

Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting

Call to Order: 12:07 p.m.

Announced: Chuck Martell's Resignation

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

Members Absent: Amy Bridges, Brandon Higgins and Lynn Brown

Ex-Officos Present: Paula Roach, Eddie Holland

Others Present: Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, Karen Tegen, Emily Ostertag, The Agency (2), Destination by Design (1) and Media (2)

Public Comments: -----

Agenda (changes if necessary):

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler

2nd: Dave Long

Motion Passed

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

Approval: 1st: Jim Masek

2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed.

Finance Report:

- 10 month YDT over last year by \$30K with occupancy tax collections.
- 12.52% over last years' plan.
- Cut back on quantity of Travel Guide
- Savings from delay of renovations on Welcome Center
- Travel Related Expenses, lack of travel was the biggest savings
- Project Programs – under budget on all categories
- Over budget with DbD and capital funding
- Money to the towns for implementation of strategic plan
 - Fund balance, wrapping up this year in excess
 - Paula provided board with overview of audit and discussed contract with Gould Killian-this proposal is year 2 of 3

Motion to approve the audit contract with Gould Killian

Approval: 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed.

Motion to approve finance report

Approval: 1st: Dave Long

2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

Executive Director Report:

- Attended Visit NC conference
- KRCB trash pick-up – 650+ volunteers and 7+ tons of trash picked up
- The TDA participated in the Hometown Strong meetings, and the Gov.'s program,
 - Legislative breakfast

Executive Director Report:

- Attended Visit NC conference
- KRCB trash pick-up – 650 volunteers and about 7 tons of trash was picked up
- The TDA participated in the Hometown Strong meetings, the Gov.'s program, where it was proposed to get some signage for Jellystone Park.
- Legislative breakfast

Welcome Center Update:

Bought and planted flowers around the grounds
Mulching and weeding, along with other landscaping

Destination by Design Up-Date:

General campaign
Rutherfordbound.com finalized and will be live very soon
Finalized capital campaign video – showed draft to steering committee
Finalized Kiwanis Park video
Produced Designs for festival displays
Towns
Quotes for Chimney Rock town surveys:
Will begin engineering phase
The goal is Dec. to have construction docs
Lake Lure RFP for marina:
Aug. to Sept. estimate timeframe for complete RFP
Rutherfordton survey specifications for Kiwanis Park:
Parks and Rec. trust fund grant
Moving forward with construction details

Destination by Design Up-Date Cont'd:

Spindale: Phase 1a and 1b
Engaged a surveyor
Commissioners approved match w/ TDA phase 1a
Hometown strong pledged
By July will be engaged with steering committee to begin const. in Aug.
Phase 1b – Spindale matched funds for RHI Legacy grant
Forest City: Bostic Spur – thermal belt rail trail connection to Bostic

Project representation in Master Plan (long-range)

Paddle Trails

Grant opportunity to leverage TDA dollars

Broad River Property on Highway 221 for river access

NC Wildlife Resources

Airport site plan

Final site visit with county and airport officials

Put together long-term display for new entry way, etc.

Parks and Rec.

Finalized the survey

Presented results to steering committee

Also developed a number of site master plans for aquatic facilities, soccer fields, etc.

Contract Agenda

Motion to approve amendment to contract to extend contract and change scope with DbD

Approval: 1st: Jeff Geisler

2nd: Mary Jaeger-Gale

Motion Passed.

Marketing Update:

Advertisement placements

Battle of the Smokies Media Challenge Golf Tournament (10 media from NC and 10 from TN)

(2 articles, 3 radio hits, and 2 TV programs)

The Daily Courier - Everything Rutherford annual magazine

Atlanta Magazine Online Advertising, which was won in a silent auction (print edition released in June)

Organic ad. in Only in Your State – highlighted Chimney Rock

Organic ad. in Carolina Living – highlighted Lake Lure

Blue Ridge Country (paid ad and an organic mention)

Paid ad. in USA Today Travel

Paid ad. in Our State Magazine (also several organic mention)

Paid ad. in Down the Road Magazine

Organic ad. In Charlotte Stories

Travel Guide went to press production May 9th and 10th

Upcoming ad. in Southern Travel (May / June Issue)

Upcoming ad in Atlanta Magazine

The Agency Presentation

Synonymous Campaign message “Moments that Matter”

Variations: “Make Time for Moments that Matter” and “Stop and Enjoy the Moments that Matter”

Bright, polaroid snapshots for advertising visuals

Report on stats. from March and April:

Viewers and engaged numbers are going up

Organic social media – seen by general scrollers

Paid social media – this is the focus, but can only be seen by select, targeted viewers

Post engagements

Link clicks - bring viewers to the website

Agency Presentation Cont'd:

Website analytics:

Charlotte, Nashville and Atlanta are at the top for visitors to the website (target audiences)

Number of users is up by 42% from last year, 53% of which are new users

Overall social traffic up by 85% from last year

Working to make website more user friendly (especially with the lodging section)

Committee Reports

Marketing:

- The Agency presented marketing plan
- Committee approved Moments that Matter
- Discussed Interim program of work
- Internal staff to develop reporting
- Travel guide printing May 9

TAF:

- Increased number of visitors to Bechtler House
 - Discussed support to TDA
 - May Fest booth

Wayfinding:

- Forest City signs will be installed by June 30
- Meeting with DOT later this month to discuss Bostic, Ellenboro and Ruth signs. Projected to be installed in Aug.

Committee Reports Cont'd:

KRCB:

Continued collaboration

Approved budget for education and marketing of \$60K

Jenna Bailey will be helping to design a website to aid in taking donations

Executive:

- Board approved agenda
- Budget Discussion
- Board Member Seats
- Committee Updates

2019-2020 Budget:

2018-2019 Year End

- Completed a County-Wide Tourism Asset Development Plan
- Progress with Wayfinding program
- Occupancy Tax receipts have increase 30% over last year
- Reorganized staffing and hired The Agency

- Community Grant program continues to grow
- Started new programs, Agri-Tourism and KRCB
- Budget reflects 18% increase over 2 years ago
- Adding a new program this year, Retire NC, where the state will partner with our towns

2019-2020 Highlights:

- Decrease from prior years in occupancy tax collection (mainly from not hosting WEG)
- Marketing and Advertising has a \$65K increase over prior years
- Travel has increased, as we anticipate attending staff training, legislative events, etc.
- Spending less in projects and programs, mainly due to the completion of the Wayfinding Sign Program
- Fund balance is reserved for Tourism Plan Implementation, etc.

Motion to take 2019-2020 recommended budget to a public hearing on June 20th 2019 at 12 noon in the Rutherfordton Town hall

Approval: 1st: Richard Lundy

 2nd: Jim Masek

Motion Passed.

Announcements:

- Mary Jaegar-Gale mentioned the passing of Lake Lure Mayor, Kevin Cooley
- Paula Roach mentioned discounted tickets to Forest City Owl games
- Rutherfordton Town Choir will hold a show in the Pops Arena
- Willard Whitson mentioned that Kid Senses is hosting an event, Sat. May 18th called Safety Day with the local Fire Department, etc.
- Mary Jaegar-Gale mentioned that the Lake Lure Classical Academy is opening their new gymnasium
- Rutherfordton Public Works facility grand opening – Friday, May 17th

Meeting Adjourned: 1:54 p.m.

1st: Jeff Geisler

2nd: Kitty McCammon

Motion Passed