



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

## MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
February 15, 2017 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.  
North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching  
Cullowhee, NC 28723

### Call to order/Roll Call

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Robert Jumper.

Members in attendance:

Nick Breedlove  
Sarah Jennings  
Ron Mau  
Joel Sowers

Stephanie Edwards  
Robert Jumper  
Clifford Meads  
Julie Spiro

Darlene Fox  
Mary Lanning  
Vick Patel  
Bob Williams

**Absent:** Jim Hartbarger, Henry Hoche, & Ann Self

### ***Others in attendance:***

Joyce Pope (minutes), Mary Ann Baker (INNights Internet Marketing)

### Approval of Minutes

Minutes were presented and approved for January 17, 2017 and January 27, 2017.

**MOTION:** *Kelly Custer moved to approve minutes as presented. Clifford Meads seconded. Motion passed.*

### Addition to Agenda

A motion was requested to add an item to the agenda to entertain becoming part of the NC local government retirement system.

**MOTION:** *Sarah Jennings moved to add item to agenda. Meads seconded. Motion passed.*

### Review & approval of year-to-date financial report

The Financial Report was presented by Darlene Fox.

YTD collections of Jan: \$ 55,741.35 with \$340 penalties; \$ 673,730.50 total YTD.

114 units reported for December rentals.

January expenses were \$ 62,825.80.

YTD expenses were \$535,186.07.

YTD expenses totaled \$533,733.00 with encumbrances of \$1,452.49, for a combined total of \$535,186.07.

Cash balance on January 31, 2017: \$ 685,245.32.

**MOTION:** *Mary Lanning moved to approve the financial report. Motion was seconded by Meads. Motion passed.*

Darlene Fox presented a resolution to enroll in the NC Employees retirement system. TDA has the right to join. Approval is needed from the board in order to provide retirement for Executive Director Nick Breedlove.

**MOTION:** *Custer moved to take action on this resolution; Meads seconded. Motion passed.*

Discussion addressed retirement options available and their advantages or disadvantages. This plan offers a payroll deduction with a match of up to 7.25%.

**MOTION:** *Custer moved to approve enrollment in the NC Employees retirement system no second needed since prior motion was to act was approved; vote taken and approved.*

Board of Trustees of retirement system will vote on this in April and the soonest effective date is July 1.

#### **Committee reports: Personnel & Governance, Marketing**

Chairman Jumper said it is to our advantage to merge the personnel and governance committees into one. Committee members are Ann Self, Mary Lanning, and Sarah Jennings; Self will serve as Committee Chair. There was no further report from the merged committee.

#### **Jackson County Chamber of Commerce activity report**

Julie Spiro provided the group with a highlight summary of Chamber activities and news:

- Our Town magazine is being mailed out to members, along with cards for Solar Eclipse.
- “Just the Girls” March 31<sup>st</sup> event is in downtown Sylva. Posters are going out. If it does well, the event will be repeated in Dillsboro in the fall.
- March 28<sup>th</sup> is a day of service in Dillsboro with Harrah’s. Harrah’s will provide 18 volunteers to clean and prepare Dillsboro for the spring. The Chamber has done this project for 8 years and are pleased to have Harrah’s assisting this year.
- May 20 is the Chamber’s inaugural Hook, Line and Drinker festival. Posters and more coming.
- A new fly fishing equipment store opened this month in Sylva, making 6 in Jackson County and at least 25 registered fly fishing guides in Jackson County.
- Concerts on the Creek is booked for the summer, 7pm – 9pm Memorial Day through Labor Day. There will be 15 Friday nights of free music offered at Bridge Park.
- July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks and band are booked.
- A Solar Eclipse plan for Sylva’s event has been presented to TDA. There will be further discussion later in the meeting.
- There is a new sign at the Jackson County Chamber. The Chamber paid for it; the font is twice as large as the previous sign.

Spiro was asked for a status update of trout fishing destination changing from ‘premier trout’ area to ‘trout capital’. In March, they will be meeting with N.C. Rep. Mike Clappitt and N.C. Sen. Jim Davis about this name change.

