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Swain County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
04-24-2024 Regular Meeting

- Present (Voting): Shannon Lackey, Presiding Chair, Andy Bhakta arrival @ 1:00 p. m., Janene Lancaster, Kevin Seagle, Eugene Shuler arrival @ 12:20 p.m. PattiJo Taylor, Jeremiah Wiggins left at 12:48 p. m.
- Absent (Voting) Erin Smith, Cheryl Taylor
- Present (Ex-Officio) None
- Absent (Ex-Officio): Cally Elliott, Swain County Finance Officer
- TDA Staff: Sarah Conley, Rita Jones, Selena Hyde
- Commissioner: None
- Attendees: Pineapple Public Relations, Karen Proctor, Isaac Herrin, Mary Anne Shea

This meeting was called to order by Interim, Chair Shannon Lackey at 12:08p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. Prayer by Kevin Seagle.

Changes to the agenda: Jeremiah Wiggins asked that he could speak regarding the East/West Elementary Schools being in the Strawberry Jam Race. Due to timing issues, he would like to be first on the agenda to speak regarding this matter. All the board is in approval of this matter.

PattiJo Taylor made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 03/13/2024 regular meeting. Jeremiah Wiggins seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to approve the minutes for 03/13/2024 Executive Session. PattiJo Taylor seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Jeremiah Wiggins asked that the entrance fee for the Strawberry Jam Race be lowered or waived for children at East and West Elementary Schools wishing to run in the race but can't afford the entrance fee. Jeremiah made a motion for the TDA to pick up the cost of the shirts for the children at East/West Elementary Schools, and that the entrance fee be waived. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.



Public Comment: None

Karen Wilmont spoke about getting Chamber Funding for the 2024 Freedom Fest. The amount that is being requested is \$14,500.00. The board will look at the funding proposal and get back to her at the May meeting.

Pineapple Public Relations gave an update of all that they have done for the TDA marketing and public relations for the last year. Also, an outlook for the upcoming physical year.

Executive report:

Marketing & Public Relations:

- Website statistics for March are strong traffic from Google organic and social media.
- Visitor totals are up for the Aquarium for March.
- Mary Anne is continuing working on the DAM project, double checking listings and link information.
- Complete audit of the rack cards for our area.
- Marketing contracts are up for review in preparation for the budget.

All the financial information was sent to you via email. If there are issues with receiving them let me know. Occupancy for February was the best that we have ever reported. We are up 12% from the previous year. The rolling 6% or 5.8% **will not affect the budget until May 01.**

Budget:

FY 24/25 Budget is about 85% done. A Marketing meeting is set for May 2 and the Finance committee meeting is set for May 6. We may need a 2nd meeting in May or June on the budget.

- Bank balance: \$610,727.20.
- Containers for Light Show Storage: \$15,836.00
- Escrow/Surety for LGERS: \$111,055.00
- Payroll Account set up with 2-month reserve \$60,000.00.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to put into a payroll reserve account \$60,000.00. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Administrative & Committees:

- HR Update—Reviewing of handbook with Hr Craft first week in May.
- Official Separation from Swain County with letter was sent to LGERS.
- LGERS surety of \$111,055.00 now in separate account.
- Update on Rec Park Pool via Tanner Lawson



- Event Planning Hiring Committee renamed –Exploratory Event Plan Committee
 - Pausing search for Event Planner, focusing on Event Park upgrades needed

Sarah had a meeting with Lottie to discuss the event park MOU. Talked about adding a water reservoir to help with the water situation. TDA would like Lottie to set up a meeting with Mr. Coggins to have a plan for the property that is needed for use in the upcoming Light Show. TDA feels the meeting should be set up by the County Manager due to the County owning the land at the event park.

Beautification Committee:

- Naturally Green Landscaping has begun getting baskets on bridges and the boxes for the flowers ready. The encroachment has been submitted to Brian Shuler.
- Downtown Christmas contract with Gabe is based on last year’s budget, proposal for a snowman for the corner at Relax Inn.

Board Discussion:

Shannon Lackey brought before the board a rendering of a sign that he would like to have put at Bryson City exit 67; at the island where the veteran flag is on Veteran Blvd. The sign is a stone structure with a Bryson City logo for the TDA and Park signs. Size is 60”h x80”w; rock base is 66”hx180”w. Signarama to make the sign is \$7,276.00; Collins Masonry to make concrete pad and do the rock work needed is \$13,450.00. Total cost being \$20,726.00.

Shannon made a motion to put this money into the budget for 2024/2025 for this sign, upon permission from the DOT of encroachment on their property. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Shannon Lackey seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

Board Member Signatures:

Interim Chair, Shannon Lackey _____

Andy Bhakta _____

Janene Lancaster _____

Kevin Seagle _____

Eugene Shuler _____



Erin Smith _____

Cheryl Taylor _____

PattiJo Taylor _____

Jeremiah Wiggins _____