



Swain County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Regular Meeting

May 13, 2026

Present (Voting): Chairwoman PattiJo Taylor, Andy Bhakta, Robin Fronrath, Adrian Litzau, Janene Lancaster, Tanner Lawson, Erin Smith

Absent (Voting): None

Present (Ex-Officio): Cally Elliott, TDA Finance Officer

Absent (Ex-Officio): None

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

Attendees: Mike Drinkwater, Monica Brown, Fred Crawford

Public Comment: Larry Smith, Al Desilets

Chairwoman PattiJo Taylor called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by a prayer led by Tanner Lawson.

Changes to the Agenda

None.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Tanner Lawson made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from April 15, 2026. Robin Fronrath seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Erin Smith made a motion to approve the executive session minutes from April 15, 2026. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Mary Anne Shea reviewed the Inter-Local Agreement prepared by Attorney Rockoff for the TDA. Following discussion, the Board agreed to approve the agreement with the following revisions:

a. Section #2 shall be revised to read:

“The County shall remit to the SCTDA, on a monthly basis, the net occupancy tax collected for the prior month.”

b. Section #5 shall be revised to read:

“The County, in its role as Finance Officer ensuring compliance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, shall provide the annual audit and corresponding report to the SCTDA as prepared by the auditor selected by the Finance Officer.”

Once revised by the attorney, the agreement will be forwarded to the County Manager for presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Erin Smith made a motion to approve the Inter-Local Agreement pending the above revisions. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board also revisited discussion from the April meeting regarding spending authority. Janene Lancaster made a motion authorizing the Executive Director to approve expenditures up to \$2,500 in TDA funds. Any expenditure exceeding \$2,500 must receive prior TDA Board approval. Adrian Litzau seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Draft Budget Review – 2026-27

Mary Anne reviewed the draft budget in detail, specifically pointing out detailed spreadsheets for payroll, marketing, and other ancillary budgets. Board members made some suggestions for revisions, and Mary Anne will present a final budget at the June regular meeting for Board approval.

Review of TDA Board Candidates

The Board reviewed the applications for the TDA board.

Financial Report

The Board was reminded of two important upcoming June meetings:

- June 10, 2026 – Regular Meeting to finalize the FY 2026–2027 budget

- June 24, 2026 – Public Comment Session and final Board vote on the FY 2026–2027 budget
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Administration & Committees

- All full-time employees will be enrolled in County insurance coverage by June 15.
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Marketing Report

Food Photography Project

- Scheduled dates: June 15–19. Selena Hyde will coordinate participating restaurants, food trucks, and breweries.

Google Analytics

- Handouts were distributed and reviewed.
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Light Show & Marketing Plan

Due to ongoing budget discussions, the topic was deferred to the June meeting.

Preliminary ideas presented by Mary Anne Shea, Rita Jones, and Selena Hyde included:

Launching pre-sale ticket promotions immediately, and looking at promotional opportunities

Sponsorship Requests

Janene Lancaster made a motion to award \$15,000 to the Swain Agricultural Fair. Robin Fronrath seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Janene Lancaster made a motion to award \$10,000 to Singing in the Smokies. Andy Bhakta seconded the motion. Erin Smith abstained from voting. Motion carried.

Tanner Lawson made a motion to deny funding for the SBG Productions Smoky Mountain Train project. Janene Lancaster seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Additional Discussion

Chairwoman PattiJo Taylor opened discussion regarding the potential installation of a digital advertising sign. Possible locations within town limits will be explored, along with discussions with the County Commissioners and Town Aldermen regarding property ownership and approvals.

Finance Officer Cally Elliott also noted that, with TDA employees transitioning back under the County umbrella, a decision must be made regarding the annual longevity payment schedule. Historically, longevity pay has been issued with the first paycheck in July.

Public Comment

Larry Smith addressed the Board regarding potential TDA funding assistance for pickleball courts at the Swain County Recreation Park. He noted that pickleball continues to grow in popularity and that many travelers seek destinations offering pickleball facilities.

Adjournment

Tanner Lawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Robin Fronrath seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Signatures

Chairwoman PattiJo Taylor _____

Andy Bhakta _____

Robin Fronrath _____

Janene Lancaster _____

Tanner Lawson _____

Adrian Litzau _____

Erin Smith _____