in *Travel + Leisure*, including a piece written by an author that she was able to pitch to alongside the Blowing Rock TDA at the Visit NC conference recently. Yelp and Action Hub also had interesting pieces mentioning the area. Facebook had big increases in reach, likes, and page visits, while Instagram saw decreases in all three over the past 90 days. Emily also included paid social media metrics for March & April, including boosted organic posts.

Kayla and Lynne left the meeting.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

- **Occupancy Tax Report**

Boone was one of the only districts in the area with occupancy tax collections still above last year's collections in the month of March. The area's other municipalities and districts have seen occupancy tax revenue falling dramatically. This is fairly expected after historically high numbers in both 2021 and 2022. Mr. Tilley expects to see these collections continue to flatten out throughout the year.

- **Marketing & Promotion**

Marketing for the summer season has ramped up. The team has had meetings with Miles Partnership about testing with digital marketing in some emerging markets based on data from Arrivalist, including Greenville, NC, Ft. Lauderdale/Miami, and Tampa/St. Pete/Clearwater. Mr. Tilley also is planning to continue working with Carvertise in the Atlanta market in the new fiscal year. He plans to add a few additional data and research options to the mix this fiscal year. Brian requested an example of one of the data

dashboards the TDA is looking into. Finally, Mr. Tilley showed the board members the creative for digital Horn in the West advertisements

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.**