



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

MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
Meeting

August 16, 2017 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.

Cordelia Camp Building Room 143, WCU, Cullowhee, NC 28723

Call to order/Roll Call

Chairman Jumper called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Members in attendance: Mary Lanning, Vice Chair; Sarah Jennings, Secretary; Henry Hoche, Kelly Custer, Ann Self, Joel Sowers, Gareth Daley, Kathy Korb, Laura Bowers, Mark Jones, Megan Orr, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards, Ron Mau.

Members absent: Vick Patel, Bob Williams.

Others in attendance: Deborah Stone with Pineapple PR; Nate Kreuter with Dark Ridge Racing; Joyce Pope (minutes).

A quorum was present for the meeting.

Public comment - no speakers.

Recognition of Vice Chair and Secretary

Chairman Jumper recognized the Vice Chair and Secretary, who had no comments.

Review and approval of Minutes

The board reviewed the June 21, 2017 minutes.

MOTION: *Sarah Jennings made a motion to approve the minutes. Mary Lanning seconded. Motion passed.*

Review and approval of year-to-date financial report

The Financial Report for June and July was presented by Darlene Fox.

- Collections for June totaled \$ 76,862.28. The total increase for the fiscal year is 12.12%.
- Collections for July totaled \$ 118,801.30. The total decrease for the fiscal year is 0.88%.

Committee reports: Personnel & Governance - none

Marketing Committee

Executive Director Nick Breedlove advised that Board that marketing highlights will be provided in the Director's Report.

Chairman report - none

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce activity report

Julie Spiro presented asked if the board had any questions or concerns on the June 2017, July 2017 or analytics reports for the Jackson County Chamber. No questions or concerns were expressed.

Cashiers Chamber of Commerce activity report

Stephanie Edwards presented highlights for June and July 2017. Cashiers has seen a lot of visitors related to the upcoming eclipse. Edwards mentioned the Cashiers Chamber had purchased weatherproof literature displays and sent Breedlove information about them in case the JCTDA wished to purchase any.

Map Project

Breedlove recommend the JCTDA engage with cartographer Ken Czarnomski to create illustrated maps for Cashiers area waterfalls and attractions, Downtown Sylva and Pinnacle Park. Czarnomski designed similar maps for the Haywood JCTDA and they are very popular. The fee for production of all maps is \$1600 and production time is 6-9 months.

MOTION: *Henry Hoche made a motion to enter into a contract for the maps. Mary Lanning seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

Director Report Highlights

Executive Director Breedlove thanked Self, Edwards and Spiro for all of their hard work on preparing for the eclipse. He also thanked Custer for the loan of a water cooler for Bridge Park. He also thanked all of our hoteliers for their support of the PR programs and FAM/media visits.

A printed copy of the director's report was provided for review. Highlights:

- Jackson County placed third out of 100 counties for tourism growth, seeing 7-percent growth for calendar year 2016, with \$188.2 million in tourist spending. That is a testament to the teamwork among the Jackson County partners and agencies, Breedlove said.
- New Smith Travel Research segment information will be available soon comparing Jackson County to surrounding counties, the WNC region and state.
- The JCTDA took delivery of 30,000 new fly fishing maps featuring a new cover image and more photography.
- Media visits have been very exciting. Breedlove has worked almost every day with Pineapple on upcoming visits. Two great pieces were produced by golf writer Steve Harmon. Harmon visited High Hampton Inn, Sequoyah National Golf Course and Bear Lake Reserve. The JCTDA is partnering with the state tourism office to host a UK writer, Wendy Parsons, on 9/22. The publication Parsons writes for, *UK Daily Star*, has a circulation of a quarter million.
- PR values: In FY 16-17 the JCTDA received over \$10 million in earned media placements, and over 300 million impressions; this is a significant increase over the prior FY, Breedlove said. The lifetime value the JCTDA has received from Pineapple is over \$18 million, and half a billion impressions.
- Blogs on Discover Jackson NC: several new posts were just published. Lifetime views total 30,000 . The JCTDA's goal is to post about 3 times per month.
- Advertising updates were provided in the written report and a copy of the *WNC Guide* was provided to the board. Breedlove mentioned the JCTDA placed an ad in the tabloid due to its exposure to potential tourists during the Total Solar Eclipse weekend.
- Rawle Murdy is editing B-roll footage from our photo/video shoot last year for 13 videos. The cost is almost \$8000 to re-cut the footage, but underspending on a previous project last fiscal year allowed this project to be completed at almost no impact to the current FY budget.

