

Date:12/5/19.....
Approved as Minutes:1/9/20.....

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting**

Call to Order: 12:09 p.m.

Members Present: Mary Jaeger-Gale, Jim Masek, Richard Lundy, Willard Whitson, Brandon Higgins, Janet Mason, Rocky Guarriello, and Jeff Geisler

Members Absent: Kitty McCammon, David Hislop and Dave Long

Ex-Officos Present: Eddie Holland and Paula Roach

Others Present: Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, and Emily Ostertag

Public Comments: -----

Additions / Deletions from Current Agenda:

- Strike "Welcome New Board Members"
- Add Closed Session G.S. 143-318.11 regarding personnel directly after prior minutes approval
- Add Budget Amendment Approval after committee updates

Motion to approve Agenda changes:

Approval: 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale
2nd: Richard Lundy

Motion Passed.

Motion to end Closed Session G.S. 134-318.11 regarding personnel

Approval: 1st: Janet Mason
2nd: Mary Jaeger-Gale

Motion Passed

Motion to resume regular session:

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler
2nd: Rocky Guarriello

Motion Passed

No action taken.

Prior Meeting Minutes (changes if necessary): ---

Approval: 1st: Brandon Higgins
2nd: Jim Masek

Motion Passed.

2019 Audit

- Summary of the audit, with review from Finance Director:
 - o At the end of last year, the fund balance was \$1.3 million
 - 94% operating fund balance
 - o Occupancy Tax Revenue for the year was \$1,601,508
 - o Finishing of fund balance, \$250,000 of it will be carried forward

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- Audit contract for 2020 audit will be brought to the Board in early 2020

Motion to accept the 2019 Audit:

Approval: 1st: Richard Lundy

2nd: Brandon Higgins

Motion Passed

Finance Report:

- Move finance report and approval of finance report to end of committee report

Executive Director Report:

- Participated in the Thermal Belt Rail Trail Kick-Off, as well as an interview with Channel 7
- TDA participated in the TJCA Ribbon Cutting
- Participated in the ARC Conference
- Attended a Lake Lure Town Council Meeting, and Utility Board Meeting
- Participated in the County Farm City Tour
- NCTCC had their quarterly meeting, which we attended. Legislative issues, and occupancy tax monitoring were topics of discussion
- Attended the Mayors / Managers Quarterly Meeting, where several representatives spoke about some improvements to be made in the county

Welcome Center Update:

- Lake Lure is looking into getting an RFP for Welcome Center construction, creating larger restrooms for the visitors
- Construction is anticipated to last from January to May of 2020

Marketing Report:

- We were the unofficial winner of the 'Best Lake' in Carolina Country magazine
- Only in Your State Newsletter mentioned Forest City's Christmas displays
- Forest City was picked for the 7th Annual Cycle NC Mountain Ride, which will bring a lot of recognition to the TBRT
- The 2020 Travel Guide has been processed for edits and changes, with the first draft complete in December
- Advertising space is still available in the guide
- Attended the Tourism DIY Workshop in Asheville
- Attended the Blue Ridge Mountain Host Annual Meeting
 - **The Agency Report:**
 - Reviewed Social Media posts from October
 - Top pages were on the website were 'Places to Stay' and 'Events'
 - Our top cities for visitors to the county are still Nashville, Charlotte and Raleigh
 - The Overall Google Pay Per Click Campaign got 3.5k clicks in October and made 928 Impressions
 - A film crew came in the middle of November to capture Fall footage to be used next year. There will be another crew returning to capture some Winter/Holiday footage.
 - Review of The Agency contract for approval:
 - Three-year contract, but can be changed with 90 day notice
 - The contract has been reviewed by the Marketing Committee and the TDA's attorney

Motion to approve the January 2020-December

2022 Contract with The Agency:

Approval: 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Janet Mason

Motion Passed.

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Strategic Plan Update:

- In Phase One of a 10-year fundraising campaign
- The Towns and Steering Committees are coming together to review their Implementation Plans
- Spindale, Rutherfordton, Chimney Rock and Lake Lure are all moving forward with specific projects
- The TDA has also partnered with Forest City, as well as every other town to give \$50,000 toward their capital improvement funds

- **Resolution:**
 - o States that work will continue with each Town, and the plan will continue to move forward with work on the Paddle Trail and its grants

Motion to approve the Resolution in Support of Application to the 2019 Water Resources Development Grant Program – Broad River Paddle Trail: US-221A Duke Energy Access:

Approval: 1st: Brandon Higgins
2nd: Richard Lundy

Motion Passed.

