



## MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Meeting

September 20, 2017 (Wednesday), 1:00 p.m.

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

### Public comment

Public Hearing was opened at 1:00pm by Robert Jumper. No members of the public were present.

### Call to order/Roll Call

Chairman Jumper called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. A quorum was present for the meeting.

*Members in attendance:* Mary Lanning, Vice Chair; Ann Self, Gareth Daley, Laura Bowers, Mark Jones, Megan Orr, Darlene Fox, Julie Spiro, Stephanie Edwards, Ron Mau, Bob Williams, Vick Patel, Robert Jumper, Nick Breedlove.

*Members absent:* Sarah Jennings, Secretary; Henry Hoche, Kelly Custer, Joel Sowers, Kathy Korb.

*Others in attendance:* Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategy Group; John Kautz, Rawle Murdy; Heather Baker, Attorney; Rich Price, Jackson County Economic Development Director; Joyce Pope, minutes.

### Recognition of Vice Chair and Secretary

Chairman Jumper recognized the Vice Chair, who had no comments at this time.

### Review and approval of August 16, 2017 Minutes

The board reviewed the August 16, 2017 minutes.

**MOTION:** *Mary Lanning made a motion to approve the minutes. Ann Self 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 August totaled \$180,732.28 with \$548.50 collected in penalties. The YTD collection total was \$181,280.78, or 16.73% of budget. 175 units reported for rentals with collections up 0.49% from the same period in 2016. 452247.03 balance. August expenses were \$127,604.51 with YTD expenses totaling \$20,3732.77, 19.63% of budget.

**MOTION:** *Mary Lanning moved to accept the financial report; Vick Patel seconded. Motion passed.*

### Committee reports:

**Personnel & Governance** - Ann Self stated we would take up the director evaluation later in the meeting.

### Marketing Committee

Executive Director 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 highlights of the chamber report:

- Upcoming events: A Concerts on the Creek event featuring Tuxedo Junction is scheduled for 9/29, followed by Mountain Heritage Day on 9/30. The Chamber will provide a shuttle, golf carts, and tent for Mountain Heritage Day; The Chamber is gearing up for the stocking up of Tuckasegee on October 3-4 with the NC Wildlife Commission. This event has been posted on fly fishing trail pages; The Chamber is working with the Sylva Police department on a "Walk for hope" when the new police chief unveils "Hope," the new pink police car; the WCU homecoming parade is Friday, 10/27 at 6:15pm. The Chamber is hoping to "paint the town purple" along with WCU; Halloween Pumpkin Patch will be a Mark Watson Park this year. The Town of Webster and SCC will also do trick or treating.
- Dining guide sales open now through end of October.

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

Stephanie Edwards presented highlights of the Chamber report:

- Baldaroo went very well and hopefully will become an ongoing music festival. Attendance appeared to be over 400 and was a positive experience.
- Cashiers Leaf Festival 10/6-8: as many as 4,000 people are expected.
- Storm damage from the hurricane is now being addressed.
- The Cashiers Planning Council will take up an ordinance on sidewalks. Sidewalks definitely impact the visitor experience and there may be funds available to pursue this project.
- The Chamber is actively working on workforce housing as part of a workforce development strategic initiative.

### **Director Report Highlights**

Executive Director Breedlove gave highlights of his report. The Bridge Park event for the solar eclipse was a great success; there is a picture gallery on the TDA website. Lots of website projects are ongoing, including the panorama gallery, which went live today. Breedlove is working on media trip for a UK writer from the Daily Star to visit Jackson County. Two social media influencers will visit in October and November. A Fall FAM trip is scheduled for October 27-29.

### **Advertising Update**

John Kautz with Rawle Murdy presented a JCTDA Marketing Update. Results Highlights for August included leads up 25.42% (vs. July 2017), website traffic up 110.71% (vs. July 2017), and website traffic up 354.33% (vs. August 2016 – old website). Much of this traffic was driven by the eclipse. Social media was the top driver of sessions, and more importantly, leads for the month of August (including 201 leads in July and 168 for the month of August) (Leads = visitor guide downloads and email signups). Social Media Paid Advertising yielded 63,209 video views, 7,871 website sessions, 770 new pages likes, and 549 goal completions. Subject matter was divided into 13 areas for the video views. Video data was for one half month since it started mid-August.

- Advertising highlights included USA Today Travel and WNC Guide – Solar Eclipse Edition
- Website highlights: Panorama Views Page is live and was demonstrated for the board
- Partners Database Update: update included merge/purge of two databases, nesting of collections data, sync with WordPress clean-up, and developing detailed plan for final steps



- Sticky Menu Bar has been added to the website
- Drop-down menu promo ads are live and can direct visitors to upcoming or ongoing local events or attractions with click-through capability
- Harnessing the power of traveler-generated visuals takes advantage of user provided content using locations, hashtags, and pictures. It has a content discovery and rights management tool and streams content into curated website galleries to improve website performance.

#### **Director Evaluation process approval; set evaluation for November**

Printed copies were made available of Magellan Strategy Group's Recommendations for the Performance Evaluation for the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Executive Director. Chris Cavanaugh prepared the recommendations and provided to the governance committee. The sample evaluation uses a 1-5 scale to evaluate the director in six areas of performance: initiative, industry leadership and engagement, community leadership and engagement, fiscal management, destination marketing and management, and achievement of organizational objectives. It was recommended that the weighting of these criteria be equal to each other. The Executive Director would provide his thoughts on performance prior to an in-person evaluation with the board chair and vice-chair. The entire board would provide feedback to the board chair and vice-chair prior to the in-person evaluation. Personnel and Governance Committees reviewed the evaluation recommendation and recommended sending the process to the full board for approval. Breedlove suggested the evaluation be done in November before the current board changes. Evaluations would be performed annually each November thereafter. Heather Baker recommended doing the feedback process in a closed session or in a confidential written form.

