



MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting May 19, 2021 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m. Zoom Teleconference

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Mr. Jumper. Mr. Jumper reminded attendees of Zoom meeting etiquette.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Robert Jumper, Chair; Ann Self, Vice Chair; Megan Orr, Secretary; County Commissioner Mark Jones, Board Members Dale Collins, Daniel Fletcher, Darlene Fox, Scott Greene, and Stephanie Edwards
- **Members absent:** Julie Spiro, Daniel Fletcher, Craig Smith, Mark Jones and Jay Grissom
- **Others in attendance:** Sales and Marketing Manager Caleb Sullivan; Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; John Kautz, V.P. and Laurie Devore, Media Strategy Manager, Rawle Murdy.

Approval Agenda

Agenda was sent prior to meeting via email.

MOTION: Ann Self moved to approve the agenda. Dale Collins seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Robert Jumper, Chair, did not comment.

Ann Self commented that she is pleased that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, which means that events will be returning to normal. The Village Green is preparing for a limited concert series that will begin in July.

Megan Orr is also happy that restrictions are lifted. She further commented that the Quality Inn is currently being renovated and rebranded as a Clarion.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner, did not comment.

Review and Approval of April Minutes

Minutes of the April 21, 2021 meeting were sent via email prior to meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: Ann Self moved to approve the April 21, 2021 minutes. Dale Collins seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of April 30, 2021 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial reports. Highlights for April include Occupancy Tax collections of \$130,223.76 penalties of \$126.99, and YTD collection totals of \$1,456,592, which is 88.30% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$43,358.76. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$25,607.52. The VACASA, NC total was \$3,965.32. 59 accounts reported rentals for March rentals (decrease of 27 accounts from last year). Collections were up 278.87% (\$95,946.06) from the same period in 2020. The April 30, 2021 cash balance is \$947,549.59 with investments totaling \$400,000. April expenses were \$136,633.31 with YTD expenses totaling \$868,085.61 with encumbrances of \$6,279.00 for a combined total of \$874,364.61, equaling 50.94% of the budget.

MOTION: Dale Collins moved to approve the April financial report as presented. Ann Self seconded. The motion carried.

Review Proposed Budget FY 21/22

The proposed budget was sent via email prior to the meeting. A printed version was mailed and should have been received prior to this meeting.

Mr. Breedlove explained the key component highlights including the major variations from the prior year and new programs implemented as follows:

- The proposed budget is a combined budget with room occupancy tax revenue and fund balance and is in the amount of \$1,754,000.
- The room occupancy tax will remain the same at 4%.
- A new Public Relations firm, the Lou Hammond Group, has been hired at \$86,200.
- The advertising budget has been increased due to the increased occupancy tax receipts to \$702,961.
- The rent on both Chambers of Commerce and Visitors Center are increased by 3% and \$5,000 each has been added for improvements to the visitor experience.
- Travel has been increased in anticipation of increased participation in trade shows, sales meetings, and group convention business.
- A committee working on proposed capital project program structure and application guidelines is in the works. All capital projects must be approved by County Commissioners.
- The Tourism Grant program has been increased to \$50,000. The Grant Program is on today's agenda for approval.
- An investment in research and analytics is in the budget with several firms that will give insight about our visitors and combine all data collected into one website.
- There is a contract for Magellan to create an incentive plan for TDA staff.

Schedule Public Hearing – FY 21-22 Budget – June 16, 2021@12:55 PM

The budget will be presented to the County Commission and a public hearing will held on June 16. There were no questions or comments from the Board.

Rawle Murdy FY 21-22 Plan Presentation

Mr. Breedlove introduced the Vice President of Rawle Murdy John Kautz who presented the company's strategic plan for FY 21-22 and Laurie Devore, Media Strategy Manager.

Mr. Kautz briefly gave the highlights of the 2020 marketing initiatives which focused on healthy, outdoor activities that could be experienced safely in Jackson County that sent the message of come when you feel comfortable. The Secret Season campaign and video and the chat feature on the website were also highlights of the year. The Wedding Giveaway is on-going and will occur in the Fall. Mr. Kautz then shared statics of the performance of the website and paid social media which were all favorable.

In the coming year, Rawle Murdy plans to target five different audiences— (1) The Budget Traveler (2) High Adventure Traveler (3) The Luxury Traveler R & R (4) The Purpose Driven Traveler (5) Loyalist Traveler. Strategically, Rawle Murdy will concentrate and invest in media advertising to platforms that are proven performers.

Laurie Devore presented new strategies including promotions such as Ale Trail, Outdoor Alliance to appeal to the Purpose Driven Traveler, feature content emails appealing to the Luxury R & R and the Budget Travelers, audience targeted display ads to appear on travel websites, Spotify audio ads, advertising in the magazine Local Palate, a publication that focuses on Southern food and has a readership of approximately 200,000, and billboard advertising.

