



Swain County Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
12-14-2022 Regular Meeting

Present (Voting): Jeremiah Wiggins, Chairman, Shannon Lackey, Janene Lancaster, Afton Roberts, Cheryl Taylor, Patti Jo Taylor, Eugene Shuler, Erin Smith arriving @ 12:50p.m.

Absent (Voting): Andy Bhakta

Present (Ex-Officio) Kevin King, Swain County Manager

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

TDA Staff: Mary Anne Shea, Rita Jones, Selena Hyde

Attendees: Julia Hunt, Julie Thorner, Taylor Barnard, Melissa Barker

The meeting was called to order by Chair Wiggins at 12:03p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. Prayer was then given by Cheryl Taylor.

Changes to the agenda: Chairman Wiggins added to the agenda #3b, Kevin King, Swain County Manager to speak to the board about the Recreation Park Pool project.

Afton Roberts made a motion to accept the minutes of 11-09-2022. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comment: Julia Hunt spoke about the Light Show and how it has greatly been a benefit to the local Non-profit groups in Swain County. Julia was very appreciative to the board for bringing it in to Swain County.

Melissa Barker from the Family Resource Center/CORE gave a review on how the Light Show has gone this year. There have been 12 non-profit groups that have worked the Light Show. To date there have been \$69,890.00 of tickets sold this includes the pre-sale tickets the non-profit groups sold before the event. Melissa gave a breakdown of how the money is to be distributed as follows: non-profit 50%, CORE 30% and Family Resource 20%. Also, Melissa explained what CORE was and who were the board members.

County Manager, Kevin King then gave an update on the plans regarding the slide and pool improvements for the Recreation Park pool. He provided sketches of the lazy river and the slide and announced the new Director for the Recreation Park is Taylor Woodard.

Julie Thorner of Liquid Spark, which is the Marketing Agency for the TDA, gave an overview of what her company does to help with the tourism marketing of Swain County.

Executive Report given by Mary Anne Shea:

Marketing and Public Relations:



- The big news: The Great Smoky Mountain Railroad in Bryson City ranked 6th in Google's ranking of top scenic spots searched for in the U.S. in 2022. This story has received national TV coverage, as well as national and global digital coverage. www.cbsnews.com/news/google-search-list-top-us-scenic-spots-2022
- 2023 Visitor Guide- Mary Anne is writing content and updating photos. Delivery date February 01, 2023
- Website:
 - Google Analytics reports-the light event is driving a lot of traffic for November and December, and organic search is our number one source of website traffic, followed by social media.
 - Ongoing work includes search engine optimization and media pages.
- Public Relations:
 - November report attached
 - We have several Instagram Influencers; their content and deliverables can be seen in the PR reports.
 - We have also had several media partners here in person to help promote the holiday season and attractions.
 - Visit NC (State Tourism Office)
 - Romantic Asheville (one of our top referrers)
 - Pineapple Public Relations
 - Concord Creative
- New banners are being designed for the Main Street light poles. These will be installed when the snowflakes come down.
- Visitor totals are attached for the visitor center and aquarium.

Financial

- October occupancy tax is \$262,291.60. We are 5% over last year.

Administrative & Committees:

- Committees: PattiJo Taylor was assigned to the Beautification committee which had an opening due to Ron LaRocque retiring in June.
- Board reminders: No meeting on January 11
- The next meeting will be the annual retreat on January 25, 2023, at 10:00am at McKinley Edwards Inn.
- There will be no meeting in February.
- The March 8 meeting will be moved to March 15. Mary Anne and Rita will be at the annual Visit NC conference in Asheville.
- The new pool slide has been ordered. Installation expected by the end of summer 2023.
- Our new van is in transit. Working on the design for the van wrap.
- CIC has installed the low voltage box for the charging stations. They are now talking to Mark Lyons the County IT person about hookup through the visitor center. At that point we will get an electrician back to hook it all up.
- Construction on the Fly-Fishing Museum is now underway. Foundation is ready for the cement to be poured which we are hoping to happen next week.
- Two of the 3 new digital exhibits for the Kid Zone in the Heritage Museum have been delivered. Once the last one is set up, we will then re-open the Kid Zone.
- Beautification committee: Planning for spring flowers RFP in January.



- Finance committee: Nothing new to report
- Marketing committee: Nothing new to report

Board Discussion: Chair Wiggins made a motion to go into Executive Session G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4), Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried at 2:05p.m.

Upon returning from Executive Session, Shannon Lackey made a motion to ask Mary Anne to write an article for the local newspaper regarding the functions and community spending of the TDA. Eugene Shuler seconded this motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Eugene Shuler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Afton Roberts seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 3:02p.m.

Board Member Signatures:

Chair Jeremiah Wiggins _____

Andy Bhakta _____

Afton Roberts _____

Shannon Lackey _____

Janene Lancaster _____

Eugene Shuler _____

Erin Smith _____

Cheryl Taylor _____

PattiJo Taylor _____