- In the JCTDA's first month with Rawle Murdy on social media, they have delivered impressive results, Breedlove said. A key metric is driving visitor guide downloads; we have over 200 visitor guide downloads as a result of a social media campaign.
- There are several new projects for the website, including SMS functionality to enhance phone access, foodie itineraries, and panoramic vistas. The panoramic vistas will provide an immersive experience for the website visitor. Website traffic this year shows increases in every metric. Since June 1, 2017, traffic is over 50,000; for the same time period last year, it was 11,000.
- Balsam West fiber conversion for both chambers is underway. Actual fiber construction is taking place along with securing rights of way. Internet speed should increase about tenfold and open up the capability for Wi-Fi and high definition voice conferencing.
- The JCTDA created a one-page informational sheet for the eclipse covering parking, on-site amenities, a QR code for eye safety, and more. These documents were made available to the hoteliers and chambers. Eye safety tips were also printed for distribution.

2016 State Tourism Numbers for Jackson County

A packet of information was distributed to the board with the 2016 state tourism rankings. Chairman Jumper mentioned the report for Jackson County and was impressed with Jackson County's placement next to Cherokee County (which has the new casino).

Succession planning and board size discussion

Since there are no JCTDA meetings in October or December, and the Chair and Vice Chair will rotate off in December, a discussion needs to take place on succession, Breedlove said. The changes that were made in January, 2017 to the local resolution establishing the JCTDA were helpful in making a wider array of candidates available. However, the size of the board is rather large, especially in comparison to TDA boards statewide. The JCTDA engaged Magellan Strategy Group's Chris Cavanaugh in a discussion relating to board size and succession. Research Cavanaugh compiled among 31 TDA's statewide showed the average board size at 8.2; the JCTDA board of 15 was larger than any of the other boards surveyed.

Based on that data, Breedlove worked with Cavanaugh and Chairman Jumper to prepare a plan that would reduce the board size to 9 (nine) members. Cavanaugh suggested reaching a goal of reduced board size through attrition, expiration of terms, or voluntary step-downs.

In other discussion:

- The current quorum is defined as a hard number of 8 (eight). Breedlove suggested changing the quorum to a simple majority.
- Jumper explained that the dynamics of the board would not change, with over 66% of the board represented by hotels and accommodations.
- Breedlove suggested with the Chamber appointments that board members might be excluded due to potential conflicts of interest. Chamber Directors said that would limit the pool of available nominees. Board members agreed to remove that clause, but said they should consider revisiting the conflicts of interest clause in their bylaws in the future.
- In order to reach the new number of 9 board members, no vacating members would be replaced until the lower number is reached. A board of 9 will be more efficient, and open up more potential members.

MOTION: Henry Hoche made a motion to recommend to commissioners to consider a resolution change from 15 to 9 members, with the previously discussed edits removing “who neither sits on the board or is employed by the board of <chamber>” with “who is employed by”. There was no further discussion. A consensus was taken with agreement to present this recommendation to the commissioners.

New Print Project – Sylva/Cashiers Map

The map was previously presented.

2018 Visitor Guide agreement

Smoky Mountain News has produced the JCTDA visitor guide for the last three years. This year the JCTDA formalized the arrangement in a contract. The JCTDA will receive 35% of the advertising revenue for the first \$30,000.00 and 20% of the advertising revenue for the amount over \$30,000.00 in the arrangement.

MOTION: Sarah Jennings made a motion to approve moving forward with the agreement with the Smoky Mountain News. Mary Lanning seconded. Motion passed.

Special Projects Request – USARA Qualifier Race

Nate Kreuter with Dark Ridge Racing presented a special project application for “The Great Balsam Adventure Race,” a U.S. Adventure Racing Association regional qualifier for the adventure racing national championships. The race date is August 10-12, 2018.

- Adventure racers are given a map and have to plot their course. They run, canoe and mountain bike through the course, reaching the required check-points along the course. The team with the most check-points win. The race would promote the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of our area through a 24-hour adventure race featuring trail running, canoeing, and mountain biking. There would also be a 12-hour intermediate race and a 6-hour sprint.
- The proposal requests a tourism special project grant of \$2,500, which will go to canoe rental and food.
- Expected attendance from 40 to 100 racers. As an inaugural race, attendance is generally smaller the first year with the goal of growing the event annually. Adventure racers generally travel distances to attend races.

MOTION: Sarah Jennings made a motion to approve the funding request of \$2,500. Mary Lanning seconded Motion passed.

