



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
November 18, 2020 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.
The Village Green, Cashiers, NC

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Ms. Self at The Village Green Commons. Members were in attendance both at The Village Green and by Zoom teleconferencing.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Ann Self, Chair; Robert Jumper, Vice Chair; Board Members Dale Collins, Brad Herman, Andrew Harlfinger, Ron Mau, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards, Megan Orr, and Jay Grissom.
- **Members absent:** None
- **Others in attendance:** Sales and Marketing Manager Caleb Sullivan; Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Rich Price, Economic Development Director Jackson County; John Kautz, Rawle Murdy; Deborah Stone, Pineapple Public Relations; Melissa Webb, Pineapple Public Relations; Craig Smith, proposed new Board member; Daniel Fletcher, proposed new Board member.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda was sent prior to meeting via email.

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to approve the agenda. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Recognize Vice Chair and Secretary

Mr. Jumper, Vice Chair, reported on how well Cherokee is doing with COVID-19 restrictions. Harrah's has not closed due to COVID since July. All events have been shutdown until the end of the year; therefore, it is anticipated that tourism will be picking up in 2021.

Appoint Secretary

Kathy Korb has left Cashiers and The Laurelwood Inn to relocate to Tampa; therefore, a new Secretary needs to be appointed. The executive committee has nominated and motioned that Megan Orr be appointed.

Motion: Andrew Harlfinger seconded. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of September Minutes

Minutes of the September 16, 2020. Minutes of the September meeting sent via email prior to meeting.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the September 16, 2020 minutes. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval September 30, 2020 and October 31, 2020 Financial Reports

Ms. Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for September include Occupancy Tax collections of \$228,850.82 penalties of \$121.62, and YTD collection totals of \$652,583.82, which is 74.83% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$40,79.46. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$51,249.26. 116 accounts reported rentals for August rentals (decrease of 80 accounts from last year). Collections were up 71.94% (\$95,800.47) from the same period in 2019. The September 30, 2020 cash balance is \$542,832.32 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. September expenses were \$78,629.45 with YTD expenses totaling \$216,186.28 with encumbrances of \$23,227.62 for a combined total of \$239,413.90, equaling 27.45% of the budget.

Highlights for October include Occupancy Tax collections of \$190,936.10 penalties of \$329.51, and YTD collection totals of \$653,173.49, which is 75.59% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$41,291.67. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$38,670.99. 109 accounts reported rentals for September rentals (decrease of 66 accounts from last year). Collections were up 71.94% (\$95,800.47) from the same period in 2019. The October 31, 2020 cash balance is \$659,442.72 with investments totaling \$400,000.00. October expenses were \$91,698.88 with YTD expenses totaling \$307,882.16 with encumbrances of \$20,935.74 for a combined total of \$328,820.90, equaling 37.70% of the budget.

MOTION: *Dale Collins moved to approve the September and October financial reports as presented. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval of Audit Report

The audit report was sent via email with the agenda for today's meeting. Ms. Fox presented the results of the audit report. There were no findings in the audit and the results present a picture of a much better year financially than was anticipated. There were no questions about the audit.

MOTION: *Robert Jumper moved to approve the Audit Report. Andrew Harlfinger seconded. Motion carried.*

Budget Amendments

The list of budget amendments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 was sent via email with the agenda for today's meeting. Mr. Breedlove summarized and explained the amendments.

Ms. Self asked the staff to step outside so that the Board could discuss an additional line item on the budget amendment. The Executive Committee is recommending that Mr. Breedlove receive a \$5,000 incentive bonus for exceptional performance and that Mr. Sullivan receive \$2,500 as an incentive bonus for his performance.

MOTION: *The Executive Committee has moved to approve the budget amendments in the total amount of \$212,264.00. Andrew Harlfinger 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 month prior to the meeting via email and presented the following updates that were not included in the report:

- Mr. Breedlove presented slides showing hotel trends in Jackson County during COVID-19. The trend was up in May to July 2020 and dissected with the amount of hotel occupancies in July 2019.

