



Swain County Tourism Development Authority

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2026

Attendance

Present (Voting Members):

- PattiJo Taylor, Chairwoman
- Robin Fronrath
- Adrian Litzau
- Tanner Lawson

Absent (Voting Members):

- Andy Bhakta
- Janene Lancaster
- Erin Smith

Present (Ex-Officio):

- Cally Elliott, TDA Finance Officer

Absent (Ex-Officio):

- None

TDA Staff Present:

- Selena Hyde
- Rita Jones

Guests/Attendees:

- Mike Drinkwater
- Monica Brown
- Fred Crawford
- Joe Holt



Call to Order

Chairwoman Pattijo Taylor called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an opening prayer led by Tanner Lawson.

Agenda Modification

Rita Jones requested that the July TDA Board Meeting be rescheduled from its original date to July 15, 2026.

Motion: Robin Fronrath made a motion to change the July meeting date to July 15, 2026.

Second: Adrian Litzau

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Robin Fronrath made a motion to approve the May 13, 2026 meeting minutes.

Second: Tanner Lawson

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Public Comment

Monica Brown, representing the Chamber of Commerce, requested additional funding of \$6,000 for the Chamber's Fourth of July event. The TDA had previously approved \$14,000 in support of the event.

Motion: Tanner Lawson made a motion to provide an additional \$4,000 specifically for bounce houses and children's activities associated with the Fourth of July event.

Second: Adrian Litzau

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Executive Director's Report

FY 2026–2027 Budget Review

Rita Jones presented the proposed FY 2026–2027 budget, including revisions discussed at the May meeting. She also reviewed a proposed increase in the retirement contribution for full-time employees to 14%.

Motion: Adrian Litzau made a motion to approve a 14% retirement contribution for full-time employees.

Second: Tanner Lawson

Vote: Unanimously approved.



Robin Fronrath inquired about including funding for a flashing sign for the Christmas Light Show. Rita Jones reported that Swain County owns larger digital signage options that may be available for use during this year's event.

Motion: Adrian Litzau made a motion to approve the proposed FY 2026–2027 budget.

Second: Tanner Lawson

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Motion carried.

Board Appointments

The Board reviewed candidates for two upcoming board vacancies for the FY 2026–2027 term.

Motion: Robin Fronrath made a motion to recommend Dena Ensley and Mike Drinkwater to the Swain County Commissioners for appointment to the TDA Board.

Second: Adrian Litzau

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Marketing Report

Selena Hyde provided a marketing update, including:

- Food photography sessions conducted June 15–19.
- Review of recent Google Analytics performance metrics.
- Ongoing efforts to promote Island Park as a downtown attraction and visitor amenity.

Financial Report

Board members were reminded of the importance of attending the June 24, 2026 meeting, which will include public comment and the final vote on the FY 2026–2027 budget.

Events Report

The Board received updates on the following events:

- **Stampede in the Smokies** was well attended and highly successful.
- **Riverfront Family Fest** at the Appalachian Rivers Aquarium launched in May and continues every Saturday through Labor Day, with strong attendance reported.



- Rebranding efforts for the Christmas Light Show are underway.
- The **Smoky Mountain Music Train** event was well attended and received positive feedback.

Administrative Report

Employee Longevity Pay

The Board discussed establishing a consistent schedule for annual longevity payments to full-time employees.

Motion: Tanner Lawson made a motion to issue longevity payments annually on the second payroll in July.

Second: Adrian Litzau

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Interlocal Agreement

Rita Jones reported that the Interlocal Agreement between the Swain County Tourism Development Authority and Swain County has been approved by the Swain County Board of Commissioners.

Airport Property

The Board discussed matters related to airport property. No action was taken.

Grants & Sponsorships

The following grant and sponsorship actions were reported:

- Mary Anne Shea approved a \$1,000 Marketing Matching Grant for SBG Productions in recognition of the strong attendance generated by the recent music train event.
- A sponsorship request from Kaye McConnell for a drug awareness event was denied because the event did not meet tourism-related funding criteria.
- The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad was awarded a \$2,500 sponsorship for the annual Red, White & Boom Fourth of July Festival, a longstanding event supported by the TDA.

Adjournment

Motion: PattiJo Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Adrian Litzau

Vote: Unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.



Signatures

Pattijo Taylor, Chairwoman _____

Andy Bhakta _____

Robin Fronrath _____

Janene Lancaster _____

Tanner Lawson _____

Adrian Litzau _____

Erin Smith _____