

**Date: .....1/09/20.....**  
**Approved as Minutes: .....**

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority  
Board Meeting**

**Call to Order:** 12:19 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mary Jaeger-Gale, Dave Long, David Hislop, Willard Whitson, Brandon Higgins, and Rocky Guarriello

**Members Absent:** Kitty McCammon, Jim Masek, Janet Mason, Jeff Geisler, and Richard Lundy

**Ex-Officos Present:** Eddie Holland, and Paula Roach

**Ex-Officos Absent:**

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

**Public Comments:** -----

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

**Motion to approve Agenda:**

**Approval:** 1st: David Hislop  
                  2nd: Mary Jaeger-Gale  
Motion Passed.

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

**Approval:** 1st: Brandon Higgins  
                  2nd: Dave Long  
Motion Passed.

**Finance Report:**

- Occupancy tax continues to exceed plan
- November Occupancy Tax receipts \$10,000 over last year
- 1<sup>st</sup> 5 months of actual up \$200,000 over plan
- Revenues are up
- \$100,000 worth of grant money for Strategic Plan
- Projects and Programs are \$100,000 over plan because of the additional grants, RHI & Duke Power
- \$1.1 million Fund Balance for future projects and Tourism Asset Development

**Budget Amendments**

- Broad River Paddle Access Grants (70-3815-330-04-000)
  - o Motion to move \$100,000 (\$75,000 from RHI Legacy Foundation and \$25,000 from Duke Energy) from Broad River Paddle Access Grants (70-3815-330-04-000) to Strategic Plan Implementation (70-6520-191-00-000)

**Motion to approve Budget Amendments as listed:**

**Approval:** 1st: Dave Long

2nd: Brandon Higgins  
Motion Passed.

**Motion to approve Financial Report:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Dave Long

Motion Passed.

**Executive Director Report:**

Highlights:

- TDA participated in the Duke Energy Environmental Update at the plant in Mooresboro
- TDA participated in the RHI Thermal Belt Rail Trail Video Presentation
- TDA participated in the Hickory Nut Gorge Leadership Meeting, which covered several topics such as affordable housing and extending the tourism season
- TDA attended the Joint Session for Spindale Council / Steering Committee, where the Spindale Streetscape Project was discussed
- Attended Lake Lure's Utility Board Meeting during their RFF process for several ongoing projects
- Presented County Commissioners with TDA Quarterly Review

**Welcome Center Update:**

- Don mentioned and gave recognition to the Lake Lure Welcome Center staff for the great work they do

**Marketing Report:**

- The Agency is working on modernizing the TDA logo
- Work on the Marketing Plan is ongoing and will be ready for approval at the next board meeting
- The 2020 County-Wide Travel Guide is also in progress

**The Agency Report:**

- 2019 re-cap:
  - Social media follows increased in 2019, as well as impressions, engagements, likes, and clicks
  - Some of the Top Posts for 2019 were a guide to Chimney Rock and Lake Lure holiday festivities, and a family visit to Chimney Rock that generated a lot of activity
  - 2019 Paid Campaigns on social media compared the cost of the campaigns to the engagements and impressions they generated
  - In 2019 the website saw more users than last year. These users were predominantly older and female
  - Visits to the website's home page, places to stay page, listings page, etc. were all up in 2019
  - The Top Cities for visitors to the website were Charlotte (from 8,861 in 2018 to 17,191) Raleigh, Nashville, etc.
  - Organic search traffic on the website saw a 96% increase year-over-year
  - Commercials were broadcast in larger markets, such as Charlotte, Raleigh, and Asheville, with millions of trackable impressions generated
  - Print advertisements were run in Blue Ridge Country, WNC Magazine, Our State, Smokey Mountain Living, among many other publications

**Strategic Plan Update:**

Date: .....1/09/20.....

Approved as Minutes: .....

- The Planning portion of the Strategic Plan in being wrapped up, as Destination by Design continues to work with the towns to start ground-breaking on Phase I and Phase II projects
- Three or more projects are set to have ground-breakings within the first half of 2020
- The Strategic Plan Committee met, and saw two different presentations given by fundraising consulting firms (PMA Consulting and Dickerson, Bakker & Associates), to see what needs to be done to reach major donors, industries, legislative outlets, and other sources of fundraising
- The committee also saw a presentation by The Agency, and voted to additionally hire them to help reach the citizens of Rutherford County and publicly promote the Rutherford Bound Campaign
- The hired consulting firm, The Agency, and Destination by Design will partner to move the campaign forward

**PMA Consulting Contract:**

- o Initially, will provide an evaluation and a plan
- o Includes a 2-month end-clause

**Motion to approve the contract with PMA Consulting:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Dave Long

**Motion Passed.**

**The Agency Contract:**

- o 1-year contract, at \$81,600 over the next year

**Motion to approve the contract with The Agency:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Dave Long

**Motion Passed.**

**Committee Updates:**

**Marketing:**

- o \*See Marketing Update\*

**Agri-Tourism:**

- o Established several committee members outside of the TDA Board
- o This separate committee, made up of citizens involved in the county's agricultural community, will form their own program of work to continue to promote agri-tourism related assets and activities

**Grant:**

- o Members of the committee evaluated the current grant application, and drafted a new application to be reviewed and approved at the next meeting

**Retire NC:**

- o On Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, the TDA hosted a Retire NC Session for county officials and leaders to meet and hear from a Retire NC representative about the benefits of being part of the program. The towns, communities, and the committee are now evaluating the pros and cons of Rutherford County becoming a Retire NC community

**Keep Rutherford County Beautiful:**

- o The three sub-committees met and discussed the upcoming events in 2020, as well as other initiatives KRCB has undertaken, such as Adopt-a-Highway, etc.

**Date: .....1/09/20.....**  
**Approved as Minutes: .....**

**TAF:**

- The TDA & TAF staff are coordinating training sessions for the software to be used for donation collection
- TAF will also be involved with making our website active for donation

**Tourism Strategic Plan:**

- \*See Strategic Plan Update\*

**Executive:**

- The committee met and reviewed some of the major projects the TDA, its staff, and committee members, continue to work on

**Announcements:**

- Mary Jaeger-Gale updated the board about the retaining wall project at Chimney Rock State Park. The park will be closed during parts of this project, which will continue into the summer. She is also now the General Chair of the Board at Chimney Rock State Park, and no longer the General Manager.
- David Hislop updated the board on the dates and vendors of the Farmer's Market

**Meeting Adjourned:** 2:04 p.m.