

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting**

Call to Order: 12:07pm

Members Present: Dave Long, Mary Jaegar-Gale, Jim Masek, Kitty McCammon, Dana Bradley, and Janet Mason

Members Absent: Jeff Geisler, Margaret Annunziata, Mia Chapman, and David Hislop

Ex-Officos Present: Paula Roach

Ex-Officos Absent: David Hunt

Others Present: Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, Elizabeth Randall, Emily Ostertag, and Kayley Smith

Announcements:

Staff Updates

Office

- New Staff member: Elizabeth Randall. She joined our team as of last Monday and is Emily's replacement.
- Emily's last day is Friday September 10th.
- Taylors job title is now Marketing, Administrative, and Project Coordinator. She took over a lot of the projects that Karen was doing.

Welcome Center

- Kayley is Welcome Center Coordinator.
- Karen's last day with the TDA is Friday September 10th.
- Hannah Crawford is our full time employee at the welcome center.
- Chloe Vickers and Sarah Searcy are our part time welcome center employees.

Additions / Deletions from Agenda: ---

Addition: *Edit:* There was an Information Committee meeting held.

Motion to approve Agenda:

Approval: 1st: Kitty McCammon

2nd: Janet Mason

Motion Passed.

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

Approval: 1st: Jim Masek

2nd: Dana Bradley

Motion Passed.

Finance Report:

Finance Report Highlights:

- Highlights
 - There are no financial details to provide at this meeting
 - Will provide full quarterly update at October meeting including actuals and the review of the RFF through the end of the year

- In the month of June, there were \$311,000 in occupancy tax receipts, which is once again record breaking and the highest we have yet to receive
- We are projecting that July receipts will also be record breaking

Motion to approve Finance report:

Approval: 1st: Mary Jaegar-Gale

2nd: Dana Bradley

Motion Passed.

Executive Director Report:

Highlights:

- Working with Spindale on their Phase II project which will be a skate park/pump track
- Met with Steve Lockett from the Foothills Regional Commission on several opportunities for working together towards improving workforce and housing needs
- Met with downtown landowners of Chimney Rock to start talking about the Phase II on the streetscapes project and all landowners seem to be excited for upcoming improvements, and even looking forward to Phase III
- Attended Chimney Rock's 30th anniversary celebration
- Met with the Relocate to Rutherford Committee and developed an action plan to reenergize the committee, with two separate meetings held
- Met with Steve Lockett again about the possibility of getting some staff members to participate with the Relocate Committee
- Met with Destination by Design and conducted an overview of new EDA grants that are available and could possibly be used for funding Chimney Rock and Spindale projects
- Met with AZP general manager, Kobus, to give an overview of Rutherford Bound in general. He wants us to keep him apprised with special interest geared toward the Paddle Trails.
- Striving for a groundbreaking on Paddle Trails in January
- Cycle NC Mountain Ride took place on August 6th through 8th, which was held in Forest City and sponsored by the TDA
- Interviewed candidates to fill the Administrative Support position, culminating in Elizabeth Randall's hire
- Held and attending a Trail Committee meeting, with lots of leadership attendance from across the region and the state
- Attended the Mayor / Managers Quarterly meeting to provide a TDA and Rutherford Bound update
- Attended the Travel and Tourism Coalition Board meeting, where an update on the state budget was given, travel and tourism trends were reviewed, as well as relocation and workforce trends
- The TDA sat in on the Golden Leaf Foundation grant committee for Rutherford County

Welcome Center Update:

Visitor traffic continues to grow based on current numbers versus last year. Welcome Center employees doing anything possible to ensure everyone is staying as safe as possible with current circumstances.

Marketing Report:

- **Marketing Committee Update**

- Internal Marketing Report
 - Tourism website is currently under renovation, with a relaunch date of November
 - The delays have been on the Simpleview end
 - 320 cases of the original 600 Travel Guide cases have been distributed
 - Elizabeth is taking over the distribution of cases
 - The 2022 guide goal is March 1st for a total redesign
 - Advertisement sales will go out for the new guide by the end of next week
 - In June, Dustin's Way and the Agency worked to create new content for commercials
 - Two commercials were viewed (10 sec and 30 sec for broadcast TV)
 - Cycle NC had over 330 riders, with 9 routes total. Attendees came from 13 states and 41 NC counties
 - A Fall Weekend Getaway is being planned with QC Exclusive

- The internal TDA logo has been updated to match the 'Lake Lure, Chimney Rock and the Blue Ridge Foothills' marketing logo
- The 2021 Travel Guide was submitted for the Tourism Achievement award through NCTIA
- OurState Magazine's Mountain Edition had organic mention of each region of Rutherford County, and also included a full page ad

- The Agency Slides presented by Taylor Hardin:
 - Review of July data- negative percentages can be attributed to things opening back up July of 2020 compared to now. However, there is still an overall increase compared to years pre-covid
 - Social media continues to be up, with a comparison reviewed from the last 3 years
 - Top posts were reviewed
 - Website Analytics showed an increase in website traffic as COVID restrictions were lifted over the Summer
 - Organic traffic is showing an increase of 99% based on information from Simpleview.

