

**Boone Tourism Development Authority Meeting Minutes**  
**September 18, at 3:00 pm**  
**Fairfield Inn & Suites – Boone, NC**

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

**Absent:** Lenny Cottom and Edie Tugman

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

**Guests:** Amy Davis (Town of Boone Manager), Todd Moody (Town of Boone Public Works Director), Suzanne Livesay (Appalachian Theatre Director)

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 3:08 pm.

**Approval of the September 18, 2024 meeting agenda:**

*Tara Brossa, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the September 18, 2024 meeting agenda. The motion passed (7/0).*

**Approval of the June 18, 2024 meeting minutes:**

*Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Lynne Mason, moved to approve the June 18, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed (7/0).*

**Sponsorship Presentation – Suzanne Livesay**

Suzanne Livesay presented the mission and vision statements for the Appalachian Theatre of the High Country, which hopes to situate the theatre as a destination in and of itself. She also highlighted three events with high attendance from the past year out of 238 total events and noted around 30% of the attendees were visitors from over 80 miles away. She requested \$30,000 in TDA marketing funding for the theatre.

**Presentation from Amy Davis – Boone Town Manager**

Amy Davis and Todd Moody presented the results of the new public bathroom project built in Town Hall. The bathrooms should be open in the next week or so. No bids were received for the Howard Street project at the recent bid opening, so the Town does not currently have a request for the remaining FY 2023/2024 infrastructure funds. When the total cost of that large project is known, the town will present a request for the remaining funds. Amy also updated the board that plans for Horn in the West amphitheater renovations are underway with an engineer and architect. The stage at Daniel Boone Native Gardens is currently under construction but waiting on additional materials.

## **Treasurer's Report**

There was a beginning balance of \$167,539.50 on June 18, 2024. The total revenue was \$599,998.69 between that time and September 18, 2024. Expenses during that period totaled \$716,616.27. The ending checking balance was \$50,921.92. The beginning money market balance was \$1,740,500.43, and interest gained was \$21,347.32. The ending cash balance for this time was \$1,812,769.67.

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

## **Occupancy Tax Report**

Brian Crutchfield entered the meeting. Wright presented the full FY 23/24 occupancy tax report. Boone, Blowing Rock, and Watauga County completed the fiscal year with increases compared to the previous year. Boone was up by 1.73%, Blowing Rock was up by 8.34%, and Watauga County collections increased by 5.2%. Wright also included July collections for the new fiscal year, which were up by 6.36% in Boone. The STR report was also included in the board packets.

## **New Business**

- Schaefer Center Presents – Sponsorship Request

The Schaefer Center Presents series submitted a request to the Boone TDA for a marketing sponsorship of \$5,000.

*Jerry Lamonds, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the \$5,000 sponsorship for the fall and spring editions of The Schaefer Center Presents series. The motion passed (7/0).*

- Sponsorship Request – Appalachian Theatre

*Lynne Mason, seconded by Elisha Brown, moved to approve the Appalachian Theatre marketing sponsorship of \$30,000. The motion passed (7/0).*

- TDA Bylaw Revisions

Wright, Sheri, and Lynne met to review the TDA Bylaw revisions and are working on a few tweaks/alterations before submitting the bylaws for town council approval.

## **Tourism Outreach Report**

Physical visitor guide requests and digital views are up compared to the previous year in August. Hope also reviewed the visitor guide and adventure map distribution. E-Newsletter performance was incredible in August, with a 44.8% open rate and a 1.9% click-through rate. Hope also reviewed the number of partner accounts and pages on the website and partners' newsletter

engagement information. She noted that the Discover Watauga Tourism Summit “Save the Date” has been sent out. The annual event is scheduled for November 19<sup>th</sup>. Finally, analytics were included on the final pages of the report.

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

Emily recapped the recent media coverage about the Boone area, including a great article published in *Outside*. Several news outlets covered local conservation efforts for the Hellbender Salamander throughout the month and included mentions of a new mural in downtown Boone. Lou Hammond Group PR efforts were included in the report, including an overview of upcoming hosted trips with journalists and influencers. Emily also reviewed the top recent social media posts, notable trends, and paid social media metrics.

### **Executive Directors Report**

- **Marketing and Promotion Update**

Wright noted some important milestones, including Emily’s three-year and Hope’s five-year mark with the TDA. Wright also notified the board that Emily has completed STS’s Marketing College certification program and that he has been elected to the STS board of directors for a two-year term. Wright also gave an update on moving into the new office building on Grand Blvd.

The SoCon Wrestling Championship has not announced the new venue for their March event, so it may be moving out of Boone. The Boone Roundball tournament is coming back to venues around Watauga County in March. A jiu-jitsu tournament is interested in coming to the area via the Sports Commission.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.**