- **Contract:**
 - o The contract with Destination by Design has been vetted by the Strategic Plan Committee
 - o It includes a list of project fees and items that are all priced separately
 - o The Strategic Plan Committee has asked TDA staff to evaluate what the Strategic Plan will look like moving forward, with possible help from external and internal staff
 - o This contract also includes the option of 90-day notice to make changes

Motion to approve the contract with Destination by Design:

Approval: 1st: Richard Lundy
2nd: Mary Jaeger-Gale

Motion Passed.

Committee Updates:

Agri-Tourism:

- o The Agri-Tourism Committee will form a secondary committee of community members that will develop a Program of Work for moving forward with Agri-Tourism marketing and development in the county
- o Annual Agri-Tourism Conference in Asheville in February

Marketing:

- o Overview of 2019
- o Budget
- o 2020 Contract
- o 2020 Marketing Plan

Finance:

- o Reviewed November RFF
- o Reviewed the STR program for Occupancy Tax monitoring
- o Reviewed the audit and 2020-2021 budget timelines

Grant:

- o Will move forward with grant applications submitted to date, and re-evaluate the guidelines for next year

Retire NC:

- o Review of the Retire NC Program
- o Evaluated pros and cons of the Program
- o Determined to host a Retire NC Session, which took place on December 3rd
- o Town Managers, Mayors, and other County Leaders will determine whether we participate

TAF:

Contract:

- o TDA will partner with TAF to collect fundraising dollars for the Capital Campaign

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- o Contract has been vetted by the TAF Committee, TAF, TDA and the TDA's attorney
- o Reviewed fees and duties listed in the contract

**Motion to approve the partnership between
TDA and TAF:**

Approval: 1st: Richard Lundy
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

Keep Rutherford County Beautiful:

- o Reviewed Trash Bowl results and winner
- o Dates have been set for the Spring Litter Sweep (April 17th through the 26th)
- o Surveillance cameras are currently being installed in several locations throughout the County, which will have a trial run before more cameras are purchased

Tourism Strategic Plan:

- o Reviewed potential partnerships
- o Evaluated DbD contract
- o Presentation from Alliway – PR and Marketing from Funding Campaign
- o Committee asked staff to evaluate additional opportunities and pricing

Executive:

- o Reviewed ACSM project timeline (Dec. – Jan.)
- o Discussed / Update on Website and The Agency
- o Discussed Marketing Program – The Agency Contract
- o Reviewed TDA Staff responsibilities and successes

Finance Report:

- October payments were \$100,000 less than last year because of lack of WEG
- o Down 42% for the month
 - o 25% over plan for the month
 - o Occupancy tax revenues are projected to continue to grow with rental server (VRBO, AirBnB, Homeaway, etc.) tax collections, and the growth of major assets in the area
- \$6,500 request for increased funding under part-time
- \$43,00 additional for marketing
- Photography, video, social and digital media will include increase
- Budget increase for travel guide
- Attorney fees for consulting on contracts, etc.
- Additional \$97,000 for Strategic Plan
- Excess of 1 million dollars in Fund Balance

Budget Amendments

Budget Amendment #1

Part Time Salaries/Wages (70-6520-126-00-000)

Motion to move \$6,500 from fund balance to Part Time Salaries to cover additional hours needed

Budget Amendment #2

Marketing and Advertising (70-6520-370-00-000)

Motion to move \$43,000 from fund balance to Marketing and Advertising to cover additional requested items

Budget Amendment #3

Professional Fees – Consulting (70-6520-194-00-000)

Motion to move \$2,000 from fund balance to Consulting to cover attorney fees

Budget Amendments Cont'd

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Budget Amendment #4

Professional Services – Strategic Plan (70-6520-191-00-000)

Motion to move \$97,000 from Fund balance to Strategic Plan to cover enhanced scope of work

Budget Amendment #5

Janitorial (70-6520-394-00-000)

Motion to move \$3,500 from fund balance to Janitorial to cover hired cleaning professional

Motion to approve Budget Amendments as listed:

Approval: 1st: Jim Masek

2nd: Janet Mason

Motion Passed.

Motion to approve Financial Report:

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler

2nd: Richard Lundy

Motion Passed.

Announcements:

- Willard announced an event in which he will be reading 'The Night Before Christmas' at the Tryon International Equestrian Center
- Mary announced that Chimney Rock State Park will be closed several days a week into the near future for construction, as well as some upcoming holiday events
- Janet announced some Friday night Christmas movie screenings at POPS, as well as hay rides, etc.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:40 p.m.