

## Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting

**Call to Order:** 12:05pm

**Members Present:** Janet Mason, Willard Whitson, Kitty McCammon, Mary Jaeger-Gale, Jeff Geisler, Jim Masek, and Dave Long

**Members Absent:** David Hislop, Brandon Higgins, and Dana Bradley

**Ex-Officicos Present:** Paula Roach and David Hunt

**Ex-Officicos Absent:**

**Others Present:** Don Cason, Emily Ostertag, Taylor Hardin, Karen Tegen, and Kersten Conklin (The Agency)

### **New Member Introduction**

David Hunt, the new County Commissioner, was introduced by Willard Whitson.

Commissioner Hunt gave a brief introduction of his background and experience in Rutherford County. He is excited to serve on our board. He gave humble recognition to Eddie Holland.

**Public Comments:** ---

**Additions / Deletions from Agenda:** ----

### **Motion to approve Agenda:**

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

Motion Passed.

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

**Approval:** 1st: Janet Mason  
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

### **Finance Report:**

#### **Finance Report Highlights:**

- All 5 month of this fiscal year have been record breaking with occupancy taxes up 40%
- Tourists continue to seek destinations with opportunity for outdoor recreation activities
- Fund balance projection of \$1.1million
- January has started off a little bit lower in terms of visitation, but that is to be expected with the normal lull in winter tourism
- Through December 2020, our region experienced tremendous tourism
- Board members who own local lodgings gave updates on their recent visitation
- The Finance Committee and staff still feel comfortable with the projections for the rest of the fiscal year

### **Motion to approve Financial Report:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale  
2nd: Jim Masek

Motion Passed.

### **Executive Director Report:**

Highlights:

- Blue Ridge Mountain Host markets our region, and the TDA serves on their Executive Board. This board met to discuss the viability of this organization moving forward, as they are experiencing financial hardships. A strategy session is to come.
- TDA staff completed their Year-End County Report
- The TDA continues to participate in Visit NC's regional meetings
- Don Cason and Eric Woolridge, from Destination by Design, met with Council Members from the Town of Ruth, as they would like to be more involved in Rutherford Bound with their section of the TBRT

- TDA met with the Blue Ridge National Heritage Foundation to discuss their regional Arts and Crafts Trail. They received a grant to promote this trail and would like to expand it into our area
- The TDA met with Sherri Adams from NC Downtown Main Streets. The TBRT is being considered as a highlight in their March conference. They did decide to pick another trail, but they will reconsider the TBRT in the future
- Don Cason and Destination by Design have been in several meetings with the Town of Lake Lure to discuss some of their future Rutherford Bound projects

#### **Welcome Center Update:**

- Continuing to operate during the pandemic
- The Welcome Center has experience some closures due to concerns over the pandemic, but have remained open over 90% of the time
- The last three months of visitor traffic has been higher than over the last three years
- Welcome Center staff were thanked for continuing to work diligently during the pandemic

#### **Marketing Report:**

##### **Marketing Committee Update**

- o Internal Marketing updates given by Taylor
  - o The 2021 Travel Guide
    - Commitments from 8 full-page ads, 7 half page ads and 4 quarter pages ads
    - More pages of ads than in last year's guide
    - May 3<sup>rd</sup> is the goal for having guides printed and in-hand
- o The Agency Slides presented by Kersten Conklin:
  - o Review of November reporting and numbers
  - o The next board meeting will be a full-year comparison of month-over-month and year-over-year data
  - o Review of top posts, with a large number of impressions
  - o Social Media content was more informative and "long-phrase"
  - o Highlights of Forest City's Holiday festivities, shop local videos, etc.
  - o Lots of Pinterest-centric content
  - o Review of money spent from budget
  - o November website traffic was up year-over-year
  - o More website traffic came from Asheville than last year
    - o Review of the Marketing Plan/Strategy:
      - Continue to build on the fact that our destination lends itself to safe/health outdoor actives
      - Established primary tourism attractions
      - Some aspects, such as media tours, have been put on hold due to COVID-19
      - Mini campaigns to niche audiences
      - Target markets: Charlotte, Raleigh, Greensboro, Nashville, etc.
      - Revised Campaign: Moments that Matter
        - o The ads themselves draw an emotional connection
        - o Several variations for different audiences
        - o Reviewed website design and development
        - o Discussed goals and strategies
      - Simpleview website management
        - o The website is now 3 years old and we are in our 4<sup>th</sup> year with Simpleview
        - o The Simpleview contract allots a certain amount of hours, that have rolled over during the last 3 years
        - o These banked hours can go toward to cost of a brand new website
        - o The Agency made recommendations to the Marketing Committee for electing to do a core redesign of around \$33,000—the committee approved
        - o The banked hours will cover \$27,000 of this cost, making the out-of-pocket cost around \$6,000 for the TDA
        - o New website to launch in June/July

**Motion to approve the website redesign:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale  
2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed.

**Committee Updates:**

**Marketing Committee:**

\*See Marketing Report\*

**Agri-Tourism Committee:**

- No meeting
- Next meeting scheduled for February

**Finance Committee:**

- Host Compliance's contract was renewed for another 6 months
- The Finance Department and TDA staff will continue to measure the viability of this software
- All budget requests are due to be reviewing in late March

**Tourism Strategic Plan Committee:**

- No meeting
- Rutherford Bound is continuing to move forward with a Groundbreaking in Chimney Rock on January 21<sup>st</sup> and a Ribbon Cutting at Kiwanis Park on February 25<sup>th</sup>
- Next meeting January 20<sup>th</sup> with PMA Consulting to discuss donor prospects, staffing needs, and campaign policies and procedures
- In early February a full Rutherford Bound report from each partner will be given to the committee
- In March the committee will make a budget request for the coming fiscal year
- The NC Main Street Center recognized Rutherford Bound in an organic Facebook post as an example of great partnership and community work

**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 31<sup>st</sup>
- TAF closed its bank accounts on December 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Monthly donation reports to be submitted monthly
- TDA staff are working with CFHC to create a login to the Rutherford Bound account portal to monitor real-time donations

**Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:**

- No meeting/no updates

**Information Committee:**

\*See Welcome Center Update\*

**Relocate to Rutherford Committee:**

- Committee has been put on hold due to COVID
- Next meeting scheduled for late February

**Executive Committee:**

\*See Executive Director Report\*

**Announcements:**

- Next Tuesday there will be a Facebook video event for KidSenses
- Rumbling Bald Resort is changing its name to Rumbling Bald on Lake Lure, and is undergoing a complete rebranding, as of January 11<sup>th</sup>

**Meeting Adjourned:** 1:18pm