

October 17<sup>th</sup> 2019 Minutes  
Approved December 5<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Call to Order:** 12:06 p.m.

Members Present: Mary Jaeger-Gale, Jim Masek, Richard Lundy, Willard Whitson, Dave Long, Brandon Higgins, Kitty McCammon, Janet Mason, Rocky Guarriello and David Hislop

Members Absent: Jeff Geisler

Ex-Officos Present: Eddie Holland and Paula Roach

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

**New Board Members Welcomed:** Janet Mason (Forest City Town Manager), Rocky Guarriello (Owner of Ultimate Textile, Inc.) and David Hislop (Farmers Market Manager)

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

**Agenda** (changes if necessary): ---

**Approval:** 1st: Jim Masek

2nd: Brandon Higgins

**Motion Passed.**

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

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

2nd: Janet Mason

**Motion Passed.**

**Finance Report:**

- Occupancy tax receipts continue to grow and be ahead of schedule

- \$90,000 over plan and \$50,000 over last year
- VRBO/Homeaway is going to be collecting and submitting occupancy tax on behalf of the owner (as of October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019)

- Highlights RFF:

- Increase of roughly over \$100,000 from the over plan amount
- Salary, wages, part-time increased hours
- Marketing and Advertising is on plan, but the committee will be assessing this line item's budget due to the increase
- Administrative and Operations – hired janitorial service for Welcome Center
- Budgeted for a new copier, but will be maintaining the current copier with a contract through Duffie's
- Project and Programs – Wayfinding budget has been adjusted because of a reduction in signs (money saved)
- Promotional Events – delay the Group Sales Program into next year
- Summary: every line item is on plan with several increases and reductions accounted for
- Increase in fund balance of over \$200,000
- Fund Balance is for the Tourism Plan and other special projects

**Motion to approve Financial Report:****Approval:** 1st: Janet Mason

2nd: Richard Lundy

**Motion Passed.****Executive Director Report:**

- Attended the Visit NC Media Mission
- Attended NCTIA Tourism Conference
- Attended the Hickory Nut Gorge Leadership Committee
- Tourism Asset Committee has an update meeting
- The TDA sponsored and played in the RHI Legacy Golf Tournament
- The TDA hosted two Coffee Talks (in Lake Lure and Rutherfordton).
- The TDA participated in the KRCB County-Wide Litter Sweep
- Attended the monthly Farmers Breakfast with the State Agri-Tourism Director
- Attended the Outdoor Economy Conference in Asheville. Destination by Design was a guest speaker

**Welcome Center Update:**

- September's Visitor Traffic was way up compared to last year because of the Dirty Dancing Festival date being moved
- Natalie Bell is the new Information Specialist at the Welcome Center

**Marketing Update:**

- Lake Lure was the winner of Carolina Country's Best Lake in the State
- Upstate Lake Living had a three-page article from the Battle of the Smokies Golf Tournament
- Smokey Mountain Living had a four-page article on the County
- Our State Magazine ad
- There are 5 blogs in approval process
- Work has started on the 2020 Travel Guide

**The Agency Report:**

- Top social media posts
- Media and influencer engagement
- Final numbers from the Dirty Dancing Festival
- Social Media Contest: 166,000 impressions
- 500 total entries to dirty dancing staycation
- Paid social media doing well
- Website Analytics: New user engagement – 30,000
- Top cities are still Charlotte, Raleigh and Asheville
- SEO Statistics from Simple View
- Google pay-per-clicks
- Commercial placements and where they were broadcast in August and September

**Committee Updates:****Agri-Tourism:**

- Idea to reach outside of our board for potential new committee members
- Talked about farm tours, and future involvement
- Discussed future of committee

**Retire NC:**

- Retire NC is a state-wide program that we are investigating and looking into
- The TDA will be partnering with the towns, hospitals, realtors, etc. to try to recruit retirees to Rutherford County
- The State has a lot of communities that are part of this program

**Keep Rutherford County Beautiful:**

- The 2019 Trash Bowl and Fall Litter Sweep were a success. Thomas Jefferson was the winner of the trash bowl.
- The budget is \$30,000
- Rutherford County is picking up more trash than any other county in the region

**TAF:**

- In process of finalizing the contract between TAF and the TDA

**Tourism Strategic Plan:**

- Update from iHeart Media, potential partner for the Tourism Strategic Plan
- These partnerships will be going public in the near future once details have been finalized
- Destination by Design gave an update on the Capital Campaign and Product Development
- Spindale, Forest City, Rutherfordton and Chimney Rock all have projects that will break ground next year
- The towns are continuing to match TDA money for these projects

**Executive:**

- Updates from the website, marketing, staff, contracts, agendas, etc. are discussed a week prior to the board meeting

**Announcements:**

- A retaining wall project at Chimney Rock State Park is about to be underway
- KidSenses received a \$55,000 grant from the Timken Company

**Motion to Enter Closed Session (G.S 143-318.11 – Attorney Client Privilege)**

**Approval:** 1st: Dave Long

2nd: Brandon Higgins

**Motion Passed.**

**Motion to End Closed Session (G.S 143-318.11 – Attorney Client Privilege)**

**Approval:** 1st: Richard Lundy

2nd: Jim Masek

**Motion Passed.**

No action taken

**Motion to resume regular session**

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

2nd: Kitty McCammon

**Motion Passed**

**Meeting Adjourned:** 1:43 p.m.