#### **Cashiers Chamber of Commerce activity report**

Stephanie Edwards provided the group with a highlight summary of Chamber activities and news:

- They are looking forward to Outhouse Races this weekend.
- Self was not available to attend today, but she reported that the conditional use permit was approved for the all-season events facility. This facility will be a 5800 square feet addition to the commons area.
- They are looking forward to Tour de Cashiers in late April with Mission Health as the marquee sponsor.
- Today’s Crossroads Chronicle paper has nice coverage about the iPad kiosk.

- The Cashiers Chamber is heavily focused on economic and community development. Workforce development is a critical component of the tourism industry. The area needs to have enough qualified workers for the busy season and as new businesses open. Needs include restaurants and hospitality. At tomorrow's board meeting they will talk about creating a job board in partnership with industry people such as WCU, SCC, and AB-Tech; people with expertise, interest, and/or best-practice background are welcome and encouraged to attend. The Chamber has already met with some area leaders and stakeholders to discuss the issues of workforce needs and housing.
- The library is partnering with them on a farm to table food website.

### **Director Report Highlights**

Breedlove provided some highlights of his full report provided with the agenda:

- The JCTDA installed two iPad kiosks at the Cashiers Area Chamber and Jackson County Chamber February 1. In July – December, the kiosks collected zip codes of visitors and a report was given to the Chamber. The kiosks will feed data live into a database for both and Rawle Murdy. Visitors also have the option to provide their e-mail address and receive our bi-monthly e-mail newsletter. They may also enter to win a monthly drawing for a \$50 Visa Gift Card by completing an additional 14-question survey that delves further into the reason they traveled to Jackson County.
- About 1200 entries went into the tabulation. A report was circulated with a map of the data. Data collection has been automated. There are now 2 iPads at each location. They are simple and easy to use. This data will allow us to fine-tune marketing around survey responses. In addition to iPads, there are paper pads at the kiosks. We feel that the program is successful and is providing a lot of data.
- Breedlove will be doing intensive training in Charleston on the TDA website and will update food, lodging, recreation, and more.
- The visitor guide is on track for an end of March delivery date. The guide matches the new marketing branding. Pages will be added about films in Jackson County and the solar eclipse. They are working on artwork to be included.
- Recommendations: a formal recommendation will be made later this month to add two representatives to the Board: Megan Orr, with Holiday Inn Express; and Laura Bowers (Cherie Bowers' daughter) representing Smoky Mountain Getaways. Both candidates are willing and enthusiastic about servicing. Edwards will work with her board on names for the final two seats. Then all names will be presented to the Commissioners.

### **Solar Eclipse one-time funding policy request**

There is incredible interest in this event, even nationally and globally (UK, France, PA, NY, etc.), Breedlove said. A one-time solar eclipse funding policy was approved at the last meeting, designating two sites, Cashiers Village Green and Sylva's Bridge Park, as watch locations. We want to provide quality entertainment for people coming in for the weekend event and turn them into repeat travelers. Spiro worked with Sylva Town Manager Paige Dowling on the Sylva event.

The Chamber is requesting \$3959.89 for the solar eclipse, Spiro said. Staging will be at Bridge Park as the primary venue for activities. Events start Friday afternoon with sales and special happenings such as culinary creations, cocktail salons offering special drinks, breweries will be participating, and moonlight madness events. That is also the WCU move-in weekend. Porch 40 will play in Sylva as part of Concerts on the Creek Friday night. Funding of \$2400 is requested for "A Social Function" to play 6:30-8:30pm at Bridge Park on Saturday.

\$128.38 was requested to purchase 2 banners to go at 23/107 and Main Street in downtown Sylva. We want to order directional and parking signs for Sylva. The Town of Sylva will put up signs, provide maintenance and security, and the public works department will supervise sanitation, recycling, and trash collection. Posters will be printed for moonlight madness. 300 posters will be printed for the Greenway. On Monday, the day of the eclipse, the Colby Dietz band will play from 11am to 1pm at Bridge Park. Subject matter experts will present from 1:00 pm to 2:30pm before the eclipse.

Breedlove recommended that the remainder of the \$4,500 in funds reserved for this event remain unallocated until the event is complete and all costs come in prior to, during and after the event.

