



MEETING MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

November 13, 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; Daniel Fletcher, Chair; Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary; Megan Orr, Vice Chair; Board Members, Craig Smith, Darlene Fox, Robert Jumper, Mark Jones, Julie Spiro and Mandi Cantrell
- **Members absent:** Trevor Brown and Susan Gregory
- **Others in attendance:** Kara Addy, JCTDA Social Media Manager; John Kautz, BGRM; Madison Kosaster, Ashley Svarney, Gina Stouffer Lou Hammond Group; and Morgan Coley, Martin Starnes, and Associates; Kevin King, Jackson County Manager

Approve Amended Agenda

The audit report and board vacancies were added to the agenda.

MOTION: Robert Jumper moved to approve the amended agenda. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Daniel Fletcher, Chair – Had no comments.

Megan Orr, Vice Chair – Had no comments.

Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary – Had no comments.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner – This meeting is Mr. Jones last meeting as a county commissioner. Mr. Jones thanked the Board. The board expressed thanks for Mr. Jones time serving the TTA and TDA.

Review and Approval of October 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the October 16 meeting are available on the JCTDA website. They were also attached to the agenda for this meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: *Craig Smith moved to approve October 16, 2024 meeting minutes. Robert Jumper seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval of October 31, 2024 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for October include Occupancy Tax collections \$178,137.65 with penalties of \$526.42 and YTD collection totals of \$860,862.47 which is 34.43% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$38,939.13. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$16,799.35 and the VACASA, NC total was \$6,413.03. 83 accounts reported rentals for September rentals (decrease of 8 accounts from last year). Collections were down 22.23% from the same period in 2023. The October 31, 2024 cash balance is \$558,835.61 with investments totaling \$3,450,000.00. October expenses were \$198,478.61 with FYTD expenses totaling \$825,399.58 with encumbrances of \$519.84 for a combined total of \$825,919.42, equaling 25.50% of the budget.

Mr. Breedlove asked Ms. Fox if the cash balance had been reduced by the investment for the Greenway expansion yet. Ms. Fox stated that it had not been included in the figure.

MOTION: *Mandi Cantrell moved to approve the October financial report. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. The motion carried.*

HR Policy Update re: Benefits

Proposed: Employees may elect dependent coverage to add eligible family members. Dependent participation will be fully funded by the employee and satisfied through voluntary payroll deductions. There is no cost to the TDA.

The Executive Committee agrees with this benefit.

Motion: *Craig Smith motioned to approve this HR policy. Robert Jumper seconded. Motion carried.*

Board Vacancy

JCTDA received approval from the County Commissioners to modify and expand the membership criteria for board. Mr. Peter Evers from Hotel Sylva has been recommended and has passed the background check. Mr. Evers will be joining the board in December.

The addition of Mr. Evers leaves one vacancy on the board. Bernadette Peters has been identified as a potential board member. Ms. Peters is the coordinator of the Mainstreet Sylva Association and serves as the Economic Development for the Town of Sylva. Mr. Breedlove puts Ms. Peters name forward as a recommendation for a member of the board.

No vote is needed to recommend Ms. Peters to the County Commissioners, who will have the final vote. only a consensus is needed. The consensus was achieved by voice affirmatives.

Audit Report

The audit report of June 30, 2024 was presented by Morgan Coley of Martin Starnes & Associates, CPA, P.A. Audit highlights include the following:

The audit report includes an unmodified clean opinion, indicating no significant deficiencies or material internal control weaknesses.

Revenues increased by about \$8,000 and expenditures increased by about \$638,000, mainly due to increased operating expenses. The General Fund balance increased by \$273,781 over the last three years. The available fund balance increased by \$569,000, representing a 16-month supply.

Ms. Coley expressed that it was always a pleasure working with Ms. Fox because she always gets us everything that we need timely in order to submit the audit, and the report has been approved by the LGC.

A vote is not needed to approve the audit report. Ashlie Mitchell motioned to accept the audit report. Craig Smith seconded. The audit report is accepted.

JCTDA Director's Brief

Mr. Breedlove presented the Director's Brief, highlighting lodging trends for September and October. Lodging sales were down approximately \$1,277,000 for September 2024 over September 2023. The loss is due to Hurricane Helene. Vacation rentals were most affected by the storm.

Occupancy in October improved, with a significant decrease in ADR (average daily rate) due to group discount rates for disaster recovery workers. Vacation rentals were down significantly at approximately 8%; however, the ADR was up. The Zartico data for October shows that visitors are coming back in October and spending money with small local businesses.

The new website is in development, with a focus on enhancing data and allowing partners to update information.

Advertising campaigns in Atlanta and Charlotte are running successfully, with positive engagement on social media.

Mr. Breedlove reminded all not to miss the December 4th meeting, which is early to avoid the holiday PTO. The meeting is to vote on officers and to set the meeting schedule for 2025. Mr. Breedlove announced that on February 19, there will be a board facilitator (Berkeley Young) to do a board reset to refresh the goals of board and optimize board meetings. The meeting will be a half day, and everyone needs to attend; lunch will be provided.

Ms. Addy provided an update on social media performance, highlighting a time-lapse video of Bear Shadow that went viral and reached 4-5 million people. October social media metrics were strong, with 12 million impressions and significant audience growth. Upcoming videos include the new Aquatic Center, Catch the Spirit Festival, and a video about Sweet Treats and baked goods.

Partner Updates

John Kautz from BGRM reported on the success of the national hiking day promotion and the positive impact of October's advertising campaigns.

Gina Stouffer from Lou Hammond Group discussed media relations efforts, including coverage in Southern Living, Lonely Planet, and a TV spot in Tampa Bay. Ashley Svarney, a new account rep at LHG, is introduced and welcomed to the team.

The board expressed appreciation for the efforts of partner agencies in promoting Jackson County.

Jackson County Chamber Director's Report

Ms. Spiro reported that there was a ribbon cutting for a new business, Brown Haven Homes. The Chamber is working on grants for 14 businesses in Dillsboro that flooded.

The Sylva Christmas tree lighting will be held on November 29.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director's Report

Ms. Gregory was absent due to an emergency with the Cashiers Christmas Parade.

Closed Session – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property

***MOTION:** Robert Jumper moved to go into the closed session for N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. The motion carried.*

The partners from BGRM and LHG dropped off. Mr. Breedlove thanked them for attending.

There was no action taken in closed session.

Updates from all Board Members

Mr. Jumper expressed his thanks to Mr. Jones for his service to the board and to Jackson County.

Announcements

Mr. Breedlove reminded everyone about the December 4 organizational meeting and the February 19 facilitated Board Strategy session.

Adjourn

MOTION: *Craig Smith motioned to adjourn. Ashlie Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 2:24 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held December 4, 2024 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.



Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: December 4, 2024