

**JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
Noon, February 14, 2023**

**Present:** B Cook, J Pritchett, M Smith, WE “Bud” Andrews, J Lassiter, K Pickett,  
M McDonnell, J Jenkins, C McLamb, J Hamilton  
**Absent:** J Hoke  
**Staff:** D Bailey-Taylor, K Radford

**I. Call to Order – B Cook, Chairperson**

B Cook called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm and stated that a quorum was present. B Cook asked for any possible Conflict of Interest concerning the agenda. None were heard.

B Cook asked for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

*M McDonnell made a motion to adopt the agenda. M Smith seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

B Cook introduced J Hamilton to the JCVB Board. J Hamilton comes to the board as a representative of the Triangle East Chamber of Commerce board.

B Cook asked for a motion to accept the January minutes that were previously sent to the board.

*WE Andrews motioned to accept the January minutes as presented. J Pritchett seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**II. Executive Committee**

Committee is meeting directly after the board meeting to review the FY 24-25 budget with staff.

**III. Finances – December Financial Report – D Bailey-Taylor**

Month-to-date revenue for January was \$150,721.96. Month-to-Date Operation Expenses was \$166,477.34. The net negative variance for the month was -\$15,755.38. Year-to-date revenue was \$1,152,788.51. Year-to-date operation Expense was \$932,400.91. The Year-to-Date net positive variance was \$220,387.60. The December County 3% revenue was \$91,208.17, Smithfield’s 2% Revenue was \$29,155.42, Selma’s 2% Revenue was \$6,136.10, Kenly’s 2% Revenue was \$2,120.69, Benson’s 2% Revenue was \$5,617.63.

D Bailey-Taylor met with C McLamb and finance staff, county manager Rick Hester and county attorney Jennifer Slusser concerning Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site’s \$700,000 appropriation from the state budget. The county has requested that the Tourism Authority be the subgrantee for the Bentonville project, which will need a motion and vote.

*WE Andrews motioned for the JCVB to be a subgrantee for the Bentonville state grant. J Pritchett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

**IV. Marketing Committee - M Smith**

The committee met last month to discuss a new software program, Placer AI. The JCVB staff is currently using Near.com which tracks visitors through cell phone data. Placer AI offers more in-depth data and tracking through credit card sales. M Smith noted that the Town of Clayton has

this software and has assisted with data on the Harvest Festival which has been helpful for developing marketing strategies and measuring the impact of the festival. J Jenkins asked about cost comparison. D Bailey-Taylor stated it was \$38,000 more than Near.com, with a total of \$50,000 for a year-long contract. Additional discussion was had on how other towns, tourism partners, and Economic

Development may use the data and the JCVB will provide access to the software as a service to towns and tourism partners. WE Andrews asked if this was something the bureau could charge to the Towns, and D Bailey-Taylor noted we have not previously charged for data research.

***K Pickett made a motion to purchase Placer AI software. J Lassiter seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

#### **V. Special Projects Committee - WE Andrews**

WE Andrews reported that the Special Project Committee met and agreed to increase both grant programs to address the issue of a large amount of the fund balance. Matching Marketing Grants for major festivals would increase from \$1,500 to \$3,000 and community events from \$500 to \$1,000. Furthermore, Capital Grants would have a higher cap of up to \$100,000 over a 5-year period for qualifying applicants. The JCTA would annually review the cap on grants based on the budget. C McLamb reported the JCVB currently has a 40% fund balance.

***WE Andrews made a motion to increase the grants program as presented. M Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

Two Matching Marketing Grants came to the board from Rockin on Raiford and JoCo Latino Festival. D Bailey-Taylor indicated that each of these nonprofits are applying for the first time.

***K Pickett made a motion to accept Rockin on Raiford grant. WE Andrews seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

***K Pickett made a motion to accept Latino Festival. M Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

#### **VI. Sports Council - D Bailey-Taylor**

The council met in January and A O'Neal gave an update about the county regional park in the Cleveland area and the trail(s) feasibility study. Friends of the Parks is working on an art in nature program, funded by the Johnston County Arts Council. They are also coordinating an Earth Day clean-up. A Brame is working with Outdoor NC to document county park accessibility. The council is reviewing its bylaws for the next meeting and how the council can market to attract and bid on sports tournaments, which is one of the mission objectives of the council.

#### **VII. Staff Report - D Bailey-Taylor**

E Dean is finishing up the 2024 Visitors Guide and D Bailey-Taylor recognized that K Radford has emailed each business that has a listing in the guide for their review and approval of content. As part of JCVB's advocacy efforts, the email opportunity with the Triangle East Chamber of

Commerce was utilized to send out a message that business owners and community leaders read the JCVB 2023 Annual Report and view the new video produced about the importance of tourism in the county. D Bailey-Taylor will be asking each chamber to send out a similar email as part of the bureau's sponsorship. The publicity and impact of media for online and print in January was over 56 million people reached and valued at over \$200,000 (if the bureau had to pay for content or ads). D Bailey-Taylor noted that publicity efforts complement the paid advertising placed by the staff in key feeder markets like Atlanta, New York, and Florida.

The JCVB was honored to be recognized by Downtown Clayton as the 2023 Contributor of the Year for the promotion work done on behalf of Downtown Clayton. Budget planning has started and D Bailey-Taylor will work with the executive committee to look at the current draft and she will also meet with each town manager of Benson, Kenly, Selma, and Smithfield on budgeting the 2% tax and review the progress on this year's budget.

#### **VIII. New Business**

J Hamilton reported that the Triangle East Chamber of Commerce's year in review from 2023 had 125 new members, 3,000+ 8th graders attended JoCo Works, and 2,356 members attended training sessions held by the chamber. The chamber is publishing the *Livability Magazine* for county-wide information and workforce recruitment. The online magazine reaches a national audience and will be advertising Johnston County as a place to live and work. D Bailey-Taylor noted that both Smithfield and Selma used 2% funds to place ads in the magazine. J Hamilton also mentioned the chamber building will be needing repairs and requested more information for a capital grant.

K Pickett mentioned that Benton Card Company is going to be featured on *American Pickers* tonight (Feb. 14) at 9 pm on the History Channel. B Cook said it's Valentine's Day, but it could be taped and may be available on YouTube soon.

#### **IX. Old Business**

None

#### **X. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 12:54 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Ben Cook, Chairperson*

**Next Meeting**  
**Johnston County Tourism Authority**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2024**  
**Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices - 12 Noon**