



MEETING MINUTES
Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
February 19, 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; Megan Orr, Vice Chair; Craig Smith, Secretary; Peter Evers; Julie Spiro; Mandi Cantrell; Susan Gregory; Trevor Brown; and Darlene Fox

Members absent: Jenny Lynn Hooper, Susan Gregory and Daniel Fletcher

Others in attendance: Kara Addy, JCTDA Social Media Manager; Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Gina Stouffer, LHG; TJ Fletcher, Alice Noto and Katy Livingston, Madden Media

Approve Agenda

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

Public Comment

None

Recognize County Commissioner

Ms. Hooper was absent.

Review and Approval of a February 19, 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: Trevor Brown moved to approve the February 19, 2025 meeting minutes. Dale Collins seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of February 28, 2025 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows. Highlights for February include Occupancy Tax collections \$104,097.46 with penalties of \$37.82 and YTD collection totals of \$1,492,657.57 which is

59.87% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$53,533.55. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$5,575.24 and the VACASA, NC total was \$ 3,225.79. 68 accounts reported rentals for January rentals (increase of 1 account from last year). Collections were up 7.29% from the same period in 2024. The February 2025 cash balance is \$123,482.60 with investments totaling \$3,150,000.00. February expenses were \$171,698.85 with FYTD expenses totaling \$2,252,138.29 with encumbrances of \$57,930.40 for a combined total of \$2,310,068.69, equaling 71.33% of the budget.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the February 28, 2025 financial report. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.

Grant Request – Birdfest 2025

WNC BirdFest is an all-day annual bird festival and outdoor recreation-focused event put on by Balsam MountainTrust in partnership with other local organizations, including Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, MainSpring Conservation Trust, Birders of the Tuckasegee Watershed, and Wild Remembering. It takes place every year on World Migratory Bird Day (the second Saturday of May) from 10:00am-4:00pm in conjunction with other global events to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) coordinated by Environment for the Americas. The festival will take place in Monteith Park in Dillsboro.

The festival will have a night bird watching event the night prior to the events on May 10. Last year there were 270 attendees who will stay overnight in Jackson County.

They are requesting \$1,000 for general festival support for event insurance required by the town of Dillsboro, advertising expenses, and miscellaneous supplies. The Executive Committee recommends this grant.

MOTION: Trevor Brown motioned to approve the grant request from Birdfest 2025. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.

Audit Contract – Martin Starnes & Associates

Ms. Fox explained that the audit contract with Martin Starnes & Associates is a standard agreement which is made every year with Martin Starnes to audit the JCTDA. The contact amount is \$9,875, which has slightly increased over last year.

Mr. Breedlove pointed out that each Board member will be receiving a survey regarding the audit.

MOTION: Trevor Brown motioned to approve the audit contract with Martin Starnes & Associates. Craig Smith seconded. Motion carried.

Presentation – Madden Media

JCTDA has contracted Madden Media as the new advertising agency to replace BGRM. The representatives of Madden Media introduced themselves.

- TJ Fletcher, Senior Destination Strategy Director

- Alice Noto, Destination Strategist, who will be the day-to-day contact.
- Katy Livingston, Senior Creative Director

Madden Media is a nationwide agency specializing in travel and tourism. They are currently working with the Blue Ridge Parkway Association to rebrand.

The presentation gave a detailed explanation of how Madden will work on brand strategy with JCTDA. Examples of former and current campaigns that Madden is working on were shown, along with explanations of how to reach different audiences of travelers. Ms. Noto outlined how Madden and JCTDA will work together daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly.

New Business

Mr. Breedlove explained the Madden Media contract. The goal is to have the contract in place mid-May before the BGRM contract expires in June to give six weeks transition period. The cost of the six week transition is \$10,000. The Madden budget remains the same as the BGRM budget. Ms. Fox stated that the funds were in the budget; therefore, acceptable financially. Mr. Jumper stated that the Executive Committee has reviewed the contract and recommends its execution.

