



Swain County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
02-12-2025 Strategic Meeting
Mckinley Edwards Inn

Present (Voting): Chairwoman, Cheryl Taylor, Andy Bhakta, Phillip Carson, Sr, Robin Fronrath, Janene Lancaster, Adrian Litzau, Erin Smith, PattiJo Taylor, Jeremiah

Absent (Voting) None

Present (Ex-Officio) Cally Elliott, Swain County Finance Officer

Absent (Ex-Officio): None

TDA Staff: Sarah Conley, Rita Jones

Commissioner: None

Attendees: Sharla Stoltzfus, Fred Crawford

Chairwoman, Cheryl Taylor called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. Prayer was given by Cheryl Taylor.

Changes to the agenda: None

PattiJo Taylor made a motion to approve Meeting Minutes 12-11-2024. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Public comment: None

Executive report:

Marketing and Public Relations:

- Final Edits to the 2025 Visitor Guide and have ordered an extra 50,000 to be distributed.
- Marketing focus is on spring break and summer travel. Many cabins are already booked for June and July. Valentine's weekend looks very good
- Light show report attached. We are down from the first year due to Hurricane Helene. The success is in the total independent operation of the TDA staff and volunteer staff. Ready to begin promotion of the 2025 year.
- [Social Media Reports](#)



Financial Report

December occupancy tax is up from last year.

Administration & Committees:

- The Exploratory Event Committee will be scheduled in the first week of March to discuss Chamber Event proposal.
- Beautification Committee to report during Strategic Session
- Marketing Committee—Meeting in April to discuss 25–26-year Marketing Plan
- Finance Committee –anticipated meeting first of May for budget review before presenting to the full board. Budget final vote by board to be done at June meeting.
- Our Attorney, Sabrina Rockoff, will be at the May meeting for a brief overview.
- Request the April meeting be rescheduled due to Visit NC and Spring break at Swain County Schools.

Phil Carson made a motion to move the April meeting to April 23, 2025. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Board Discussion:

The MOU for the event park was opened for discussion by Commissioner Phil Carson asking the board for consideration of an event planner for the event park.

Due to Swain County owning the event park, the TDA cannot in all good judgement hire an event planner. TDA can give sponsorship to hire an event coordinator for an event but not put an event planner on payroll.

Sarah presented to the board a Funding Request from the Swain County Agricultural Fair, Inc a request in the amount of \$25,000.00. The Fair will be held on August 22, and 23. Battle of the Bands will be on Friday night the 22. Fred Crawford spoke on behalf of the Fair asking for the funds to be awarded to them and gave an in-depth review of what the Fair consisted of. The board will take this into consideration.

Sarah presented to the board that the Swain County Visitor Center is in dire need of painting on the outside. Paints are cracking up on the rooftop, peeling totally away from some places. Huskey Painting will be giving an estimate before the next meeting. Also, depending on the amount of the estimate we will ask the Board of Commissioners to help with this project due to the amount, and per the MOU requirements of cost for major upgrades to the building.

Robin Fronrath made a motion to get a quote from Huskey Painting for the cost of painting the Visitor Center. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to void the pressure washing contract that Kevin King signed with Michael Watson due to the board having never seen or approved of the contract. PattiJo Taylor seconded the motion.



All in favor. Motion carried.

Budget Considerations:

Current Budget Anticipated Expenditures:

- The Chamber of Commerce has given ownership of the (2) welcome to Bryson City signs to the TDA. Therefore, at the property adjacent to the Burger King we will install the new sign that is in the budget for the TDA rendering that Shannon Lackey proposed. Also, Pat Monteith has given permission to have a sign installed at the end of her parking lot at the BBQ Wagon.
- Visitor Center Repainting
- The Chamber of Commerce has asked that the TDA go into partnership with the Chamber on the caboose that is on Evertt and Mitchell Streets. The TDA needs to have the caboose repainted with locomotive paint and rebranding with ExploreBrysonCity.com added to it.
- The TDA needs to have a conversation with Great Smokey Mountain Railroad about leaving the caboose sitting at the current location.

Light Show Expansion:

- The TDA board would like to talk to the Department of Transportation about getting a new road sign put up for the Event Park Road.
- Better signage at the bottom of the road for the light show.
- There needs to be more light displays inside the building at the event center. Bigger at the beginning and going up the event center road.

Downtown Christmas:

- Upgrade visitor center with a larger tree, then move the current tree to administration building. See about decorating the Town Hall office.
- Stage more photo ops around town.
- Change out snowflakes on the poles downtown that don't light up with banners advertising the light show. Or some other kind of Christmas wreath.
- Look for more activities for people to do while they are downtown.

Beautification:

- PattiJo gave an update on her talk with Swain County Agriculture Dept regarding raising the bulbs for the TDA for the flower boxes. We would just take whatever they have this year, then next year let them raise for us what the board would recommend. The cost approximately just for the flowers is \$15,000.00. The TDA would give a donation for the time spent putting the flowers inside of our boxes and arranging them.



- We have 94 flower boxes. PattiJo and Janene agreed that the number of boxes put on the street and on the bridges need to be cut way down. Due to folks not being able to get out of their cars when parking on the downtown streets.
- For the bridges, suggestion of having either at the ends of the bridges, or in the center a large basket flanked by smaller on each side. This would be a total of 12 bridge baskets.
- Several trees that are on Evertt Street need pruning. The Town Board has given permission for the TDA to take care of this problem.
- The watering of boxes and baskets will be done with maintenance for people on TDA payroll.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to hire a landscaping company to come in and take care of the pruning of trees, mowing and weed eating of Bryson City signs, and any upgrades that get done to visitor center. Robin Fronrth seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Cheryl Taylor made a motion to buy Christmas lights for all downtown businesses that agreed to put them up on their businesses for the Christmas Holiday. TDA will not be responsible for putting them up on buildings. Erin Seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Erin Smith gave an update on the downtown black poles that we have not been able to put lights on due to not having an outlet on the poles. The cost to get a ground fault put on the 58 poles is approximately \$12,000.00.

Janene Lancaster made a motion that the TDA give the \$12,000.00 to Bryson City Town for the addition of the outlets to be put on the black poles so that we may decorate them for Christmas once again. Erin Smith seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Janene Lancaster made a motion for future funding of beautification of Bryson City and being in partnership with the Town of Bryson City, for light posts, benches, and garbage receptacles. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

General Expense Projections:

The marketing, payroll, and Christmas-related line items are major expenses and still being gathered with the largest expense being payroll as we now have a full year with exacts. Sarah would like to expand the Conference/Meeting portion of our budget to include continuing education allotment. Sarah would like to expand her training and acquire her MPA in local government, legislation and public affairs.

An increase of around 400k-500k totaling around 2.6 mil budget consideration for the 25/26 operating year is what we would expect.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Phil Carson, Sr seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.



Signatures Board Member:

Chairwoman Cheryl Taylor _____

Andy Bhakta _____

Phillip Carson, SR _____

Robin Fronrath _____

Janene Lancaster _____

Adrian Litzau _____

PattiJo Taylor _____

Jeremiah Wiggins _____