JCTDA Office Signage

Funds had are included in the budget for office signage for the JCTDA, Breedlove said. The JCTDA issued an RFP and had no responses from Jackson County businesses. Due to potential confusion to visitors thinking the JCTDA is the Visitor Center/Chamber, and in keeping costs down, Breedlove proposed that instead of a sign, a large window decal be placed. The cost is roughly \$96. Breedlove proposed moving the remainder of funds slated for signage (\$2400) into contingency for future needs. The board agreed.

Solar Eclipse Plans – Aug. 21

Breedlove updated the board on Solar Eclipse plans in both Cashiers and Sylva.

In Cashiers, The Village Green will host a day of festivities and solar eclipse viewing during "Eclipse Fest." Astronomy activities with eclipse tips and facts will take place throughout the day of the Eclipse. Visitors can try several local food trucks such as Glenville's own Flip & Whip, Coach Joe Crosby, and Native Private Chef, enjoy beer and wine by Cashiers Mountain Market, and sweet treats and ice cream from Cream & Flutter. Yard games and a live music performance by Coconut Groove, a '60s/'70s cover band, will entertain guests during the festivities

in Sylva, Festivities will take place at the Bridge Park Solar Eclipse fest 11am – 4pm. Shuttles are provided 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Shuttle rides are \$1 per ride per segment and parking is free. Bridge Park's subject matter expert, Dr. Amy Fagan, will instruct crowds starting at 1 p.m. on safe viewing techniques and guide them through eclipse science. On-site food trucks will be serving up tacos, tasty bites and more. Live music from the Colby Deitz band (Americana/rock) and children's activities will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be a planetary walk of the solar system scaled to fit on Sylva's Main Street. Children's activities will take place at Poteet park. Adult Events following kids' events will be held at Bridge Park. Other events include Friday night (Aug. 18): Concerts on the Creek - Porch 40 band 7-9 pm at Bridge Park; Saturday (Aug. 19) A headliner concert, A Social Function, Bridge Park 6:30-8:30 pm. Food on-site. Free admission. Following the concert, Main Street merchants will be open late for moonlight madness shopping with special deals, offerings and discounts; 2k (1.1 mile) Moonlight Fun Run at 9:30 p.m. Aug. 19 in Cullowhee; and Sunday (Aug. 20) - learn the science behind the eclipse at a panel with area astronomers, astrophysicists, and professors at the Southwestern Community College Myer's auditorium at 6 p.m. Admission is free. Panel moderated by SCC's NASA Project Director and Physics Instructor Matt Cass.

Pineapple PR Update

Pineapple PR president Deborah Stone introduced current team member Jessica Ennis, and new team member Haley Barton. Ennis provided a recap of solar eclipse PR taking place over the past year, reaching 23 million impressions of solar eclipse coverage for Jackson County. Editorial value has reached \$1.8 million. Pineapple PR coordinated a media trip for *National Geographic's* Larry Porges to attend the Solar Eclipse in Cashiers.

In other PR updates:

- Pineapple is working on a press release for the tourism economic impact numbers.
- They will attend the Mission NC media event in Charlotte, an event with 30-35 media expected to attend.
- Pineapple is also focusing on media influencers, such as outdoor, culinary, and travel media influencers. These influencers have become very credible as a new media channel. They have as many as tens of thousands of engaged followers. Pineapple and the JCTDA are vetting influencers to invest in appropriate channels.
- Website itineraries are underway, with the foodie, fishing, outdoor adventure, girls' getaway, family friendly shopper, and rainy day coming in September.
- Ennis is pitching Mountain Heritage Day, the WNC Pottery Festival, and other seasonal pitching. Other media initiatives include golf coverage, and a visit next week from Southern Living to take photos and do research for a feature in a 2018 issue.

New Business - none

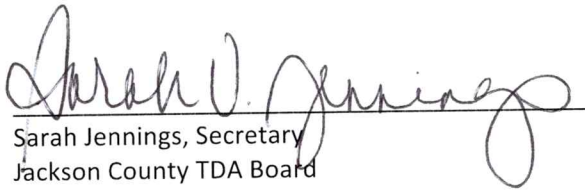
Announcements

Edwards provided posters for the Baldaroo festival on September 16, which is a fundraiser for the Boys & Girls Club of the plateau.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 20, 2017, at 1:00 p.m. at the Cordelia Camp Building Room 143, WCU.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40pm.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sarah V. Jennings", written over a horizontal line.

Sarah Jennings, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: September 20, 2017