



MEETING MINUTES
Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
August 27, 2025 (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. Jumper.

Members in attendance: Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Robert Jumper, Chair, Secretary, Mandi Cantrell, Daniel Fletcher, Susan Sapienza, Darlene Fox, Jack Austin, Todd Vinyard, Trevor Brown, Dale Collins, Peter Evers, Craig Smith

Members absent: Jenny Lynn Hooper, Daniel Fletcher, Todd Vinyard

Others in attendance: Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Ashley Svarney, LHG; Alexandra Noto, Madden Media; Samantha Nelson, JCTDA Social Media Manager; Jane Maurer, Smokies Life; Gina Stouffer and Anesha Walrath, LHG

Approve Agenda

MOTION: Trevor Brown moved to approve the agenda. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Jane Mauer mentioned that 441 construction through the Park is started with a completion date of September 30. In July, Park visits were down 4.7% over last year, but Oconaluftee visitor has had 4 million plus visitors this year.

County Commissioner Updates

Jenny Lynn Hooper was absent.

Review and Approval of July 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

MOTION: Megan Orr motioned to approve the July 16, 2025 meeting minutes. Peter Evers seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of July 31, 2025 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for July include Occupancy Tax collections of \$306,440.82 with penalties of \$211.18 and YTD collection totals of \$306,440.82 which is 8.81% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$64,235.50. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$51,133.23 and the VACASA, NC total was \$5,297.30. 102 accounts reported rentals for June rentals (increase of 10 accounts from last year). Collections were up 10.83% from the same period in 2024. The July 31, 2025 cash balance is \$246,968 with investments totaling \$2,900,000.00. July expenses were \$183,807 with FYTD expenses totaling \$183,807 with encumbrances of \$160,742 for a combined total of \$344,549 equaling 9.73% of the budget.

Mr. Breedlove pointed out that there were two line items for June on the Fiscal YTD Totals. His question is which one is actually June? Ms. Fox says that she will investigate and report back next month. She later reported in the meeting that one of the June months is mislabeled and should be named May.

MOTION: *Peter Evers moved to approve the July 31, 2025 financial report. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.*

Grant Applications

Mountain Heritage Days

This festival is a tradition for 51 years held at WCU each September. It is well attended with over 10,000 in attendance. The festival is increasing the number of days, from one day to one week from September 22-27, with a finale concert at Bridge Park. There are various activities such as dance, food, crafts and music each day. They are requesting \$5,000 for general festival and marketing support. The Executive Committee recommends approving this request.

MOTION: *Trevor Smith moved to approve the Mountain Heritage Days grand request. Megan Orr seconded the motion. Motion carried.*

WATR

WATR (Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River) submitted a grant application entitled “Unmuddy the Tuck.” The goal of the group is to improve the water quality of the Tuckasegee River in Jackson County. The river has experienced turbidity in the last few years. Photos showing the muddy Tuck river compared to the confluence Oconaluftee. WATR wants to monitor the water quality at various sites. The \$4,000 requested will pay for data logging sensors. WATR will monitor the sensors and report back on what is causing the turbidity.

The Executive Committee recommends approval of the grant with two caveats: (1) when the source of turbidity is uncovered, the source announcement will be approached in a sensitive way and not to lay blame publicly and work with regulatory agencies and not to cause controversy or negativity (2) the data will be shared with TWSA as a partner.

Trevor Brown stated how important the Tuckaseegee River is for recreational activities.

MOTION: Trevor Brown motioned to approve the WATR grant request. Megan Orr seconded. Motion carried.

JCTDA Director's Update

The JCTDA Director's Brief with updates on industry metrics and lodging performance was attached to the agenda. Mr. Breedlove presented the Director's Brief, highlighting the following:

- The JCTDA needs new Board Members, and all Board members are encouraged to recommend candidates based on the criteria in the By-Laws. Mr. Breedlove noted that the Chair position will come vacant at the end of 2025. Existing Board members are encouraged to express their interest.
- New tourism numbers were released today and show that Jackson County is only down 1%, compared to our neighboring counties which show greater losses.
- County Commissioners approved the Fairgrounds at the former Drexel site project and the Dillsboro Link project.
- This month we are introducing a new reporting format from our partner Tourism Economics. Mr. Breedlove showed examples of the new dashboard and a breakdown of various sectors in the North Carolina tourism industry. Mr. Breedlove stated that he will send the report to Board members monthly.

Social Media Report

Ms. Nelson reported on the improved social media metrics. There is an increase in followers on Facebook and Instagram. Views on all social media continue to increase.

Jackson County Chamber Director's Report

The Director's Report was attached to the agenda for this meeting. Mr. Vinyard was absent because the Chamber was having their annual golf tournament today.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director's Report

Ms. Sapienza presented the report. The report was attached to the agenda for this meeting. Followers have increased on the Chambers social media. The Chamber has two visitor campaigns for the fall (1) Autumn Bounty Bucket List and (2) Falling for Cashiers in October. The 2025 Christmas Parade is scheduled for December 6. Participants can sign up on the Chamber's website.

Partner Updates – LHG/Madden

Aneska Walrath, LHG, gave a summary of the PR efforts. Local restaurants have been highlighted in national magazines during the month of July, along with a Travel and Leisure article on Cashiers. LHG is planning the holiday season and Secret Season by inviting journalists to the area.

Alexandra Noto, Madden Media, stated that Madden has completed the onboarding process and are “hitting the ground running” in July. Several Madden staff members joined the JCTDA staff at the Destinations International annual convention, where they gained valuable insights and networks.

Updates from individual Board Members / Announcements

Mr. Jumper announced that Whitewater Landing in Cherokee had their grand opening today at 5 PM.

Trevor Brown broadcasted events on the Jackson County Greenway.

Craig Smith announced that Ilda Restaurant is opening a new shop in Sylva next door to Sante that will offer fresh pasta for sale.

Adjourn

MOTION: Trevor Brown motioned to adjourn. Peter Evers seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:47 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on September 17, 2025 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.

Craig Smith, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved September 17, 2025