

**Watauga County District U Tourism Development Authority – Board Retreat Minutes
Blue Ridge Conservancy Campus
Thursday, April 16, 2024**

PRESENT: Matt Vincent – Chair
Tony Gray – Vice Chair
Lisa Cooper
Missy Harrill
Tina Houston
Wright Tilley, TDA Executive Director
Hope Thingelstad, TDA Director of Tourism Outreach
Emily Neeley, TDA Director of Social Media and PR

ABSENT: Kim Rogers

GUESTS: Brad Moretz, App Ski Mtn
Edie Tugman, Boone Town Council
Sheri Moretz, Boone TDA
Brittany Chapman, Lou Hammond Group
Gina Stouffer, Lou Hammond Group
Ileana Frascone, Miles Partnership
Elodie Badoual, Miles Partnership
Charlie Brady, Blue Ridge Conservancy
Scott Elliott, Blue Ridge Conservancy
Wendy Patoprsty, Blue Ridge Conservancy
Reggie Hunt, Boone Area Sports Commission

Call to Order: *The meeting was called to order by Chairman Vincent at 8:34 a.m.*

Welcome From Charlie Brady - Blue Ridge Conservancy

Charlie Brady introduced himself and welcomed the TDA board to the Blue Ridge Conservancy's Conservation Campus.

Lou Hammond Group – New PR Agency

Lou Hammond Group's Charleston branch president, Gina Stouffer, and St. Petersburg and Miami branch president, Brittany Chapman, introduced themselves to the TDA board and gave a brief presentation about LHG. This is the team's first trip into the market since becoming Explore Boone's new PR Agency and they are excited to explore and learn more find more stories to tell about the area.

Middle Fork Greenway/Blue Ridge Conservancy Update

Wendy Patoprsty reviewed the progress on the construction of the Middle Fork Greenway and highlighted the sections and elements of the Greenway that the TDA has already supported. Wendy also outlined the upcoming sections to be constructed and requested the TDA to support the construction of section 3 and Boone Gorge Park.

Boone Area Sports Commission – Reggie Hunt

Reggie Hunt reviewed the recent Boone Area Sports Commission activities and let board members know about upcoming events and opportunities. He highlighted the successful SoCon wrestling tournament in March and is hopeful that this annual tournament will return with a bid for next year. Reggie will be attending the Sports ETA conference in Portland, Oregon in the coming weeks in the hopes of attracting various sporting events to the area in the future.

Presentation from Miles Partnership

Ileana and Elodie outlined the performance of Explore Boone's marketing efforts over the past fiscal year, highlighting several successful campaigns and great creative executions. They also presented their plans for evolving the brand in future creative placements and outlined the strategy and media plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The team discussed with the board some emerging markets that Miles has identified through Arrivalist data collection.

Imagine Watauga Plan/Infrastructure Discussion

Wright updated the board of directors on the progress of several ongoing infrastructure projects, including the new TDA office building, Rocky Knob Mountain Bike Park, Howard Knob Park, Crab Orchard Falls, and the county-wide Wayfinding signage project. He discussed the board priorities identified in the Imagine Watauga plan and discussed several possible projects to begin or complete in the next fiscal year.

The board meeting entered a closed session for GS 143-318.11(a)(6) at 12:30pm on a motion by Lisa Cooper with a second from Tina Houston.

The board ended closed session at 1:25pm with a motion from Tony Gray and a second by Lisa Cooper.