

HCTDA Board Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2024
Lake Junaluska Bethea Welcome Center

Members/Staff Present: Jim Owens, Dr. Shelley White, Mike Huber, Jeff Hillis, Scot Blair, Chad King, Angie Frisbee, Kristian Owen, Chuck Dickson, Jeremy Boone, Natalie Hawkins, Gail Mull, Jennifer Best

Members Absent: David Francis, Kelsie Baker

Guests Present: Jeanne Forrest, Lisa Conard, Jane Mauer, Brionna Dallara, Lindsey Godwin

1. Call to Order – Chair Jim Owens

- Meeting called to order at 9:00 AM

2. Introductions –

3. Adjustment of Agenda

- After adjournment, we will have Board and Staff photos. After photos, Executive Committee will meet.

4. Public Comment Session (12 minutes total, limit 3 minutes per person)

- Jane Mauer, from Smokies Life, announced that pho (firefly book) is in stock and will be at the visitor center. The Gateway to the Smokies event is June 1st and they are excited that it is happening
- Jeanne Forrest, representing the Canton Merchant Partnership, requests that the TDA Board **not** vote on Canton Labor Day grant. They have submitted a grant application themselves, and do not feel like it is in best interest of the spirit of the grant program to vote on grants without considering all of the submitted grants in the Canton zip code.

5. Board Comments

- Corrina Ruffieux announced, on behalf of Kelsie Baker, that The Red Fox restaurant opens tomorrow.
- Jeff Hillis stated that next month will be their 20th year in business. They will have a celebration at the ranch and will send details.
- Mike Huber announced that the recreation area at Lake Junaluska opens this weekend.
- Angie Frisbee stated that that Route 19 Inn's pool is open right now, and everyone is welcome to go use it.
- Jim Owens explained that a trout shortage is coming next year. Haywood County will be fine through the end of the this year, but there will not be additional fish added to the streams due to needed renovations on the state hatchery that will result in a 66% reduction of trout supply for several coming years. Economic impact for the state was \$1.38 billion. Haywood County is ranked #5 in the state for trout fishing. We are closely monitoring this situation to ensure we can act if needed.

6. **Consent Agenda | VOTE**

- Request approval of minutes – April 24, 2024

Natalie Hawkins made a motion to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Dr. Shelley White seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

7. **Finance Reports**

- April Financial Reports– *Kristian Owen*

Kristian Owen presented the April financials, as follows:

- Total Checking/Savings - \$3,709,193.20
- Total Assets - \$3,747,137.01
- Total Liabilities - \$272,781.28
- Total Occupancy Tax Revenue April - \$131,561.84
- Total Occupancy Tax Revenue YTD - \$2,179,748.91
- Total Income April - \$181,189.59
- Total Income YTD - \$2,410,461.11
- Total Expenses April - \$191,125.66
- Total Expenses YTD - \$1,827,257.06
- Change in Net Position April – (\$9,936.07)
- Change in Net Position YTD - \$583,204.05

- Occupancy Tax and Lodging Data – *Corrina Ruffieux*

Corrina showed that March was up 22% this year. After investigating, the logical conclusion is that the early Easter contributed to the increase in March visitation. Additionally, the average temperature was several degrees higher this year than last year, meaning the Blue Ridge Parkway was open earlier.

Corrina announced that all of our data platforms are changing how they provide data service. AirDNA data showed that May was pacing up from last year, though June and September are not pacing up as high as we'd like. Short term rentals for the month of April shows that occupancy rate is down which matches the conclusion that March was up due to shift in spring break travel. Data shows that hotel visitors are staying 2 days, while vacation rental visitors are staying 4 days. Short term rental visitors book their stay far in advance, while hotel visitors book more last minute.

8. **Old Business – None**

9. **New Business**

- **NC 401K Plan Adoption**

Chuck Dickson made a motion to accept the 401k plan adoption. Gail Mull seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Budget forum | VOTE**

Mike Huber made a motion to move the budget forward and call for a public hearing in June. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Crawford Interim Scope of Work | VOTE**

Chuck Dickson made a motion to extend the Crawford contract and authorize Corrina Ruffieux to sign the contract. Natalie Hawkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Legacy Event Sponsorship Grants | VOTE**

- **Canton Labor Day Festival** [Application](#) & [Budget](#)

Chuck Dickson suggested the TDA Board continue this meeting at a later date, in order to review all Canton grant applications at the same time and make an informed decision. There was consensus with his suggestion.

- **Maggie Valley Fall Days** [Application](#) & [Budget](#)

Natalie Hawkins made a motion to approve Fall Days funding in the amount of \$6567.50. Chuck Dickson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Waynesville Folkmoot International Festival** [Application](#) & [Budget](#)

Jeff Hillis made a motion to approve funding for the Folkmoot International Festival in the amount of \$5000. Natalie Hawkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

10. Staff Reports/Announcements

- Grant Update
- Trail Towns
- Ice Fest Weekend
- Mountain Mornings
- Mission/ Vision/ Pillars
- August Community Session
- Brand Summit
- Next TDA Board meeting is June 26, 2024
- Board & Team Photos

11. Ten Minute Media Communication Session

Chuck Dickson made a motion to continue the meeting to June 5, 2024 at 9AM. Natalie Hawkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.