- Hotel occupancy tax collections were up over 2019 levels in June, July, August, and September. It is anticipated that October 2020 collections will be above the 2019 amounts.
- Hotel occupancy in October 2020 is more than in 2019 at 74.9% vs. 72.6% (3.2% change). The statistics show that Jackson County is doing better on a year-to-date basis than surrounding counties (Haywood, Macon, and Swain/Cherokee).
- Staff has applied for grants to purchase two bear-proof trash containers for The Village Green in Cashiers, one in Glenville and one in Sylva.
- The TDA has received three grants totaling \$113,750 from the CARES Act funding. The CARES Act is awarded to mitigate COVID-19 and has been used in the following ways:
 - The CARES Act funding will be used to make and post signs for Leave No Trace principles. The signs are exceptionally durable and will last for about 15 years. They will be placed at every river access area and park in the county.
 - The TDA had signs, posters, pins, and decals made to remind everyone in the Cashiers area to “Grin and Bear It” to encourage mask wearing.
 - Billboard advertising has been purchased to remind locals and visitors about COVID-19 mitigation actions—mask wearing, handwashing, sanitizing, and social distancing. The locations of the billboards are on the main highways coming into Jackson County.
 - A-frame signs were made to promote downtown Sylva bunch in the hopes that people will eat brunch at local restaurants and shop afterwards.
- Staff has been working to clean up outdated Google Maps and Apple Maps information and getting the correct detour for the Dillsboro bridge construction on Google Maps.
- The TDA staff now can analyze data based on where visitors are from and the locations of potential visitors who have requested a Visitor’s Guide. This service will be free to hotels in the area.
- A new video for Secret Season has been created. Due to the CARES Act funding use deadline of Dec. 30, it had to be created quickly. It will be updated and will contain more Jackson County footage in the future.
- The TDA has purchased a 360-degree camera for photos showing an immersive view of a venue. Mr. Sullivan is getting FAA certified to operate a drone. Photos posted on Google of venues in Jackson County are getting an impressive amount of attention from users.

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

Kathy Korb, Secretary, has moved to Tampa. Anna Thomas, Ron Mau, Andrew Harlfinger and Brad Herman will be retiring from the Board at the end of the year. Ms. Self recognized their service and extended a thank you to them for their service of the Board.

Directors' Reports

Jackson County Chamber: Highlights of the Jackson County Chamber report was emailed prior to the meetings. Ms. Spiro summarized efforts that the Chamber has made on the Brunch Campaign and COVID safety measures in the county. During the holidays, the Chamber is promoting Shop Safely at Home, “Home for the Holidays,” as part of the Shop Small campaign to promote Sylva local businesses.

Cashiers Area Chamber: The Cashiers Area Chamber report was given by Ms. Edwards. The Chamber is continuing to promote sanitary precautions and Shop Small in Cashiers. They are also promoting the Christmas display at The Village Green and several drive through events.

Draft 2021 Meeting & Subcommittee Schedule

Mr. Breedlove presented a summary of the draft schedule, which was emailed prior to the meeting with the agenda. The calendar is being presented early due to shifts in the meeting dates from Wednesdays because of conflicts with holidays. The January meeting has been moved to Thursday January 21 and the September meeting is shifted to Tuesday September 14. Mr. Breedlove requested that the Board members review these dates to identify potential conflicts with dates.

Ann Self will move to Vice Chair in 2021 and the TDA has requested Robert Jumper be named Chair by County Commissioners. New proposed Board members are Craig Smith, Daniel Fletcher, and Scott Greene. Mr. Smith and Mr. Fletcher were in attendance at this meeting.

Partner Reports – Rawle Murdy & Pineapple PR

The full PR update was emailed prior to the meeting with the agenda. Deborah Stone of Pineapple PR introduced Melissa Webb who presented PR Updates and Highlights for January to October 2020. The publicity value of Pineapple's efforts were \$11.5 million and 400,000 media viewership in 2020. Most of the advertising due to COVID concerns has focused on outdoor safe destinations, fly fishing, and road trips.

John Kautz from Rawle Murdy introduced Rachel Croyle as the new account supervisor. Digital marketing results have been impressive—new users to the website are up over 30% and Visitors Guide and Newsletter signups are up 27%. The drives for the activity are Facebook, Romantic Asheville, and the paid search campaign. Rawle Murdy is currently heavily promoting Jackson County with the CARES Act grants funding.

Announcements

None

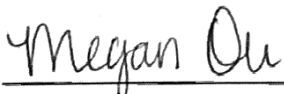
Adjourn

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to adjourn. Robert Jumper seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Next Meeting

The Wednesday December 16, 2020 TDA Full Board Meeting will be at 1:00 pm via Zoom.



Megan Orr, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: December 16, 2020