

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority  
Board Meeting**

**Call to Order:** 12:04

**Members Present:** Mary Jaeger-Gale, Dave Long, Willard Whitson, Kitty McCammon, Jim Masek, Jeff Geisler, David Hislop, and Richard Lundy

**Members Absent:** Brandon Higgins, Rocky Guarriello, and Janet Mason

**Ex-Officos Present:** Paula Roach

**Ex-Officos Absent:** Eddie Holland

**Others Present:** Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, Emily Ostertag, Karen Tegen, Eric Woolridge (DbD), and Tim Johnson (DbD)

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

**Additions / Deletions from Agenda:**

Add Audit Contract under Finance Report

**Motion to approve Agenda:**

**Approval:** 1st: Richard Lundy  
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

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

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

Motion Passed.

**Finance Report:**

**Audit Contract with Gould Killian**

Highlights

- \$600 increase from last year

**Motion to approve the Audit Contract with Gould Killian:**

**Approval:** 1st: Richard Lundy  
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

**Finance Report Highlights:**

- Reminder of February Year-to-Date Occupancy tax receipts, which were 33% over budget (before COVID-19)
- March and April payments were 17% less than the prior year
- Year-to-Date we are still 26% over plan, but this is subject to change as impacts from COVID-19 continue

**Motion to approve Financial Report:**

**Approval:** 1st: Richard Lundy  
2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

**2020-2021 Budget:**

RFF Details as we wrap up 2019-2020:

- Occupancy Tax Revenues are projected to be \$16,000 ahead of last year
- About \$1.3 million in Occupancy Tax Revenue to finish out the year
- Wages are under plan as we finish out the year

Date: .....5/14/20.....

Approved as Minutes: .....6/18/20.....

- Marketing and Advertising line items are under plan, as many of these programs have been put on hold - Total will come in around \$350,000
- Admin. Expenses, Office Expenses, Travel, Building and Maintenance are all also under plan
- Projects and Programs – Wayfinding Signage still to be wrapped-up before the end of the year
- Strategic Plan will come in under budget, as our partners and projects have largely been put on hold
- All towns will still receive their \$50,000 for Rutherford Bound in June \$1,183,000 is the projected year-end fund balance

#### Summary

- The original budget plan has changed since the last board meeting
- Since then the Finance Committee, based on the impact of COVID-19, is projecting a 40% decrease from prior year in Occupancy Tax
- Projecting a Fund Balance of half a million due to COVID-19
- Marketing and Advertising budget has been increased \$70,000 over the prior year
- All committees have approved their dollars and budget line items
- Increase in freight cost to get our travel guide distributed
- Travel will hopefully pick up next year, which is reflected in the budget
- Wayfinding will move into a monitoring and replacement program
- TAF program will be adjusted
- Strategic Plan and Implementation funds maintain as projects continue to move forward
- Towns will receive their last allotment of \$50,000
- Community Events are projected to pick back up next year
- The budget has been projected to accommodate any worst-case scenario happenings

#### - Year-End Review highlighted:

- Tourism Master Plan and Funding continues to work on the Asset Development Plan with lots of success
- Established Rutherford Bound Partnership Team
- Occupancy Tax Receipts continue to exceed prior year
- Marketing Plan officially began contract work and developed a new logo
- Community Programs continue to grow
- Wayfinding signage will be completed
- Enhanced and developed Welcome Center presence in Lake Lure

#### Budget Message highlighted

- Our many successes were put on hold due to COVID-19
- The impact of this pandemic is still unknown, but the TDA will work very hard to help Rutherford County rebuild and recover from these impacts
- All of our prior goals still stand, and will be revisited once this pandemic subsides

#### - TDA 2020-2021 Goals were highlighted

#### - Budget Summary was highlighted

#### - Budget Detail highlighted

#### - Budget Ordinance highlighted

- Total Revenue and Appropriations \$1,495,498

**Motion to take the 2020-2021 recommended budget to a Public Hearing June 18<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon in the Rutherfordton Town Hall:**

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

2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed.