Mr. Kautz presented a budget summary showing that the bulk of the budget would be spent on media spending and creative production.

Approve FY 21-22 Contracts

All Contract copies were emailed with Agenda for May 19 meeting. Mr. Breedlove summarized each contract prior to voting.

- **Rawle Murdy Advertising Contract**
The only change from the previous year is increasing the amount for advertising spending and miscellaneous other changes.

Motion: Ann Self motioned to approve the Rawle Murdy Contract. Dale Collins seconded.
Motion carried.

- **Lou Hammond Group Public Relations Contract – June 2021 Contract and July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022 Contract**
The contract is two part since the Group did work for the TDA outside of the FY year 21/22 in June 2021 and the other part is for FY 21/22.

Motion: Ann Self motioned to approve the Lou Hammond Group Public Relations Contract. Scott Greene seconded. Motion carried.

- Magellan Strategy Group – Incentive Study
This contract is in the amount of \$5,600 between Magellan Strategy Group and the Executive Committee to work through details an industry wide study on salaries/incentives for JCTDA.

Motion: Megan Orr motioned to approve the Magellan Strategy Group contract. Ann Self seconded. Motion carried.

- Smoky Mountain News for Visitor Guide Production
This contract is to produce the Visitor Guide. We to receive revenue back from the publication.

Motion: Ann Self motioned to approve the Smoky Mountain News contract. Scott Greene seconded. Motion carried.

- Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement
The only change from previous year is a 3% increase in rent and \$5,000 added for capital projects.

Motion: Dale Collins motioned to approve the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement. Ann Self seconded. Motion carried.

- Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement
The only change from previous year is a 3% increase in rent and \$5,000 added for capital projects.

Motion: Dale Collins motioned to approve the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center Agreement. Scott Greene seconded. Motion carried.

Grant Program Application

The Grant Program Application has been simplified after the grant Program Committee produced recommendations that are incorporated into the new application. These changes are (1) a monthly rolling cycle for the submittal of the application (2) included on the application is an explanation of how the TDA ranks the application in points (3) the budget has been increased to open grants to larger applications with no monetary cap, and (4) application will be completed on-line.

Motion: Dale Collins motioned to approve the Grant Application. Scott Greene seconded. Motion carried.

JCTDA Staff Report/Marketing Report/PR Report

Executive Director: Mr. Breedlove provided the board with a written report listing all the activities of the month prior to the meeting via email. He then only presented the highlights as follows:

- The TDA staff and Rawle Murdy is excited about receiving Zardico's statistical information on tourism in Jackson County.
- Next month the TDA staff will work on bringing the Lou Hammond Group on-board to begin PR work.
- There is a new Economic Development Director, Tiffany Henry, who was previously with the Small Business center at SCC.
- The TDA now has access to Visa data which shows what is spent on cards in Jackson County.
- Occupancy last week was at 65%, which is a positive sign for growth as is the average daily rate.
- The Wedding Giveaway Contest in conjunction with Bear Lake/Castle Ladyhawke have been narrowed down to five very compelling stories of people whose nuptials were cancelled by the pandemic.
- Mr. Sullivan commented that engagement on social media was increasing. He completed the Professional Destination Management certificate.

Directors' Reports

Jackson County Chamber

Ms. Spiro was absent. Mr. Breedlove updated the activities of the Chamber as follows:

- The welcome center has sent out over 2,000 Visitor Guides and have answered 1,200 direct inquiries, and 600 people have visited the center showing that people are interested in learning about Jackson County.
- Concerts on the Creek are resuming, Hook Line and Drinker Festival is scheduled for August 21, the July 4th fireworks will resume, and Greening Up the Mountains is scheduled at the end of August.

Cashiers Area Chamber

The Cashiers Area Chamber report was given by Ms. Edwards, who stated that the area is seeing increased activity and pent-up demand for a return to indoor activities and dining.

New Business

None.

Updates from Individual Board Members

Scott Greene commented on the reopening of High Hampton, and they are anticipating the arrival of about 600 members this coming weekend for the opening of the pool and golf course.

Announcements

- The budget must be approved in June.
- There will not be a July meeting.

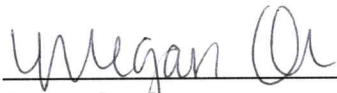
Adjourn

MOTION: *Ann Self motioned to adjourn. Scott Greene seconded. Motion carried.* The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the full Board will be June 16, 2021 via Zoom. There is no July meeting.

On August 18 , 2021, our meeting will be in person at the Village Green Commons in Cashiers. There will be a hybrid option for those who cannot attend.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Megan Orr", is written over a horizontal line.

Megan Orr, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: June 16 2021