



MEETING MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

February 21, 2024 (Wednesday) @1:00 p.m.

98 Cope Creek Rd., Suite D

Sylva, NC 28779

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Mr. Fletcher.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Megan Orr, Vice Chair; Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary; Board Members, Craig Smith, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Trevor Brown, Robert Jumper, Mark Jones, Susan Gregory and Mandi Cantrell
 - **Members absent:** None
- Others in attendance:** Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Carter Long, Lou Hammond Group, Kara Addy, TDA Social Media Manager; John Kautz, BGRM; Maggie Sweeny, Guest from Jackson County Parks and Recreation, Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development

Approve Agenda

MOTION: Mandi Cantrell moved to approve the agenda. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Daniel Fletcher, Chair – Introduced Susan Gregory, new Cashiers Chamber of Commerce Board Member.

Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary – None

Mark Jones, County Commissioner - None

Review and Approval of December 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting are available on the agenda on the JCTDA website. They were also attached to the agenda for this meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to approve meeting minutes. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of December 31, 2023 Financial Report and January 31, 2024 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for November include Occupancy Tax collections of \$189,294.98 with penalties of \$30.51 and YTD collection totals of \$1,369,406.42 which is

54.78% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$43,976.50. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$29,047.99 and the VACASA, NC total was \$7,080.98. 78 accounts reported rentals for November rentals (decrease of 4 accounts from last year). Collections were down 8.10% from the same period in 2022. The December 31, 2023 cash balance is \$482,043.71 with investments totaling \$3,750,000.00. December expenses were \$170,472.77 with FYTD expenses totaling \$866,489.34 with encumbrances of \$2,195.36 for a combined total of \$868,684.70, equaling 25.24% of the budget.

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for December include Occupancy Tax collections of \$141,523.21 with penalties of \$15.00 and YTD collection totals of \$1,510,929.63 which is 60.44% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$33,381.23. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$26,815.58 and the VACASA, NC total was \$5,155.58. 79 accounts reported rentals for December rentals (increase of 2 accounts from last year). Collections were down 3.41% from the same period in 2023. The January 31, 2023 cash balance is \$522,795.80 with investments totaling \$3,750,000.00. January expenses were \$119,722.56 with FYTD expenses totaling \$986,233.18 with encumbrances of \$62,573.36 for a combined total of \$1,048,806.54, equaling 30.48% of the budget.

MOTION: *Mandi Cantrell moved to approve the December and January financial reports as presented. Trevor Brown seconded. The motion carried.*

Budget Amendment

This budget amendment for \$100,000 reconciles additional social spending needed (\$4,000) for the remainder of the fiscal year, postage increases (\$12,000) and contingency allocation (\$84,000) for levelling out budget line items. Any unspent contingency will roll back into the general fund, Ms. Fox stated. There is no increase in expenditures on the general fund as these are all paid for by interest income from investment earnings.

MOTION: *Ashlie Mitchell moved to approve the budget amendment. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.*

Grant Request – Greening Up the Mountains

Greening Up the Mountains, a festival held in Sylva, is requesting \$2,500 for general operating support. This year marks the 27th year that the non-profit Greening Up the Mountains has held the festival, which runs at a deficit most years. They are requesting the same amount as last year to support the festival which brings visitors into Jackson County.

MOTION: Trevor Brown moved to approve the grant request from Greening Up the Mountains. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.

Recognition for Julie Spiro – 25 Years of Service

Chamber Director Julie Donaldson at the Jackson County Chamber on Thursday, Feb. 15 celebrated her 25th work anniversary. We would not enjoy the success we celebrate without her at the helm of the Jackson County Chamber, Breedlove stated, adding that she and her team do great things for us. Ms.

Spiro was presented with a plaque in recognition of her service to the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce.