Committee Updates:

Marketing Committee:

- Met on 8/17
- The Agency is requesting additional money within the budget amendments.
- They are going to be adding additional marketing within many high traffic shows, radio broadcasts, magazine ads, websites and etc.
- Marketing committee has approved this section of the budget amendments and is recommending to the full board
- The County is also undergoing a rebranding program, and has asked the TDA to help fund this effort (\$15,000)
- The board would like TDA representation on the rebranding committee

Agri-Tourism Committee:

- *No meeting*

Finance Committee:

- *No meeting*

Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:

- Met on 7/29
- Provided a marketing update, a litter report, an update on the NC DOT Litter Sweep, which starts this weekend.
- The Fall Trash Bowl and the Fall Litter Sweep is going to be a combined event this year
- The 21-22 Budget was reviewed
- Keep Rutherford County Beautiful is now an affiliate of the Keep America Beautiful organization
- Roxi has made several appearances recently, however there have been several appearances canceled due to COVID
- NC DOT has requested to use Rutherford County's Keep Rutherford County Beautiful brand and Roxi the Raccoon in their marketing
- The next full committee meeting has been canceled due to COVID, and will reconvene soon

Trails Committee:

- Dana Bradley is heading this committee, with a lot of local and state leadership representation.
- A running Google Doc has been created for all Rutherford County trails to track funding and development status and to keep up with all progress on anything trails related
- Next meeting to be held September 21st

Relocate to Rutherford Committee:

- Met twice during the last several weeks
- This group will look at recruiting families, workforce, millennials, and retirees to Rutherford County
- This committee has a major interest in looking for asset development for housing within the county

- A budget will be put together to help support this vision
- Next meeting to be held on September 20th where discussion will be had regarding breaking the full committee into three subcommittees.

Information Committee:

- Met at the Welcome Center in Lake Lure.
- A property inspection was conducted
- A staff update was provided
- The dress code policy is being updated
- Discussed COVID and the possibility of reintroducing the old policies from 2020, depending on State guidelines
- Reviewed Welcome Center visitation
- Looking for a cleaning service to come in and service the welcome center at least once, maybe twice a week; but as of now Kayley and staff are doing a great job keeping the center clean and up to guidelines.
- Reviewed the current brochure policy and the draw-down of the lake (starting November 1st)

Strategic Plan Committee:

- Met on 8/25
- The main emphasis was to cover the progress of each project
- Chimney Rock Phase I is still underway due to a multitude of issues within contracting etc. but looking to be completed by the end of October
- Spindale streetscape is almost complete and looking to do the ribbon cutting on Phase I mid-October.
- All communities are looking at the start of their Phase II projects.
- Rutherford Bound has received nearly \$30,000 in individual donations
- The TBRT received a \$300,000 grant from Facebook
- Discussed reinstating the Rutherford Bound TV commercials and the Agency's program of work
- The TDA has a meeting with DbD and The Agency tomorrow to try and finalize the design for the kiosks
- The TDA is working with The Agency to put together 4 billboards to help promote Rutherford Bound (visuals shown)
- PMA consulting is still on hold
- Meetings with county leadership and industries will be held to discuss the details of the higher-level campaign
- Destination by Design 2021-2022 Strategic Plan Contract Review (recommended for approval by the Strategic Plan Committee)
 - Several items were added to the contract, including the inclusion of the County's smaller communities, specific TBRT implementation, as well as grant writing and funding services

Destination by Design 2021-2022 Strategic Plan Contract Review

Motion to approve Destination by Design's 2021-2022 Strategic Plan Contract as presented:

Approval: 1st: Dana Bradley
2nd: Mary Jaegar-Gale

Motion Approved.

Executive Committee:

See Executive Report

Budget Amendments:

Budget Amendment #1

Fund Balance	\$213,975.25	
Strategic Plan Implementation		\$213,975.25

- To appropriate \$213,975.25 from fund balance to strategic plan implementation (70-6520-191-01-000) for unspent dollars in the 20-21 fiscal year. \$13,975.25 will go to Chimney Rock. \$50,000 will go to Lake Lure. \$150,000 will go to Forest City.

Budget Amendment #2

Fund Balance	\$33,501.00	
Paddle Trail Implementation		\$33,501.00

- To appropriate \$33,501.00 from fund balance to paddle trail implementation (70-6520-510-04-000) for unspent dollars in the 20-21 fiscal year.

Budget Amendment #3

Fund Balance	\$60,000	
Marketing		\$60,000

- To appropriate \$60,000 from fund balance to Marketing/Advertising (70-6520-370-00-000) for additional projects from the Agency. (the breakdown of the \$60k is: \$15k to county rebranding, \$40k to additional digital and print advertising, \$5k to other category)

Motion to approve budget amendments as presented:

Approval: 1st: Janet Mason

2nd: Jim Masek

Motion Passed.

Announcements: Keeping an eye on public events due to Town of Rutherfordton canceling all of their public events through at least October 6th.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:27pm