

HCTDA Board Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2024
Lake Junaluska Bethea Welcome Center

Members/ Staff Present: Jim Owens, Dr. Shelley White, Jeff Hillis, Natalie Hawkins, Kristian Owen, Chad King, Mike Huber, Gail Mull, Angie Frisbee, Kelsie Baker, Jeremy Boone, Corrina Ruffieux, Ashley Rock-Rice, Amie Newsome, Alycin Ray

Members/ Staff Absent: Chuck Dickson, Jennifer Best, Scot Blair, Hayley Printz

Guests Present: Brionna Dallara, Elizabeth Teague

1. **Call to Order – Chair Jim Owens** — Chair Jim Owens called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.
2. **Introductions**
3. **Adjustment of Agenda** — No June financial report yet.
4. **Public Comment Session (12 minutes total, limit 3 minutes per person)**
 - No public comments.
5. **Board Comments**
 - Dr. Shelley White announced that HCC will be having their second trail run on the Dahlia Ridge Trail on September 14th.
6. **Consent Agenda | VOTE**
 - Request approval of minutes – [June 26, 2024](#) & [August 15, 2024](#)
Chad King made a motion to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.
7. **Finance Reports**
 - June Financial Report – *Kristian Owen*
 - Per agenda adjustment, the June financial report is still to come.
 - Occupancy Tax and Lodging Data – *Corrina Ruffieux*
 - Corrina Ruffieux presented most recent [occupancy tax report](#), wrapping up FY 23-24 up 7.47% in total revenue. For the month of July, STR inventory continues to increase on pace with demand. Looking at future bookings, November is now pacing up at 4% according to AirDNA data. Zartico's Event Impact Report shows that events like the July 4th holiday week draw visitors to Haywood County. During the evaluated date range (June 30th – July 7th), there was a 35.4% increase in visitors' retail spending and a 72% increase in visitors' restaurant spending, as well as a 15.5% increase in total resident spending.
8. **Old Business**
 - Advertising Agency Advertising Proposal, [Contract](#), & [FY 24-25 SOW](#) | **VOTE**
Received 26 proposals across the nation. Marketing Committee selected 3 finalists to come to Haywood for interviews. The committee unanimously recommends hiring DCI as the new AOR. Contract documents have been reviewed by marketing and finance committees plus have been reviewed by legal counsel. All recommend moving forward with signing the contract.

Mike Huber made a motion to approve the contract and scope of work, as presented, and allow Corrina to sign the contract and all related documents. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [Appalachian Heritage Weekend Date Change Request](#) | **VOTE**

The original application stated the event's dates as April 19-20, 2025. Since being awarded grant funding, the event organizers realized that is Easter Weekend and would like to move the dates to May 2-3, 2025. Corrina stated that while it does bump the event out of our technical shoulder season of November-April, it is still very early in May. Jim Owens clarifies that the event organizers have committed to holding the event in April next year should they elect to apply for TDA grant funding during the next grant cycle. Jeff Hillis raises concerns about whether they will encounter the same issues with scheduling next year, but Jim Owens assures him that this is a one-time exception, and the Board will continue its dedication to funding events in shoulder seasons.

Jeff Hillis makes a motion to approve the date change request. Natalie Hawkins seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

- Ice Sculpture Stroll Event Change & [Budget Amendment](#) | **VOTE**

Downtown Waynesville Commission sent an email requesting that the HCTDA manage the Waynesville Ice Sculpture Stroll and have released their grant funding for the event.

Finance Committee recommends that we transfer the original \$5,000 grant award, as well as the required match amount of \$5,000 from the Waynesville 1% account to the NC Smokies Ice Fest account to cover expenses associated with this request.

Jim Owens points out that while this will add to the TDA's workload, it will bring all the events under one umbrella and ensure seamless event planning and execution.

Chad King made a motion to approve the event change and budget amendment. Kelsie Baker seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

9. New Business

- [Marketing Committee Appointment](#) | **VOTE**

The Marketing Committee is comprised of a variety of local marketing specialists. Scott Clontz recently resigned due to other work obligations, leaving a seat open for appointment. The committee received two applications to review. Corrina Ruffieux and Mike Huber concur that maintaining a connection to Haywood Regional Medical Center, as one of the area's largest employers, is important. Dr. Shelley White points out that being connected to the hospital gives unique insight into the needs of visitors.

Mike Huber makes a motion to elect Andie Robbins to the vacant seat of Marketing Committee. Natalie Hawkins seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

- [Clyde Promotion Grant](#) | **VOTE**

Clyde is the only town in the county without an ad in the 2025 Visitor Guide as they do not have it in their town budget. The money would be taken from Clyde's 1% fund. While the grant is out-of-cycle, Corrina Ruffieux notes that, going forward, the TDA will communicate with each town during the grant cycle to ensure they are each represented in the guide.

Jeff Hillis makes a motion to approve the out-of-cycle grant. Chad King seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

10. Staff Reports/Announcements

- Staff Thanks – Corrina noted that we have a new team member and Welcome Center Representative, Mark Ferguson. He will attend a future Board meeting. Corrina also expressed her sincere thanks to Hayley, Alycin & Joya for really stepping up and helping manage the transition from one to two welcome center staff.
- Mountain Mornings Update – Amie Newsome
Amie explains the most recent Mountain Mornings, held at Grateful Tabel in Canton, was a success. The next Mountain Mornings will be held on November 19th at the Maggie Valley Town Hall Pavilion with refreshments from Organic Beans Coffee. Jim Owens voices his support for the program and notes the benefits to local small business owners.
- Destinations International Conference – Corrina Ruffieux & Amie Newsome
In July, Corrina Ruffieux and Amie Newsome attended the DI Conference in Tampa. Amie Newsome explains their takeaways from the keynote speech, “Build the Life You Want,” and the “How to Showcase the Value of Tourism to Your Local Community” educational session. Corrina Ruffieux notes she completed many sessions on destination master plans and visitor experience centers.
- Public Relations Update
Amie Newsome explains that the TDA has benefited from several recent successful PR visits and articles, including a Forbes article mention. There are several upcoming press trips, including Our State, Southern Living, Visit NC, and more. Corrina Ruffieux chimes in to point out that these PR hits are incredibly powerful in attracting visitors and increasing brand awareness, extending thanks to Amie Newsome for her work managing these trips.
- Master Plan Update
The TDA team has worked very hard on refining the Master Plan. Corrina Ruffieux reads the plan’s strategic pillars and expounds upon their importance to the organization and destination. There remain several details to iron out. The completed plan will be presented at a future meeting.
- Brand Summit, September 24, 8:00-11:00am
Ashley Rice encourages Board members to RSVP and attend the brand summit.
- Ice Fest Weekend – [Sponsorship Package](#), [Promotional Ideas](#)
Corrina Ruffieux explains that the TDA would appreciate the Board’s support and assistance in finding sponsors and encouraging promotional offerings for Ice Fest.
- Next TDA Board meeting is September 25, 2024
- Adjournment at 9:53am

Dr. Shelley White makes a motion to adjourn. Jeff Hillis seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

11. Ten Minute Media Communication Session