JCTDA Director's Brief

The Director's Report was sent by email attached to this agenda. Mr. Breedlove presented the report highlights as follows:

- Our Visitor Guide will be in hand next week (anticipated arrival time of Thursday/Friday), and they will be distributed to all major hoteliers and locations by our partners at the Chambers of Commerce and Mountain Information Systems (who distributes to 180+ locations in WNC). Due to the popularity of the Guide, additional copies have been requested.
- Preparations for the FY 24-25 budget are in their initial stages. Although it's premature to predict next year's financial landscape, the current fiscal trend outperforms our projections, with room revenue decline contained at 7.2% against a forecasted 10%, a testament to our resilience amid inflation and economic downturns. Notably, the luxury segment has shown relative immunity to these conditions, albeit not wholly insulated.
- The Bridge Park project, which received \$367,767 in TCPF funding from the JCTDA, has officially started. As you make your way along Mill Street in Sylva, the ongoing construction is clearly visible. The town is optimistic that these enhancements will be finalized in time for the much-anticipated Greening Up the Mountains festival in April.
- The latest funding cycle for the Tourism Capital Project Fund kicked off on January 1. Application details are available at www.JacksonCountyTDA.com. Mr. Breedlove has already spoken to people associated with two larger projects that might be a good fit for the program.
- Mr. Breedlove had the honor of attending the HSMAI Awards in New York City, where he was recognized as one of the Top 25 extraordinary minds recipients. The HSMAI Top 25 Americas awards celebrate outstanding achievements in sales, marketing, revenue optimization, and distribution within the hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors over the past 18 months.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director

Ms. Spiro presented the latest report, which was emailed with the agenda for this meeting. Highlights are as follows:

- Friends Night Out and March Madness are coming up in March.
- Planning for the WCU Homecoming in November is underway.
- Rogers Bros in Cullowhee has contracted Speedy's Pizza to serve Speedy's pizza menu in their restaurant.
- A housing market update is included in the report this month. Many tourists ask about the housing market in Northern Jackson County..

Cashiers Chamber Updates

Ms. Gregory, the new director of the Cashiers Chamber, presented the report.

- The Chamber is working on their Visitor Guide and membership directory.
- The Chamber is in the process of interviewing for the position of Visitor Center Manager.
- There will be a spring Meet & Greet at Hotel Cashiers.

- The 2nd annual Burger Week will be held in April.
- The Chamber is adding more kiosks for the Play On brochures.

Partner Update – BGRM/LHG

John Kautz of BGRM updated the Board on their activities.

- The Spring Season campaign, Capture the Moment, begins March. 1.
- There will be a photo shoot in April for future advertising.
- They are performing a mid-year review.
- They are planning for FY 2024/2025.

Carter Long for LHG updated their recent activities with magazine story placement and visits by influencers.

New Business

None

Updates from Individual Board Members

Craig Smith commented that there is interest in golfing in Jackson County. “Golf Magazine” is interested in holding their retreat in Jackson County. He also asked if there was data on weddings in Jackson County. Mr. Breedlove stated that there is no specific data on weddings because wedding guests get included in (most) overnight stays.

Ashlie Mitchell reviewed upcoming events at The Village Green-Easter Egg hunt, Easter sunrise service and Stations of the Cross. The hours for the Farmer’s Market have changed.

Nick Breedlove announced that the Blue Ridge Inn in downtown Sylva has been purchased and will become Hotel Sylva. It is currently being renovated and is expected to reopen in summer.

Additionally, Craig Smith announced that his group has taken over the Farmhouse Coffee Shop and will rename the venture The Blue Ridge Roastery which will feature entertainment. The remainder of the building will be an event venue.

Daniel Fletcher announced that Stay Outland is launching a 3-day all-inclusive fishing trip package to begin in March.

Announcements

None

Adjourn

MOTION: Ashlie Mitchell motioned to adjourn. Trevor Brown seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:48 PM by Mr. Fletcher.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held March 20, 2024 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashlie Mitchell", is written over a horizontal line.

Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: March 20, 2024