



MEETING MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

May 20, 2026 (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. Collins.

Present:

Dale Collins, Chair

Darlene Fox, Ex-Officio Board Member

Todd Vinyard, Ex-Officio Board Member

Peter Evers, Board Member

Jenny Lynn Hooper, Ex-Officio Board Member

Susan Sapienza, Ex-Officio Board Member

Brett Stewart, Board Member

Cheryl Osborne, Clerk to the Board

Ashley Svarney, LHG

T.J. Fletcher, Madden Media

Executive Director Nick Breedlove

Craig Smith, Board Member

Mandi Cantrell, Board Member (Excused Absence)

Jack Austin, Board Member

Trevor Brown, Board Member

John Faulk, Board Member

Jason Kimenker, Board Member

Alexandria Noto, Madden Media

Samatha Nelson, TDA Social Media Manager

Sarah Jennngs, Cashiers Chamber Board Member

Approve Agenda

MOTION: Trevor Brown moved to approve the agenda. Peter Evers seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None

Updates from Chair, Secretary, Vice Chair

No comments.

County Commissioner Updates

Ms. Hooper commented that several projects have started construction.

Review and Approval of April 15, 2026 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 April 15, 2026 meeting minutes. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.

Review and Approval of April 30, 2026 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial reports highlighting April collections. Collections were up 80.53% from the same period in 2025. The tax rate increased from 4% to 6%, effective July 1, accounting for the large increase.

Mr. Breedlove commented on travel trends in April.

MOTION: Trevor Brown moved to approve the April 30, 2026 financial report. Jason Kimenker seconded. The motion carried.

Approve Annual Contracts

Mr. Breedlove commented that each contract had been reviewed by the county legal department. They are standard contracts.

- **FY 26 Tembo Hospitality Group**

Mr. Smith recused himself since he is a principal in the company. Tembo produces video and photo shoots used in promotional activities. The contract value is \$55,000, plus an optional amount up to \$7,250 for photo shoot add-ons and rush fees.

MOTION: Trevor Brown moved to approve the Tembo contract. Peter Evers seconded. The motion carried. Board Member Craig Smith abstained.

- **FY 26 Office Space Lease**

This contract is issued to Gates Properties. The value of this contract is \$24,540, representing an increase of 5.4% over the last lease term.

- **FY 26 Smoky Mountain News**

The Smoky Mountain News prints the Visitor's Guide. The contract value is \$3,000.

- **FY 26 Madden Media**

Madden Media is the TDA advertising agency. The contract value is \$1,048,000.

- **FY 26 Lou Hammond Group**

LHG is the TDA public relations agency. The retainer \$85,860 with an additional amount of up to \$40,000 for out-of-pocket expenses incurred during media visits to Jackson County.

- **FY 26 Jackson Chamber Contract**

The \$121,051.67 is for the visitor center operation.

- **FY 26 Cashiers Area Chamber Contract**

Visitor center operational costs \$107,868.96.

MOTION: Jason Kimenker motioned to approve the Office Space Lease, Smoky Mountain News, Madden Media, Lou Hammond Group, Jackson Chamber and Cashiers Area Chamber Contracts contracts for FY 2026. Brett Stewart seconded. The motion carried.

Draft FY 26 Budget

Mr. Breedlove passed a copy of the proposed budget with detailed descriptions of each item to each board member so that it can be reviewed prior to voting in the June meeting.

The total for FY 2026/27 is \$3,513,661, which is \$27,000 lower than last year. The largest budget item is Advertising and Marketing at \$1,048,000. Capital Projects is \$1,000,000. The revenue mix has Occupancy Tax at \$3,420,661 as the largest source of revenue. Other sources of revenue are Investment Earnings at \$88,000 and Penalties at \$5,000.

Annual Public Relations Plan FY 26

Lou Hammond Group is the TDA's public relations firm. Ashley Svarney presented the LHG marketing plan for FY 26/27, highlighting past year performance showing 5 million media impressions to date. LHG also arranged six media visits to Jackson County in exchange for editorial coverage.

Social Media Plan FY 26

Samantha Nelson recapped last year's performance and explained the FY 26/27 focus & strategy.

Advertising Plan FY 26

Madden Media was on hand to present their annual advertising plan. T.J. Fletcher and Alex Noto presented last year's recap of programs and discussed plans for advertising in the coming fiscal year.

Proposed TCPF Changes

As a result of some discussions with a recent Tourism Capital Project Fund award and challenges with water & sewer capacity, Breedlove suggested to the board consider several changes to the application process. The changes proposed include verification of water and sewer for projects, adding a detailed project timeline, information about timeline extensions, and planning/zoning certification for intended site use. With questions related to timeline, Breedlove proposed bringing back additional suggested edits at the next board meeting.

New Business

None

Updates from individual Board Members / Announcements

None

Announcements

Mr. Breedlove reminded the board that a Public Hearing will be held at 12:55 on June 17. The Board meeting will be held at 1:00.

Adjourn

MOTION: Jason Kimenker motioned to adjourn. Trevor Brown seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 17, 2026 in person at JCTDA headquarters unless otherwise posted.

Craig Smith, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: June 17, 2026