MOTION: Megan Orr motioned to approve the Madden Media contract. Trevor Brown seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Jumper announced that Ms. Addy is leaving JCTDA. He proposed that Mr. Breedlove take over Ms. Addy's responsibilities as Social Media Manager until someone could be hired to replace Kara, which should be around May 1. The Executive Committee proposed that Mr. Breedlove's salary should be increased by the prorated amount of Ms. Addy's salary while the position is vacant, and Mr. Breedlove is doing double work. The question was asked if one month was adequate. Mr. Breedlove stated that there were several viable candidates, and May 1 should be a workable date since interviews were scheduled for April 14.

MOTION: Trevor Brown motioned to prorate Ms. Addy's salary to pay Mr. Breedlove for the time that the position is vacant for the additional workload that Mr. Breedlove is undertaking. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.

JCTDA Director's Brief/Social Media Report

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:

- Mr. Breedlove is very excited about having Madden Media on board. Their reputation in the travel industry is outstanding.
- Visitor Guide has been approved and is at the printers.
- Changed the title of the Social Media Manager to the more accurate name of the job description—Content Director. The job was posted last after Executive Committee approval at

the salary of \$54,000 which is midpoint in the range of average salaries. April 14 is the scheduled date for interviews.

- Swag items with the new brand have been offered to the JC Chamber of Commerce for sale at the Chamber.
- Budget planning for the coming year is being done currently. There is uncertainty in the economy that will affect budget friendly travel.
- Next month a cost savings plan for data collection will be submitted. Mr. Breedlove is currently reviewing alternatives to Zartico.
- Jack Austin's name has been submitted as the Board appointment by the Cashiers Area Chamber. Mr. Austin was formerly the general manager of TJ Baileys in Cashiers and GM at Old Edwards in Highlands. As soon as the County Commission approves Mr. Austin, we hope to welcome him to the Board.
- Mr. Breedlove went over the highlights for lodging and occupancy metrics.

Social Media Report

Ms. Addy presented the report on Social Media.

- The new brand has been launched successfully with positive comments and an increase in engagement.
- The Valentines giveaway worked well with increased Facebook page follows since the contestants had to invite someone to follow our page.
- New brand video is in preparation.
- Ms. Addy stated that it has been an honor to serve Jackson County.

Mr. Breedlove spoke about Ms. Addy's accomplishments in the last two years. She introduced new platforms, including Threads and Bluesky, increased Instagram followers, lead a content strategy for post Hurricane Helene disaster to let people know that Jackson County was still open for business. She oversaw original content videos across Facebook and TikTok, introduced monthly themes, giveaways, and seasonal guides on Facebook and Instagram. Mr. Breedlove noted that this was just a small list of Kara's accomplishments.

Mr. Breedlove then presented Kara with a plaque as a token of the Board's appreciation for her work.

Jackson County Chamber Director's Report

Ms. Spiro presented the report. Highlights are as follow:

- The Chamber will hold an open house March 20-21.
- Friends Night Out is next week.
- The Dillsboro Easter Parade is scheduled for April 19.
- The Maker's Market is going to be held on the 3rd
- Thursday of every month.

Cashiers Area Chamber Director's Report

Ms. Gregory was absent. The report was sent with the agenda for this meeting. Mr. Breedlove went over the highlights:

- The Visitor's Guide should be out in April
- Cashiers Burger Week will be April 26 – May 4.
- Applications for Leadership Cashiers are due March 31.
- Community Volunteer Expo is scheduled for June 11.

Partner Updates –LHG

Gina Stouffer explained the magazine and newspaper article placement activities of LHG during the past month. They are working on media visits for this Spring and Summer.

Updates from individual Board Members / Announcements

Trevor Brown announced that the Bike Rodeo will be held Sunday April 24 at the Cullowhee Valley School.

Mr. Jumper announced that the Cherokee Splash Pad is almost finished for summer fun.

Adjourn

***MOTION:** Dale Collins motioned to adjourn. Trevor Brown seconded. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on April 16, 2025 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.

Craig Smith, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: April 16, 2025