



MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting August 19, 2020 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m. Zoom Conference Meeting

Zoom Meeting Etiquette/Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Self explained to mute your audio until you speak and to use the chat feature if you wish to make a comment,

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Ann Self, Chair; Kathy Korb, Secretary; Robert Jumper, Vice Chair; Board Members Dale Collins, Brad Herman, Andrew Harlfinger, Anna Thomas, Ron Mau, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Megan Orr and Jay Grissom.
- **Members absent:** Stephanie Edwards
- **Others in attendance:** Sales and Marketing Manager Caleb Sullivan and Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to approve the agenda. Kathy Korb seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Recognize Vice Chair and Secretary

Mr. Jumper, Vice Chair, stated that there is still a great deal of out-of-state traffic in Cherokee and the town is experiencing business as usual. He stated that there was a drowning in the Oconaluftee River in downtown Cherokee, which makes a total of five drownings in the river this year, and is concerning to the town, although it has not affected tourism.

Ms. Korb, Secretary, gave an optimistic update on business at the Laurelwood Inn and Whiteside Brewery.

Review and Approval of May Minutes

Minutes of the June 17, 2020. Minutes of the June meeting sent via email prior to meeting.

MOTION: Megan Orr moved to approve the June 17, 2020 minutes. Kathy Kolb seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval June 30, 2020 and July 31, 2020 Financial Reports

Ms. Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for June include Occupancy Tax collections of \$76,024.57, penalties of \$20.44, and YTD collection totals of \$1,154,126.54, which is 124.821% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$29,572.05. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$10,380.2. 74 accounts reported rentals for May rentals (decrease of 93 accounts from last year). Collections were down 14.82% from the same period in 2019. The total decrease for the fiscal year is 9.05%. The June 30, 2020 cash balance is \$111,135.48 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. June expenses were \$46,271.70 with YTD expenses totaling \$1,006,411.86 with encumbrances of \$384.00 for a combined total of \$1,006,795.86, equaling 91.97% of the budget.

Highlights for July include Occupancy Tax collections of \$187,616.08, penalties of \$216.10, and YTD collection totals of \$187,616.08, which is 21.71% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$36,487.44. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$41,662.79. 113 accounts reported rentals for June rentals (decrease of 93 accounts from last year). Collections were up 53.43% from the same period in 2019. The July 31, 2020 cash balance is \$215,139.31 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. July expenses were \$77,847.07 with YTD expenses totaling \$77,847.07 with encumbrances of \$3,944.41 for a combined total of \$81,791.48 equaling 15.53% of the budget.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the June and July financial reports as presented. Robert Jumper seconded. The motion carried.

Budget Amendment

The details of the Budget Amendment were sent electronically with the Agenda. Mr. Breedlove explained that the funds (\$7,600.00) were from advertising revenue from the sale of advertising in the Visitor Guide and will be used for advertising and some print ads placement to be used in the Fall.

MOTION: Andrew Harlfinger motioned to approve the budget amendment. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.

JCTDA Staff Report/Marketing Report/PR Report

Executive Director: Mr. Breedlove provided the board with a written report listing all the activities of the previous month prior to the meeting via email and presented the following updates that were not included in the report:

- The 2019 Visit NC County-level tourism statistics should be released at the end of August. Mr. Breedlove expects the numbers for 2019 to be higher than the previous year.
- The EDA Cares Act Grant program is in the final review process.
- There are concerns about traffic and parking safety at Silver Run Falls and Shadow of the Bear in the Cashiers area. Mr. Breedlove has requested permission to present the concerns at the Jackson County Commissioners work session on Sept. 8 since he feels that it would be more effective for the County to present these concerns to the state and local DOT.
- Mr. Breedlove shared some slides with the latest statistics gathered nationally for visitors travel plans post COVID -19. Positive priorities among travelers are (1) getting away from crowds (2) enjoying nature, which Jackson County offers.
- Other slides presented for current COVID-19 cases statistics for both North Carolina, Jackson County and WCU.
- The July STR report shows that Jackson County's room nights demand is only down -2.5% from last year, which is extremely favorable news compared to neighboring counties and the state. Jackson County's occupancy rate for 2020 is 71.7% compared to 73.6% in 2019.
- Website traffic has increased from last year. Visitor Guide requests have increased impressively this year since May and the number of Guide requests is the highest in TDA history. Since we are running out of Visitor Guides, we will be reprinting the Guide to highlight how Jackson County is keeping visitors safe from COVID-19, such as masking and showing the foot operated hand sanitizer Kleenstations in the county. The new Visitor Guide will feature COVID-19 Recreate Responsibly and Family Field Trip which features activities that are fun and educational while keeping visitors safe.
- The new Guides will feature a fold out hiking map which has been extremely popular in the past.

- The TDA has passed the milestone of 200,000 likes on Facebook. Mr. Jumper asked Mr. Sullivan if there were percentages on the difference between paid and organic increases in followers. Mr. Sullivan offered to pull a report but informed Mr. Jumper that there was an 83% Increase in organic followership MOM.

Directors' Reports

Jackson County Chamber: Highlights of the Jackson County Chamber report, which was emailed prior to the meeting, was supplemented by Mrs. Spiro as follows:

- The Chamber has been busy providing people with information on places to eat outdoors and take out options.
- The Chamber is working on a Dillsboro promotion offering to various businesses.

Cashiers Area Chamber: Highlights of the Cashiers Area Chamber report was presented by Mr. Breedlove since Ms. Edwards was absent:

- A presentation was given to the Chamber regarding development of a 55-acre tract in Cashiers. The proposal is set to go before the Cashiers Planning Board next month. The development will feature a hotel, an organic farm, restaurants, boutiques, a cooking school, parking, childcare, and a chapel. The estimated cost is \$750 million; however, the developers have not yet finished their due diligence, nor have they estimated the economic impact since the project is in the early stages.

Updates from Individual Board Members; Agencies

- Ron Mau gave an update on the activities of the County Commissioners. The Commissioners have discussed the planned development in Cashiers and are investigating the impact on infrastructure such as wastewater and traffic. The County has been working with TWSA to test county wastewater for the COVID-19 virus; however, funds have been spent and the county is looking to find more funding.
- Dale Collins reported that the fly-fishing business is busy. He just returned from a trip to Yellowstone and reported that the park was full as were the airplane flights, which he considers a positive sign that tourism is increasing, and that people are going to rural destinations like Jackson County.
- Brad Hermann reported that construction at High Hampton is progressing and that over 90% of the homesites have sold. Opening is still on target for mid-April 2021. Real estate in general in Cashiers is booming.
- Megan Orr and Jay Grissom Report that the rooms at their properties have been sold out for the past three weeks.
- Anna Thomas also reports that the Comfort Inn has been sold out for the past six weeks.
- Andrew Harlfinger stated that his properties have been at 95% occupancy since June 1.
- Ann Self updated the group on activities at The Village Green. Funds were raised in July by an outdoor are festival, which was a success considering social distancing. The Village Green will be installing a "Story Walk" for children. No decision has been reached regarding the Leaf Festival in the Fall.
- Mr. Jumper expressed his admiration for the successful work of the TDA staff since Jackson County tourism is outperforming surrounding counties.

Announcements

None

Adjourn

MOTION: *Dale Collins moved to adjourn. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.* The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

Next Meeting

The Wednesday September 16, 2020 TDA Full Board Meeting will held via Zoom.



Kathy Korb, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: September 16, 2020