**MOTION:** *Ann Self moved to accept the recommendation. No second needed from committee head. Motion passed unanimously.*

#### **Chairperson appointment**

A candidate with board experience has been nominated for chairperson: Vick Patel. Patel is set to rotate off the board in 2018. Jackson County Commissioners prefer a written recommendation of a candidate for appointment. The Vice Chair and Secretary will be chosen after the new board is set in December, 2017.

**MOTION:** *Mary Lanning moved to recommend Vick Patel be nominated for Chairperson. Mark Jones seconded. Passed unanimously.*

#### **SB 155/Brunch Bill discussion**

A packet of information was provided with letters of support from the local groups in favor of SB 155. The Chambers indicated their boards are in support of the bill and they have been watching the progress of this bill through the Senate. Stephanie will attend the October commissioners meeting to convey their support. Chambers support the bill because North Carolina is one of the few states where alcohol is not able to be purchased before noon on Sunday. Spiro stated that about 53% of Sylva's Chamber membership could be affected by the bill, causing the board to decide in support of the bill. If the bill passes, business owners may choose to open or serve earlier but may choose not to as well.

A local business owner asked Nick Breedlove to speak for them at the Sylva Town Board meeting in support of SB 155. Rather than voice support at the meeting, Breedlove asked if the board would approve the creation of a letter of support.

**MOTION:** Sarah made a motion to support the brunch bill with a written letter that Executive Director Breedlove can use as needed. Motion was seconded by Vick Patel. Chairman Jumper abstained from the vote due to potential professional/personal conflict. Motion passed unanimously. Breedlove will work with Pineapple to draft a letter.

**Capital Projects discussion: Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategy Group**

The board has the right to perform capital projects but lacks a defined process for capital projects such as ziplines, greenways, etc. Projects can be described as either a 'motivator' or a 'satisfier'. Cavanaugh presented an overview of capital project options that are available to the TDA. The term "Tourism Product Development" covers:

1. Bricks and mortar capital projects: areas, stadiums, visitor centers, wayfinding, museums, greenways, etc.
2. "Soft" product, typically non-capital investments: festivals, events, sporting events, concerts
3. "Other": initiatives to maintain or enhance experience, tourism-related business development

TDAs become involved in product development because they "choreograph the overall destination experience", grow demand, thwart competitive threats, enhance quality of life, generate economic impact, feed the brand, create buzz, take control of their destiny, increase organizational relevancy, and "skate to where the puck is going to be." There are generally seven roles of DMOs in TPD: Advisor, Influencer, Instigator, Supporter, Funder, Partner, and Operator. The NC TDA role in product development includes:

- Legislation: mandates provided by NC law
- Policy: manage risk, legal protection, establish priorities
- Process: create clarity, efficiency, and accountability

Current Jackson County TDA legislation covers tourism-related expenditures and the duties of the Authority (JCTDA), which include the ability to finance tourist-related capital projects in the county. The JCTDA must, by legislative guidelines, invest at least 2/3 of tax revenue to promote travel and tourism, and up to 1/3 can be invested in tourism-related expenditures. The definition of "tourism-related expenditure" can be somewhat subjective. Guidelines for NC occupancy tax were adopted in 1997, and pressure is increasing to expand the use of occupancy tax dollars for tourism-impacted areas.

Funding models include public financing, tax increment financing, hospitality taxes, public-private partnership, private financing, grant funding, or a combination of the above.

- For public financing, government has always invested in tourism product development such as museums, parks and greenways, recreational venues, wayfinding, performance venues, and public art. DMOs have traditionally been reactive rather than proactive in working with local government.
- Examples were provided of the types of partnerships and grant programs used for funding. For example, NPS Public-Private Partnerships have funded cleanups of Blue Ridge Parkway overlooks in Haywood County.
- Tourism microenterprise grants are becoming more common and typically address very specific needs. Various examples were provided to address the question "Does the investment build the visitor economy?"



A review of sample TPDF process and policies were exhibited, along with specifications, results, a strategic priority list of projects, and a major tourism works pathway (for projects outside the annual TPDF funding cycle). Potential options for use of tax funding were presented.

Recommended next sets include identifying a JCTDA committee to determine strategic objectives, review options available, develop policies and processes to guide investment decisions and create transparency, establish a timeline for implementation, and meet with and inform stakeholders.

Board discussion centered on the economic development impact of tourism investments as these projects make the county more competitive for tourism dollars. However, the challenge is building the capital fund and building a revenue stream for projects. An example of a revenue stream would be an occupancy tax increase, which could generate \$250,000 in investable income. Surrounding counties' tax rates ranges from 3 – 6%.

General board consensus is that the board needs to explore and take next steps. Future goals will need to benefits all areas of the county. Funding may need to alternate among geographic areas of the county. The JCTDA has \$360,000 in an emergency fund, which represents about 4-months of operating costs, a portion of which is required to be reserved by state statute, and is not available to invest in projects. Discussion will be added to the agenda for the November meeting.

#### **New Business; set December board transition session**

No December board meeting is scheduled, but Breedlove would like to meet with the new board (current members and two new chamber board appointees) to set a schedule for the upcoming year. The meeting should take no more than one hour. The board scheduled the transition session for Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm. Space will be secured at the Cordelia Camp building or the TDA office. Members whose term is expiring are no longer active as of December 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Announcements**

The Chamber STIR events are open to everyone. Williams mentioned that Jackson County Blue Ridge Parkway overlooks are wonderful resource for our county.

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

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm.

  
Sarah Jennings, Secretary  
Jackson County TDA Board

Approved: November 15, 2017