#### **Solar Eclipse one-time funding policy request – Cashiers**

Edwards presented details about the Cashiers solar eclipse event. The event is a partnership with The Village Green.

- Festivities will be concentrated at Village Green. Subject matter experts and the merchant association are involved; viewing glasses are being provided by a partnership between the TDA and Solar Hardware & Village Green (at no expense to the TDA).
- A community awareness campaign is already underway. Village Green has a full marketing and communications plan. They are also printing souvenir t-shirts to be sold during the event. Authority funds will cover restrooms, entertainment ('Coconut' Groove band), signage, event publicity including a banner, and cleanup. There is a \$4500 sponsorship request for Village Green.
- Parking is anticipated to be an issue, and Cashiers is contacting local facilities and private landowners. All groups and stakeholders are involved in addressing this issue.

Quotes are needed for the event banner and event cleanup, and asks for funding to be approved for all of the other funding with anticipated additions of about \$262, Breedlove said. He will work with Self and Edwards on those two items. Deposits are due for both groups.

Discussion centered on whether two sites are enough based on the anticipated level of interest. Breedlove stated that these sites are the hub events and additional sites will be available, such as the Cullowhee Rec. Center, Cashiers Glenville Rec. Center, and East La Porte Park. Nick is creating a database of parking; he is also contacting all of the downtown churches to get numbers of parking spots available. A detailed map of parking will be on the NCEclipse.com website so that people can find parking.

**MOTION:** *Jennings moved to approve the 2 plans and the funding for the 2 plans, and to allow Breedlove to work on the outstanding quotes. Motion was seconded by Joel Sowers. Motion passed.*

#### **Discussion of Solar Eclipse event issues:**

- There have been monthly stakeholder meetings to work on the solar eclipse.
- Breedlove reported that he is working with Emergency Management to set up incident management. They plan to utilize a system called Code Red. Todd Dillard will make an automated call to all county residents a day prior to the event to advise residents of events, traffic delays, etc. Breedlove is also working with a 4-person WCU student team, who are putting together tourist information (top 10 facts about the eclipse, fun things to do and see, etc.) and creating tips for merchants to deal with the influx of people expected for the event. He plans to have handouts for residents and guests with comprehensive information about the events.

- The Great Smoky Mountain Railroad is coming to Dillsboro, departing Bryson City at 11:15am for special eclipse viewing. GSMR will arrive in Dillsboro about 12:45pm, leaving later in afternoon.
- Per discussion with the Forest Service, we will not advertise Forest Service lands such as Panthertown or Whiteside because they will likely be over capacity. They plan to have extra staff on hand.
- Breedlove will be getting traffic models from the N.C. DOT based on anticipated traffic.
- Breedlove has asked DOT to install traffic strips at the town entrance to count visitors; DOT has agreed to do this at no charge.
- About 1/5 of North Jackson County commercial accommodations have already been sold.
- Discussion about traffic congestion: a number of events are taking place, including WCU move in day, but traffic is expected to decline by about 3pm. WCU is doing Valley Ballyhoo and viewing the eclipse on campus (not open to the public). We will not promote WCU or SCC events since they are not open to the public and parking will be limited. Jackson County Public Library will likely have free viewing glasses, but we don't know how many glasses will be distributed. Jackson County Public Schools are also working on a plan for the schools, potentially holding children 30 minutes longer for dismissal after eclipse traffic has subsided.
- The primary source of website traffic regarding the solar eclipse has been Durham, Charlotte, Raleigh, Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Tampa, Brevard, NY, Orlando, and Toronto.

**Public comment - none**

**Announcements – none**

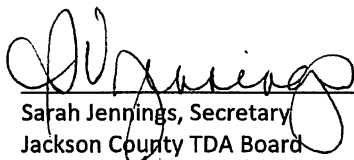
**Closed Session**

**MOTION:** Lanning moved the board go into closed session. Motion seconded by Custer. Motion passed.

**Return to open session**

No announcements.

**MOTION:** Meads moved to adjourn. Motion seconded by Lanning. Meeting adjourned at 2:11pm.



Sarah Jennings, Secretary  
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: March 15, 2017