

Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority

Minutes of 1/23/20 Board Meeting

Present: Grant Bullard, Aaron Baker, Layton Parker, Mike Hawkins, Dee Dee Perkins, Mac Morrow, Libby Freeman, Tad Fogel

Absent: Tracie Trusler

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, Prentiss Brewer, Mary Jo Gordon

Guests Present: Jonathan Griffin, Teresa Buckwalter

Call to Order – Layton Parker

The meeting was called to order at 8:30AM by Layton Parker.

Layton welcomed new members Libby Freeman and Tad Fogel. Members and staff were asked to introduce themselves.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

The minutes of December 5, 2019 were presented for review by Layton Parker. Mac Morrow made a motion to approve as presented. Grant Bullard seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark reminded that the December returns reflect payments for November and that the actual numbers, including late or early payments, are attributed to their correct months on the Occupancy Tax Revenue Sheet. He also explained how we get the occupancy and ADR numbers. In the financials, you'll see that expenses are in line, particularly given that many hit in the second half of the year. Revenues are up 5% over budget and 14% over prior year. A \$5,000 late payment was received for October during January, moving that month ahead of budget. Aaron asked if ADR was expected to be affected by the new hotel. Discussion was held about this and budgeting strategy. VRBO returns are coming in lower than expected and are much less than Airbnb returns, which is a surprise. There is no way of knowing how many properties are represented in the aforementioned returns. Grant made a motion to approve financials as presented. Aaron seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report and Tourism Updates – Clark covered the following:

- The Transylvania Always committee is hosting a symposium on February 28th from 8:30am – 12:30 pm in the Rogow Room of the Library. Land managers, sustainability groups, and outdoor recreation businesses are among the invitees. Meeting will include facilitated discussion about projects and opportunities to collaborate. Aaron gave a history of Transylvania Always, how it started and what has been done to date. Clark mentioned the upcoming Leave it Better campaign and the fact that it is rare to see a DMO doing anything about impact and safety of the visitor.
- Lake Toxaway is considering opening a visitor center. Clark will keep the board updated as more information becomes available.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

2020 Committees

We need to finalize our committees for 2020. We were able to get them mostly set at our last meeting. Libby agreed to sit on the Finance Committee. Tad agreed to serve on the Transylvania Always Committee. Tracie has agreed, via email, to serve on the Marketing Committee. A new committee, Destination Infrastructure,

will be chaired by Mike Hawkins and will include Mac Morrow and Dee Dee Perkins. Clark will set up a meeting of the new committee where duties and the need for community participation will be determined.

Board Retreat

The retreat is scheduled for February 27th from 8:30am – 1:00pm at The Bromfield Inn. The focus will be on implementation of the strategic plan. Layton asked for ideas of other items to cover. Grant mentioned the fund balance and possibility of raising the occupancy tax. Also, money budgeted for the strategic plan implementation this year has yet to be spent, so a decision about what to do with those funds also needs to be made. Mike said we should focus on prioritizing the plan and defining partners. Each committee needs to identify action items and assign a dollar amount to be budgeted.

US Park Service Permits

Layton mentioned that a photography group had canceled a trip here in October because they weren't allowed to get a permit in the forest. Layton will investigate with the help of staff.

Misc.

Dee Dee brought forward a recommendation from the marketing committee, which just met the previous day. She asked the board to approve \$25,000 in additional funds to allow Market Connections to take advantage of some new opportunities and have a bit left over for contingency. This money would come from unspent funds in the strategic plan line item. Mike made a motion to move \$25,000 from the strategic plan fund to marketing contingency. Grant seconded. Motion passed.

The Brevard Music Center will be seeking partnership funds to equip its new event space for public use. The expected total is around \$200,000. The tentative ask is \$50,000. Consensus was to have them present at the next board meeting, which will be the March meeting due to the February board retreat.

Tourism Grant Program – Layton Parker

Layton asked Prentiss to give an overview of the grants submitted for this quarter, their past requests, and the committee's recommendations, which she did. Conserving Carolina asked for \$3,000 for the Upper French Broad River Fest. The committee recommended awarding \$2,000 (the same as last year) since there was not a significant change in the event. Blue Ridge Bicycle Club asked for \$1,000 for their WNC Flyer bike ride. The committee recommended approving \$1,000. Grant Bullard seconded the motion from committee. Motion passed.

PNF Roundabout Presentation – Teresa Buckwalter, Mosaic Civic Studio

Teresa showed the board plans for the intersection at the entrance to Pisgah Forest from 280/276/64. A roundabout is planned, and her company was contracted with by the City of Brevard to make design recommendations beyond what the DOT will be doing. While staying within DOT's guidelines about sightlines and safety, Teresa presented design ideas inspired by the look of downtown Brevard and the current wayfinding signs. Other inspirations were art and sculpture, history and the natural environment. The committee had mostly positive feedback. Consensus of the board is that, when asked, it would be in favor of helping to fund these additional design elements. No dollar amount was discussed, and no ask has been made as of now.

Old Business

None

New Business

Tad informed the board that the Cradle of Forestry in America Interpretive Association (CFAIA), of which he is board chair, is rebranding and an announcement will come out in the next 60 days. He also recommended meeting Natalie Britt, the new director of CFAIA. Clark indicated that they met a month ago and has a second meeting scheduled with her soon. It seems that a lot of changes are on the horizon.

Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourn

Libby Freeman made a motion to adjourn. Aaron Baker seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Prentiss Brewer