**A Special Called Board Meeting will be held Monday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, where the proposed 2020-2021 Budget will be the topic of discussion.**

**Tourism Strategic Plan Update:**

**Destination by Design Presentation**

- Highlighted 3 Capital Projects:

- Chimney Rock Village Riverside Plaza and Streetscape
  - Fully designed, permitted and engineered
  - NCDOT has approved
  - One easement must be signed and recorded
  - Once signed the project will be ready to go to bid
  - Presented plans and 3D visuals of the projects
  - Spindale Streetscape Master Plan
    - Water and sewer infrastructure has gone to bid
    - Presented plans and 3D visuals of the projects
    - Plans still being reviewed by NCDOT
    - Thermal Belt Rail Trail and Purple Martin Greenway Connector
  - Design work has been completed
  - Within NCDOT Bike Ped Master Plan
  - Will be providing NCDOT will preliminary design work
  - Presented plans and visuals

- Grants

- Broad River Paddle Trail
  - US 221 Access – Total of \$250,000 (mostly secured, except for NC Water Resources Grant of \$50,000)
  - US 221-A Duke Energy Access – Total of \$250,000 (Summer & Fall of 2020 – delayed based on the State budget)
  - Spindale
    - TBRT/Spindale House Connector – Total of \$225,000 (mostly secured, except for AARP Community Challenge Grant of \$50,000 – Summer 2020)

**Paddle Trail Grant**

Overview provided by Destination by Design. They are currently working on the application for the 2021 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding. This time last year, the TDA completed and submitted to the 2020 RTP grant package. We don't anticipate that the 25% match (\$12,500) will need to come from the TDA if the other grants we're applying for are awarded.

**Motion: The Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority Board supports the Broad River Paddle Trail: Duke Energy Access at US-221A Recreational Trails Program Grant Application and commits to providing the required 25% match via monies from the Rutherford County TDA Tourism Master Plan Capital Project Grant and/or additional grant funding secured in the future. The project will also be completed within the required three year time period.**

**Approval:** 1st: Jeff Geisler

2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed.

**Strategic Plan Committee Update:**

- The Agency has been working on a number of different items to prepare us for events and fundraising
  - Presented The Agency's projects and visuals of their work (tents, materials, merchandise etc.)
- PMA Consulting has been put on hold and will be ready once we are ready to get back into our fundraising campaign

**Executive Director Report:**

Highlights:

- Attended the NCTTC Board Meeting (Virtually) where the State budget short-fall of \$2.2 million was addressed, as well as the reopening process in NC, the school calendar, occupancy tax uses, etc.
- The TDA participated and partnered with the County's 2020 Census promotion
- Don appeared in the 2020 census video, as well as the TDA's assistance in funding the video
- Presented and played video for board

**Welcome Center Update:**

The Lake Lure Welcome Center and Rutherfordton Self-Service Welcome Center remain closed until further notice in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions

- Potential Reopen Date, May 22<sup>nd</sup> (if state transitions into Phase II)

**Marketing Report:**

The Agency Update:

- The Agency has been working with Dustin's Way Collective to produce some TBRT videos
- They are monitoring our social media accounts to stay up-to-date
- They are working closely with Visit NC to stay timely and relevant with messaging
- Social media activity is up
- The website has impacted by COVID-19, with all stats. being down, except for organic traffic
- There have been lots of inquiries about closings, re-openings and cancelations
- Print advertisements ran in both March and April, including Our State Magazine, etc.

**Committee Updates:**

**Marketing Committee:**

- There was a Marketing Committee meeting held virtually on April 30<sup>th</sup>
- The Marketing and Grant Committees were merged
- The Grant Application was updated and has been published on the website
- The Coffee Talks have been postponed until September

**Agri-Tourism Committee:**

- The Agri-tourism Committee met virtually on April 28<sup>th</sup>
- The Extended Committee will meet in September
- The TDA is partnering, along with McDowell and Polk Counties to implement the Farm App

**Finance Committee:**

- The Finance Committee worked diligently to put together the RFF and recommended 2020-2021 Budget

**Executive Committee:**

- Reviewed all committee updates, and reviewed the budget request and agreed unanimously to reduce the occupancy tax as well as some other items

**TAF Committee:**

- The TAF Committee is meeting this Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> to review the potential partnership between the TDA and The Community Foundation of Henderson County

**Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:**

- Review of the TDA's litter pick-up efforts, with 547 total bags of trash collected
- The Spring Litter Pick-Up was postponed

**Announcements:** Taylor's maternity leave was officially announced

**Meeting Adjourned:** 1:49 pm