

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting**

Call to Order: 12:05

Members Present: Amy Bridges, Barbara Meliski, Dave Long, Diane Barrett, Lynn Brown, Richard Lundy, Ruthie Hanson, Chuck Martell, Willard Whitson

Members Absent: Kitty McCammon

Ex-Officos Present: Eddie Holland

Ex-Officos Absent: Paula Roach

Others Present: Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, Leniece Lane, Merri Oxley, Media (1),

Public Comments: ----

Agenda (changes if necessary): Add Closed Session for Personnel (G.S 143-318.11) After the Closed Session for Attorney Client Privilege.

Approval: 1st: Willard Whitson

2nd: Barbara Meliski

Motion Passed.

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

Approval: 1st: Willard Whitson

2nd: Diane Barrett

Motion Passed.

Finance Report:

- January and February receipts are up over last year \$20,868 or 27%
- Year to date actual is over budget by \$11,000 or 1.45%
- Year to date actual is \$72,698 over last year or 10.41%
- Current January collections of \$45,642 reflects first month of 6% occupancy tax. \$45,642 reflects a \$38,000 5% collection, \$7,000 over last year or 23% increase and \$2,000 over budget
- Continue to be optimistic that out total year receipts will come in on budget or higher
 - Hampton Inn open in late December
 - New 1% occupancy increase will reflect in January receipts
 - STR Program in process
 - TIEC Impact
- RFF Review
 - Projection to finish the year over 150k revenue. 80K is from revenue from towns
 - Marketing and advertising is down
 - Holding off on Building and Maintenance due to welcome center renovations from the town of LL
 - Increase in professional services
 - Project and programs increase for Wayfinding Implementation
 - Increase in travel for additional staff member
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- Budget Amendments
 - 1) To carryforward \$94,240 from original contract approved in FY16-17 for wayfinding and appropriate \$112,560 for the additional work as requested

- 2) Reallocate \$35,000 from advertising and marketing to salaries for in house work
- 3) Appropriate the towns' funds for the additional work (\$79,550) to the Strategic Plan Line Item; Destination by Design will invoice TDA and Towns will be reimbursing TDA for their share of the additional work (Phase II of the Strategic Plan as previously discussed in the fall for the "deeper dive").
- Motion to approve listed budget amendments
 - Motion to approve number 2 and 3 – hold off on number 1 until after closed session
 - **Approval:** 1st: Willard Whitson
2nd: Barbara Meliski
- Motion Passed.
 - Audit contract presented from Gould Killian
 - The County received bids from two audit firms in January. Both firms submitted proposals for the County and TDA. The County selected Gould Killian and are recommended for the TDA audit as well. The cost for TDA's audit with Gould Killian will be \$5,400.
 - Motion to approve audit contract
 - **Approval:** 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Amy Bridges

Don Cason – Tourism Strategic Plan

- DbD and TDA staff coordination of plan in process
- Tourism Plan process to be completed by June 30th 2018
- The Towns of Lake Lure, Chimney Rock, Rutherfordton, and Spindale steering committees continue to meet in preparation for the community meetings and input.
- Third Round of Steering Committee Meetings: Lake Lure 2/28, Chimney Rock 3/14, Rutherfordton 3/20, and Spindale 3/22
- DbD is evaluating and coordinating steering committee input and direction
- TDA Board and TAC meeting to take place on March 27th at 10 am at the Rutherfordton Clubhouse
- Community meetings tentatively planned second week of April
- Implementation and funding campaign initial work has begun. Committees and partnerships to be developed

Executive Director Report:

- ICC Tourism Presentation – Tourism Presentation to High School Students
- Attended all Committee Meetings – TDA Program Reviews and Updates
- Attended the Factory – Kid Senses/Community Brainstorming
- Attended Congressman McHenry Lunch and Learn – Discussed Tax Reform and Workforce Development
- Attended County Trash Pickup Committee (2) – Discussed Issues and Committee Development
- Attended Agritourism Brainstorming – Rutherford County Research for Agritourism
- TDA Budget Work – Work with Committees and TDA Staff on Budget
- Attended VisitNC 365 Tourism Conference – Tourism Updates and Networking
- Attended NC Main Street Conference – Main Street Updates and Networking
- Attended RC Historical Preservation Committee – Historical Sites
- Attended Farmers Market Board meeting – Presented Agritourism Concept

Welcome Center Update:

- Lake Lure has sent out bids for reconstruction
- The TDA will operate 2/3 of welcome center 1/3 will be renovated into restrooms
- Monitoring Activity

Marketing Update:

- Leniece: itineraries are going well. Differentiate between itineraries and blogs
- Day trip blogs

- Analytics compares the two months
- Top pages – buzzworthy and camping blog
- Ad word campaigns
- Long tail searches
- Social media – decline in January and February – not a big social month

Committee Reports

Marketing: 2/16

TDA Marketing Updates

- WEG committee meeting on 2/27 to review proposed WEG Marketing Plan and Budget at next meeting. Amy to share with marketing committee after meeting.
- Amy working on 2018-2019 marketing budget/proposal
- Any new updates or advertising you would like Amy to pursue this year.
- Review and Discuss 2018/2019 TDA Goals- Brainstorm marketing components

Vacation Guide Update

- Guide will be printed in April and distributed.
- Aditorials are sold out and have generated \$11,000 revenue to offset printing cost.
- Amy will continue to work on new locations and increasing distribution by 40% this year.
- Amy continues to establishing lodging partners within county to display in room.

