

**DRAFT**

**Jackson County Tourism Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
February 17, 2016**

**MINUTES – PENDING APPROVAL**

Present: Robert Jumper, Mary Lanning, Nick Breedlove, Ashley Iglesias, Ken Taft, Noah Bell, Cherie Bowers, Clifford Meads, Henry Hoche, Sarah Jennings, Vick Patel, Julie Spiro, Joey Laughridge, Darlene Fox and Vicki Green.

Absent: Jim Hartbarger, Alex Bell, Kelly Custer, Ann Self, Stephanie Edwards

Guest in Attendance: Rich Price (Jackson County Economic Development Office), Smith Travel Research representatives: Kelsey Waite & Melissa Holm

Chairman Robert Jumper called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

January Minutes were approved with a motion by Sarah Jennings and a second by Mary Lanning.

Finance Officer Darlene Fox presented the TDA's financial report for the month of January. Highlights include: December room occupancy tax collections of \$39,650.82 with \$40 collected for penalties. Year-to-date collections total \$591,343.09, which is 71.42-percent of the budget. 110 units reported for December. Collections are up three-percent from the same period in 2014. The fiscal year-to-date increase is 7.79-percent. The cash balance as of January 31, 2016 is \$566,667.19. Expenditures for January were \$32,619.01. Year-to-date expenses totaled \$451,882.14, with encumbrances of \$75,640.49, for a total of \$527,522.65, which is 63.71-percent of the budget.

Chairman Jumper remarked that the positive increases are a good sign for Jackson County.

The financial report was approved with Lanning making a motion with Noah Bell seconding.

In the Marketing Committee report, Marketing Chairman Clifford Meads said most items in his report would be covered by Director Nick Breedlove and did not require action by the board.

The board approved a grant request from Greening up the Mountains, who applied through the Town of Sylva for \$2,279 in grant funding.

The motion to approve GUTM's grant was made by Clifford Meads and seconded by Sarah Jennings. The application, submitted on behalf of Amy Garza detailed a regional advertising plan and showed the town would contribute approximately \$10,000 to the \$12,000 budget for the festival. GUTM applied for the grant outside of the regular grant cycle and board members approved the exception, while not typical, has been done in the past for other grants. GUTM will utilize the "Play On" branding throughout their promotional materials.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director Julie Spiro presented her chamber's report to the board and also distributed copies of the new Our Town magazine, an invitation to the upcoming STIR event, and a seminar at Southwestern Community College.

The 2016-17 dining guide will arrive next week, Spiro said. The Jackson Chamber is making all these materials available to area accommodations by dropping them off; additionally, they can be picked up at the Chamber in Sylva. Spiro also detailed the Chamber's efforts with the TDA, Brandon, Pineapple PR in her monthly report along with mentioning 996 visits through the Sylva and Dillsboro visitor center. She also made note that all businesses in Dillsboro along Front Street are now rented. "I'm very happy about that," she said.

Spiro also made mention of a film production meeting with "Three Billboards" the following week and reminded the board of Dillsboro's Easter Hat Parade March 26.

There was no report from the Cashiers Chamber as Director Stephanie Edwards was out of town. Edwards e-mailed Director Nick Breedlove that there was a 30-percent increase in attendance of the Outhouse races over last year, which he announced to the board.

In his Director's report, Breedlove detailed the following:

- Attended the joint city/county meeting Feb. 1
- Attended the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area meeting at SCC Feb. 1
- Attended introductory meeting with Transylvania TDA Feb. 2
- Attended the Jackson County Comp. Plan meeting Feb. 3
- Met with Smoky Mountain Living's Scott McLeod Feb. 4 about the TDA's visitor guide
- Met with Jackson County's new planning director Feb. 5
- Took Exec. Board Member Sarah Jennings on a tour of the Jackson Chamber & Dillsboro
- Attended Tennessee Blizzard Tourism Conference Feb. 9-11
- Developed and distributed the Website Development RFP, March 15 due date
- Developed and distributed a county-wide survey on sports and conference facilities
- Beginning work on analyzing lead data from media leads over last six months
- Worked with area photographers to create library of marketable photos the TDA can purchase for advertising and promotion
- In the process of compiling photos of area resorts, lodging, attractions, outdoor activities for promotional purposes
- Compiling a master events listing of all county events in collaboration with both Chambers, WCU, Harrah's and others.
- Working with Kevin Adams, author of NC Waterfalls and the marketing committee to purchase waterfall descriptions and photography for new website
- Will hold a Feb. 23 meeting with the marketing committee and Anglers and Appetites' David Zelski to discuss third season
- The TDA again sponsored the Tuck River cleanup this year with a \$550 donation in addition to a \$1,200 grant approved last year for use for this year's event.
- Breedlove also presented TDA website and social media data, upcoming meetings, publicity and his office's professional networking schedule along with recent TDA publicity.

The board approved a contract for \$2,250 with Smith Travel Research, with Vick Patel providing the motion and Noah Bell seconding. Henry Hoche abstained saying he can independently measure his own property's occupancy.

Smith Travel Research's Kelsey Waite and Melissa Holm gave a presentation about their firm's accommodation reports. They gave a brief introduction of the company, including that they sample 71-percent of the total US room supply and 50-percent of all global room supply. The privately-owned firm, based in Hendersonville, Tenn. Provides daily, weekly and monthly STR reports to over 52,000 hotels, reporting on 7.1 million rooms worldwide. In the United States they provide reporting to around 600 CVB's and DMO's, who get reports both weekly and monthly. The reports are impartial, timely and most importantly confidential, Waite said.

STR collects three key pieces of information - supply (rooms a property has available), demand (rooms the property has sold) and room revenue. From that data they figure out occupancy, average daily rates and the revenue per available room.

With the data, they're able to provide benchmarking reports to understand properties' performance compared to market sets, helping destinations make better pricing and sales strategy decisions along with evaluating the impact of those strategies. With this data, hotels can track performance around events and holidays.

Board member Patel said the data has been useful for his three properties and comparing it to neighboring properties provides them insight and is "very useful."

The TDA agreed to purchase the weekly reports for \$2000 and also a market comparison to other counties for an additional \$250. The total fee approved is \$2,250 annually.

In appointments, Noah Bell was appointed to the marketing committee to give additional representation from Northern Jackson; Noah Bell joins Clifford Meads (chair), Sarah Jennings, Henry Hoche, Mary Lanning, Vick Patel on the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

  
Sarah Jennings, Secretary  
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: