

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting**

Call to Order: 12:03pm

Members Present: Mia Chapman, Janet Mason, Willard Whitson, Jeff Geisler, Jim Masek, Dave Long, David Hislop, and Dana Bradley

Members Absent: Mary Jaeger-Gale, and Kitty McCammon

Ex-Officis Present: Paula Roach and David Hunt

Ex-Officis Absent:

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

Additions / Deletions from Agenda: ----

Motion to approve Agenda:

Approval: 1st: David Hunt
2nd: Dana Bradley
Motion Passed.

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

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler
2nd: David Hunt
Motion Passed.

Finance Report:

Finance Report Highlights:

- Highlights
 - Occupancy tax growth over the last year is up over all. Up 50% over prior year, with every month having been a record breaking month
 - February was 43% over prior months
 - Year to date we are \$554,361 over prior year
 - Review of May RFF
 - Projecting to wrap up the year around \$2.2 million in occupancy tax growth
 - Salary will wrap-up the year on budget
 - The Marketing and Advertising line item will come in slightly under budget
 - Janitorial will come in under budget due to the need for a cleaning service at the Welcome Center—we are still looking to hire a company
 - Office expenses will come in on budget
 - Dues and Subscriptions come in on budget
 - Travel is down for the year, but is projected to increase next year
 - Professional fees – half-year payment for Host Compliance
 - Wrap up with a fund balance of nearly \$1.9 million

2021-2022 Budget

- Highlights
 - Revenues
 - Projected \$2.4 million in revenue, with \$2 million coming from Occupancy Tax collections
 - This is a conservative projection, as we hope that travel to our area will continue to increase
 - Paddle Trail grant dollars have been moved to this next fiscal year, with the grants being reimbursed once the project progresses
 - Projection that the towns will continue to contribute toward the KRCB revenue for litter pick-up
 - Website advertising is projected to grow
- Expenses
 - Salaries and Part-time wages line item has changed
 - Karen Tegen, Project and Welcome Center Manager, will go part-time
 - Kayley Smith, Information Specialist, will be promoted to Welcome Center Coordinator
 - Additional part-time staff will also be at the Welcome Center
 - Salary increases have been added to other staff wages due to increased responsibilities
 - Emily Ostertag, Administrative Assistant, will be giving her 90-day notice in the coming months, and Taylor Hardin will take on some additional responsibilities as this transition takes place
 - Professional Services line item has also changed for the coming year
 - The STR monitoring service that we currently use is still being evaluated for continued use, but funds have been allocated in the coming year to keep this program
 - Strategic Plan line item has allocated funds to keep Rutherford Bound moving forward
 - Each Town and the County will received \$150 in funding toward projects
 - With other funds being allocated toward other projects, such as trails
 - Relocate Rutherford, Agri-Tourism, and KRCB line items will continue to allocate funds toward these efforts in our County
 - Fund balance, after expenses, projected at \$1.1 million

Motion to take the 2021-2022 recommended budget to a public hearing on June 10th 2021, at 12 noon in the Woodrow Jones Building.

Approval: 1st: Dave Long
2nd: Jeff Geisler
Motion Passed.

Budget Amendment

	Expenses	Revenues
Strategic Plan Imp./Grants	\$708.00	
Strategic Plan Imp./Funding 191-01		\$708.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To appropriate reimbursement from Chimney Rock back to Strategic Plan Implementation. 		

Motion to approve budget amendment:

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler
2nd: Dana Bradley
Motion Passed.

Motion to approve Finance report:

Approval: 1st: David Hunt
2nd: Mia Chapman
Motion Passed.

Executive Director Report:

Highlights:

- o The TDA staff participated in the Spring Litter Sweep in April. In the 4 mile stretch, staff picked up 63 bags of trash
- o Volunteer pick-up results will be announced at the next board meeting
- o A Rutherford Bound presentation was given to the Forest City Town Council, which included the plans for the TBRT
- o The TDA continued to work with DFI and the EDC in terms of funding options for Rutherford Bound—
- o Municipal Service Districts were discussed. This has already been implemented in Chimney Rock and Rutherfordton
- o Met with Margaret Annunziata, President of ICC, to discuss TDA projects and Rutherford Bound
- o The TDA was interviewed by the Citizen Times about occupancy tax and visitation to the County
- o Met with Lake Lure to develop the Phase II Amphitheater project with DbD
- o Met with the extended Agri-Tourism Committee. There is great energy and vision going toward their program of work
- o The Strategic Plan Committee continues to work with the Rutherford Bound Partners to move this program forward
- o The TDA met with the TBRT partners to discuss progress with potential grants and future funding—TDA allocating \$200,000
- o Met with the Rutherfordton Town Council to discuss their Phase II projects, etc.

Welcome Center Update:

See staff changes in Finance Report

- Visitation continues to be up

Marketing Report:

- **Marketing Committee Update**

- o Internal Marketing Report
 - o An organic feature ran in Our State Magazine's April issue on Easter in North Carolina, which mentioned Chimney Rock State Park
 - o In that same issue, the TDA ran a full page ad.
 - o All 30,000 2020 travel guides have been distributed for the first time in recorded history
 - o The press-check on the 2021 travel guide production was completed Tuesday, May 11th
 - o The 2021 guide should be ready for distribution in the coming weeks
 - o The website updates are still underway with a release date of late Summer
- o The Agency Slides presented by Taylor Hardin:
 - o Review of March numbers
 - All social media platforms are all up, in terms of views and use
 - Facebook and Pinterest in particular, in particular, are way up
 - Website analytics are up over last year
 - Mobile device usage continues to be up
 - Recent interest in the film The Last of the Mohicans
 - Website usage is up by 209%

Committee Updates:

Marketing Committee:

- Met May 4th
- Update from The Agency
 - Moving of funds, for better use. No additional dollars allocated
 - Tentative date for Coffee Talk is June 7th, in-person at Kiwanis Park
 - Participating in WLOS's Road Trippin', which is scheduled for June

Agri-Tourism Committee:

- A separate sub-committee was established, with the last committee having met on April 26th
- The original committee will reconvene in the coming weeks to:
 - o Decide on branding
 - o Best educate farmers, and identify assets
 - o How to reach the middle 65% as tourists, and their visitation to the Farmers Market

Finance Committee:

- Met May 6th
- *See Finance Report*

Tourism Strategic Plan Committee:

- Met May 11th
 - o Continuing to enhance the program of work
 - o Meeting with key Rutherford County citizens and business owners to further develop to the program
 - o All Rutherford Bound partners have developed their programs of work for the coming year
 - o The Lake Lure Boardwalk and Washburn Marina Ribbon Cutting was rescheduled from May 14th to June 11th
 - o The Tourism Advisory Committee will meet on May 18th to discuss current and future projects and plans

CFHC Committee:

- No Meeting
- Review of current donation status - \$26,025

Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:

- No Meeting
- *See Executive Director Report*

Information Committee:

- No Meeting
- *See Welcome Center Update*

Relocate to Rutherford Committee:

- No Meeting
- Committee is in the process of developing a program of work and a website with DbD
- This program will continue to evolve with collaboration and cooperation with other County and Town entities

Executive Committee:

- Met May 6th
- *See Executive Director Report*

Announcements:

Meeting Adjourned: 12:59pm