



Swain County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
05-10-2024 Regular Meeting

Present (Voting): Shannon Lackey, Presiding Chair, Andy Bhakta, Janene Lancaster, Kevin Seagle, Erin Smith, PattiJo Taylor, Cheryl Taylor, Jeremiah Wiggins

Absent (Voting) Eugene Shuler

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

Absent (Ex-Officio): None

TDA Staff: Sarah Conley, Rita Jones, Selena Hyde

Commissioner: None

Attendees: Mary Anne Shea, Jane Maura (Smokies Life)

This meeting was called to order by Presiding Chair, Shannon Lackey at 12:12p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. Prayer by Cheryl Taylor

Changes to the agenda: None

Janene Lancaster made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 04/24/2024 regular meeting. Andy Bhakta 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.

Public Comment: None

Executive Director, Sarah Conley presented the proposed copy of the 2024/2025 Budget Ordinance for the Swain County Tourism Development Authority. Total proposed budget being \$2,045,059.00.

Jeremiah Wiggins made a motion to put into Advertising & Marketing \$50,000.00 for signage that the TDA is looking into purchasing in the next year. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.



June 12 will be the meeting date for approval of the budget.

Executive report:

Marketing & Public Relations:

- Website statistics for April are strong traffic from Google organic and social media.
- PR report delayed due to late April meeting and Pineapple presenting in person.
- Social and Digital Reports attached showing strong ROI.
- Sarah met with Marketing Committee and went over all the contracts and the changes that were needed concerning the social media plan and operation. OurState has been added with digital and print along with Garden&Gun with digital platform.
- Sarah and staff attended Smoky Mountain Host annual meeting.

Financial:

- April occupancy report \$125,612.54.

Administrative & Committees:

- Sarah met with Finance Committee regarding 2024/2025 Budget before presenting to board.
- The Heritage Museum will be receiving from GSMNP a 1930's Oil Painting- "Aunt Winchester" to be on display for 6 months. This request comes from MS. Winchester family. A requirement due to the value of painting that security cameras be present on the painting. The need to upgrade the existing cameras in the Heritage Museum is at a cost of \$4,446.92 by SMS Integration.
- Sarah met with Melissa Barker who has agreed to organize the Light Show nightly volunteer staff for the TDA.
- PattiJo Taylor gave an update regarding the Event Park information.

Jeremiah Wiggins made a motion for SMS Integration to be paid \$4,446.92 for the upgrade that is needed at the Heritage Museum prior to the painting coming in from the National Park Service. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

A unanimous decision regarding the light Show. Great Smoky Christmas Light Spectacular. The show will run from November 06, thru Jan 04, 2025. The cost will be Swain County residents \$12.00, presale tickets \$15.00 and tickets at the gate \$20.00. For larger vans cost \$40.00. The board would like to have a car counter added for this year for an accurate number of vehicles. Janene Lancaster left meeting at 1:15p.m.



The board would like to present a new MOU for the event park to the Swain County Commissioners for their June 4, 2024 meeting. As Swain County owns the land with heavy investment from the TDA, the new MOU would clearly reflect the following:

- The Tourism Development Authority is allowed access to the event park for the next 10 years for the Christmas Light Show for the months of October, November, December and first half of January each year. For all other events the TDA will request usage of the property through the County on a needed basis.
- The TDA will be responsible for compensation of any labor utilized during TDA sponsored/managed events.
- TDA will be monetarily responsible for any event park property upgrades needed for TDA sponsored/events. In doing so no fee's will be applied for usage of the event park.
- Inclusion of storage of the containers of the Christmas show be allowed to stay on the County property at no fee to the TDA.

Some of the board members expressed an interest in acquiring a more robust MOU or lease for the Heritage Museum and also the Aquarium, and the Fly-Fishing Museum. The board would like clearer guidelines and understanding regarding who is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of these buildings that are owned by Swain County. The board would like to see a 100-year lease from Swain County for these three buildings.

Board Discussion:

Cheryl Taylor made a motion to give to the Swain County Chamber of Commerce, for the Freedom Fest the amount of \$8,662.27. The amount that was asked for was \$14,500.00. The amount reflected is the request less the cost of generators in which the board encourages the chamber to use the County as a resource to rent their generator. This also includes a show of receipts shown before getting a check for this amount. Jeremiah Wiggins seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

The board would also like the Exploratory Event Committee to set up a meeting with Karen Wilmont and Chamber Board President to discuss further the expectations regarding funding requests and for the next year for the Freedom Fest. The board expressed a desire to see a more robust entertainment line up and discussed several recommendations for next year's lineup.

Andy Bhakta made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jeremiah Wiggins seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:42 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 _____