Website/SEO Update

- New program going well, all broken links and misspellings have been corrected as of mid-January.
- We will receive monthly reports as shown in last board packet which will include all analytics and rankings.
- Amy continues to work with McConnell Group and Simpleview to optimize and implement key word searches, SEO and content.

Marketing: 3/19

TDA Marketing Updates

- WEG committee met on 2/27 to review proposed WEG Marketing Plan and Budget
- Amy working on 2018-2019 marketing budget/proposal full proposal in April
- Reviewed advertising options including Our State Magazine Annual Proposal
- Amy working on all info for Hospitality Training Program due 3/20 and will be ready at the end of May

Vacation Guide Update

- Guide will be printed in mid-April and distributed
- Aditorials proofs have been sent to all stakeholders who participated
- Final proof edition will be ready by 3/20
- Amy secured several new locations in prime shopping and attractions in region

Website/SEO Update

- New program going well, all broken links and misspellings have been corrected as of mid-January.
- The latest report in Feb had also been corrected and was minimal with stakeholder updates we have already corrected.
- We will receive monthly reports as shown in last board packet which will include all analytics and rankings.
- Amy continues to work with McConnell Group and Simpleview to optimize and implement key word searches, SEO and content.
- Discussed 2018-2019 Marketing needs to be outsourced and RFP

TAF:

- Attended Caroline's Ladies Church Group Meeting along with Dana, spoke briefly.
- Met with Carol Price of McDowell Tourism regarding the Gold Festival and the Gold Trail

- Did a tour on Sunday, Feb 18th, a couple...the young lady may be a Bechtler descendant.
- Increased Facebook Likes have by nearly 200
- Met with a professional storyteller in Shelby to give her info on Bechtler for her to create a historical character
- Phone meeting with David Blackwelder, who is head of the Gold Festival Committee
- Meeting in Old Fort with the Gold Festival Committee

Finance:

- Reviewed 2017-2018 RFF Summary
- Reviewed 2018-2019 Goals
- Discussed 2018-2019 Budget
- Looked at Potential Cost of Wayfinding and Occupancy Tax Projections for 2018-2019
- Worked with Paula to establish needed budget amendments to balance the current 2017-2018 budget

Grant:

- No Meeting this Month
- We will hold a meeting sometime in the next couple of weeks. We have five applications.

Information:

- Construction changes that are pending with LL: It was determined that more clarification is needed from Lake Lure on what the new design for the WC will be.
- Upcoming 2018-2019 Budget- Will revisit after final plans for the Welcome Center Renovations are complete. Budget items include but are not limited to:
 - Shampoo carpeted areas
 - Paint two interior walls due to remodel
 - General allotted money for any unforeseen issues
- Future meeting dates: Will determine at the next Info Committee Meeting

WEG committee:

- Training Update: A2D Custom Hospitality Program
- TDA team working on all of the information needed for program to be customized, this is due on 3/19 (30 pages of info)
- See timeline of program (See Attached)
- Program will be complete by May 2018
- TDA Partnerships with other towns and municipalities: Update from Amy & Don
- Discuss/Develop WEG Marketing Plan and Budget-
- Reviewed Amy's proposal of WEG marketing/Advertising plan

Executive:

- Provided Wayfinding Update – Discussed potential time-line for completion
- Reviewed Marketing– Reviewed marketing progress and discussed success of coffee talks
- Provided update on staff progress on projects
- Provided WEG update – Discussed Hospitality Training. Trash and Community clean-up, WEG Marketing
- Provided Welcome Center staff update and reviewed Welcome Center renovation project
- Reviewed board meeting agenda
- Provided TDA Tourism Master Plan Update – All towns are in planning process – Discussed plan implementation and funding campaign
- Brainstormed potential projects for 2018-2019
- TDA RFF Review

- TDA 2018-2019 Budget Review

2018-2019 Budget:

- 2018-2019 Goals Hi Level Top line items focus for staff and committees
- Occupancy Tax Projections are conservative
- 2018-2019 Draft – Summary Review
 - Revenues – Increase
 - Expenses/Benefits – Salary increases adding part time person
 - Advertising and Marketing – 36,000 increases in total
 - Continue website
 - Postage bump
 - Repairs and maintenance – holding basics
 - Travel – increase (additional staff)
 - Decrease in professional fees and STR is renewal
 - Projects and programs – wayfinding
 - Strategic plan – wrapping up – additional communication and support
 - Strategic Plan Implementation – partnering with towns
 - Community programs – up a little
 - WEG – marketing and promotion
 - Group Tours and Agritourism Program

Announcements:

- Coffee Talks Coming Up - DATES

Motion to enter Closed Session G.S 143-318.11(Attorney-Client)

Approval: 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Ruthie Hanson

Motion Passed.

Motion to end Closed Session G.S 143-318.11(Attorney-Client)

Approval: 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Ruthie Hanson

Motion Passed.

Motion to Enter Regular Session Session

Approval: 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Dave Long

Motion Passed.

Motion to enter into amended contract negotiations with ACSM

Approval: 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Willard Whitson

Motion Passed.

Motion to carry forward the 94k from the original 16-17 contract,

Approval: 1st: Barbara Meliski
2nd: Amy bridges

Motion to enter Closed Session G.S 143-318.11(Personnel)

Approval: 1st: Willard Whitson

2nd: Ruthie Hanson

Motion Passed.

Motion to end Closed Session G.S 143-318.11(Personnel)

Approval: 1st: Amy Bridges

2nd: Dave Long

Motion Passed.

No Action Taken

Meeting Adjourned: 2:34pm

Next meeting May 3rd at 12 noon in the Woodrow Jones Building