

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting**

Call to Order: 12:02pm

Members Present: Janet Mason, Willard Whitson, Kitty McCammon, Mary Jaeger-Gale, Jeff Geisler, Jim Masek, Dana Bradley, and David Hislop

Members Absent: Dave Long, and Brandon Higgins

Ex-Officis Present: Paula Roach

Ex-Officis Absent:

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

Public Comments: ---

Additions / Deletions from Agenda: ----

Motion to approve Agenda:

Approval: 1st: Jim Masek
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

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

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler
2nd: Mary Jaeger-Gale

Motion Passed.

Finance Report:

Finance Report Highlights:

- Another good month came in 40% over last year for September receipts received in October
- Came in at around \$218,000
- Projected good revenue streams for October and November
- The first half of this year should be well above plan and over prior year
- Meeting with Finance Committee on Dec. 16th
- Reviewed Revenue numbers throughout the year
- Projected to come in at \$1.7 million for the year
- The typical Winter slow-down has begun, as well the flu season and the progression of COVID-19
- Summary Page:
 - o Revenue up \$300,000 over budget
 - o Salaries and expenses come in a little bit over due to additional staffing
 - o Marketing and Advertising coming in as planned
 - o Repairs and Maintenance has an addition of \$4,300 including the expense of repainting the Lake Lure Welcome Center
 - o Travel has definitely been decreased this year, with events and seminars continuing to be virtual
 - o Professional fees are going as planned
 - o Projects and programs are also under budget due to the postponement and cancelation of County events
 - o Projected fund balance of around \$1 million at year-end

Motion to approve Financial Report:

Approval: 1st: Kitty McCammon

2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

Executive Director Report:

Highlights:

- The TDA spent a lot of time working on and planning the Spindale Downtown Streetscape Groundbreaking
- The TDA also attended a quarterly County Commissioner meeting and provided an update. The commissioners are in complete support of what the TDA is doing. The November 2nd meeting was Commissioners Hollands last meeting.
- The TDA attended the Lake Lure Utility Board, which is in the process of working on their policies and infrastructural changes. The town had hired a firm to assist with these changes. The Lake level will continue to be dropped during the off-season for tourism (January 2021)
- The TDA participated in the Duke Energy, Water Resources, Rutherford County meeting on the Broad River Paddle Trail.
- The TDA continues to participate with Visit NC as they attended a virtual DMO forum
- The Daily Courier did several stories on TDA projects, such as Relocate to Rutherford
- The TDA coordinated a TBRT visit with the Director of Visit NC, Wit Tutell
- The TDA coordinated a Tourism Advisory Committee meeting and agenda
- The TDA attended the TBRT vision / enhancement session
- Photos viewed from the Spindale Groundbreaking
- Viewed the Daily Courier article, 'Tourism surges during Pandemic'

Welcome Center Update:

- Continuing to operate during the pandemic
- Staff have reduced the indoor occupancy to 10 people
- There was a recent closure due to a potential exposure, but that has been resolved
- The TDA hired a company to repaint the exterior of the Lake Lure Welcome Center
- The TDA hired, Sarah Searcy, to be the new part-time Information Specialist at the Lake Lure Welcome Center
- Welcome Center staff was thanked for continuing to work diligently during the pandemic

Marketing Report:

- **Marketing Committee Update**
 - o Internal Marketing updates given by Taylor
 - o Quarter page holiday themed ad from the December issue of OurState Magazine
 - o Visit NC mentioned Chimney Rock and Santa repelled down the rock in a list of 'Safest Places to Meet Santa this year'
 - o Reviewed and discussed the impressions and views we have received from the Visit NC grants/marketing given to the TDA
 - o Of those Visit NC dollars millions of views were given to our County's tourism efforts
 - o The 2021 travel guide is set to release in April
 - o Two videos were completed by Dustin's Way Collective and paid for by the grant as well
 - One was a 'shop local' theme
 - And the other was a 'tourism push for Lake Lure and Chimney Rock
 - o The Agency Slides presented by Taylor:
 - o Review of October reporting and numbers
 - o Review of top posts, with a large number of impressions
 - o We ran our Fall 'Moments That Matter' social media campaign
 - o The Travelers Quiz has created a large number of views to our website
 - Completion rate of 75%
 - o Website analytics continue to go up
 - o The Agency and Simpleview are discussing the best way to revamp our website
 - o Website traffic is up 75% over last year
 - o Television commercials are targeting Atlanta, Charlotte and Raleigh
 - o Top keyword searches were reviewed
 - o The SEO report was reviewed

Committee Updates:

Marketing Committee:

See Marketing Report

Agri-Tourism Committee:

- Met on Nov. 30th on GoToMeeting
- David Hislop shared the results of a survey that was sent out to farmers and the agricultural community to help navigate how to expand on our Agri-Tourism efforts
 - o 77 responses
- The TDA paid for outdoor heaters that are installed at the Winter Farmers Market
- We continue to promote the Visit NC Farms App
- A full committee meeting is being planned for February, but will most likely continue to meet virtually

Finance Committee:

- Meeting on Dec. 16th on GoToMeeting
- TDA staff, Revenue Dept. and Finance Dept. participated in a workshop with Host Compliance
- Finance Dept. to evaluate the effectiveness of the Host Compliance Revenue module
- Current contract expires Dec. 31st

Tourism Strategic Plan Committee:

- Met on Nov. 18th
- The partners presented each of their programs of work to the committee
- Wit Tuttell from Visit NC was able to attend this meeting
- The Tourism Advisory Committee (made up of county/town leaders) also met Dec. 1st and heard an update on Rutherford Bound progress as well as a presentation from the Development Finance Initiative out of the NC School of Government
 - o If DFI was contracted they would conduct financial feasibility studies, market studies, public interest case studies, site analysis, etc. for each capital project
 - o Don and the committee will continue to explore this option with town and county leaders

CFHC Committee:

- CFHC has been working closely to finalize several Rutherford Bound funding projects, such as kiosks at all the projects and promo-items
- The Rutherford Bound donation portal is live at rutherfordbound.com
- CFHC is working with KRCB to set up the donation portal on keeprcncbeautiful.com
- Contract with TAF ends December 31st
- Monthly donation reports to be submitted monthly, starting in December

Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:

- Committee met on Oct. 22nd
- The Fall Litter Sweep Results:
 - o 80 total volunteers collected 133 bags of trash
 - o Paid services picked up 172 bags of trash from 63.5 miles of roadway
 - o Total bags collected: 305
 - o Estimated 4,575 lbs of trash, or 2.25 tons
 - o Spent \$6,350
- Committee to meet again in January

Information Committee:

See Welcome Center Update

Date:12/3/20.....

Approved as Minutes:1/7/2021.....

Relocate to Rutherford Committee:

- Committee has been put on hold due to COVID
- Next meeting scheduled for January 14th

Executive Committee:

See Executive Director Report

Announcements:

- Mary Jaeger-Gale announced that the parking lot at Chimney Rock State Park has been completed
- Willard Whitson announced the progress of Kiwanis Park and The Factory at KidSenses
- Jim Masek received a national award for his volunteer work in the community
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Meeting Adjourned: 1:16pm