



## **Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority Minutes of 10/28/21 Virtual Board Meeting**

**Present:** Grant Bullard, Layton Parker, Libby Freeman, David Guice, Dee Dee Perkins, Jessica Whitmire

**Absent:** Ali Lien

**Staff Present:** Clark Lovelace, MJ Gordon, Corey Gafnea

**Guests Present:** Jonathan Griffin, Dana Antonuccio, Liz Goodwin, Dionne Hodgson, Jonas Watts, Brian Farmer

### **Call to Order – Layton Parker**

LP called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM.

### **Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker**

LP presented the minutes of the September 23, 2021, board meeting for review. It was noted that Dee Dee Perkins needs to be marked as absent and Mac Morrow needs to be marked as present at the September Board meeting. DDP made a motion to approve minutes with noted changes. Grant Bullard seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Director's Report – Clark Lovelace**

**Financials –** Sent out in the advance packet. TCTDA Revenues continue to be up in August, but by a less extreme amount of only 7%. STR revenue continues to account for roughly half of total revenues. Expenses are in line at this point early in the season. As mentioned last month, revenues are trending ahead of budget. This, in combination with unallocated Strategic Plan dollars and a significant fund balance, may be worthy of a discussion by the Finance Committee or the TCTDA Board in the not-too-distant future. LP noted that he wanted to review the strategic plan and consider it as we discuss fund balance expenditures. DDP made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Libby Freeman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Office Report and Tourism Update –** CL asked if there were any questions about the advance report. There were none. A discussion was held about the board retreat in February, the additional January 6th meeting and the impact of a new contract. It was decided to keep updates from the finance and destination infrastructure committees on the Dec agenda, keep the January 6 agenda open to talk about the organizational structure, and plan on a retreat in conjunction with the February board meeting.

### **Report from Auditor – Martin Starnes & Associates**

Jonas Watts reported that the audit went smoothly and appreciated everyone's quick responses to questions or additional requests for information. There is an \$870,000 increase in the fund balance. There were no questions or comments from the board. LP asked if Jonathan Griffin had anything to add. He did not.

## **Chair Report – Layton Parker**

**TCTDA Organizational Structure** – As a reminder, a group, including representatives from the TCTDA, Chamber, and County met to review where everyone was on the relationship between the TCTDA and Chamber and the organizational structure of the TCTDA. The Chamber determined that they need their own dedicated director and staff and welcome a partnership between the Chamber and TCTDA on the visitor center and office space. They will work on a proposal. LP reiterated the TCTDA's desire to have a dedicated director and staff, as well as a partnership on the visitor center and office space. The County shared that they have been researching options for the TCTDA to determine what is allowable and particulars on how those options may play out. The County has just contracted with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to consult on having the staff fall under the County's human resources and pay program. LP confirmed that this is the primary option the board has voiced in the past and asked if any feel differently. None one indicated differently. He shared that based on conversations with board members, the goal is a smooth transition that involves the staff currently supporting the TCTDA to continue to do so if similar compensation can be provided and if they agree. He asked for any comments, specifically if anyone felt differently. No comments were shared. He indicated that at this time there really isn't a viable plan B.

**2022 TCTDA Board** – There is one open position right now to replace Tracie Trusler, an accommodation owner and there are three applications for this position. There will be an open position to replace Grant Bullard in January after his term ends. There are three applications for this position. Six applications were filed by the October 15th deadline and have been on file for less than two years. They are as follows:

- Kevin Howell (from Dec, 2019\*) – non-accommodations
- Mark Tooley (from Mar, 2020\*) – non-accommodations
- Paulette Todd – accommodations
- Dana Antonuccio – accommodations
- Isaac Allen – accommodations
- Mike Hawkins – non-accommodations

A discussion was held regarding each of the candidates. Grant Bullard nominated Paulette Todd to be recommended to the County Commissioners to fill the accommodations position based on her role as GM at an important accommodation, The Greystone Inn. Libby Freeman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. DDP nominated Mike Hawkins to be recommended to the County Commissioners to fill the position as an interested individual based, in part on his past experience on both the TCTDA and Chamber boards. GB seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. CL will send a letter to the County clerk asking to add the recommendations to the soonest possible agenda so the County Commissioners can take action on the openings.

**Transylvania Economic Alliance Appointment** – LP stated that Grant, Libby and Clark met earlier in the month to discuss a potential appointee to the TEA Board and asked if one of them would give an update. CL indicated that it was determined that there are a number of great candidates who applied to be board members who would be great in this role, so the group recommends waiting until the commissioners make their final determination on those positions and we then reach out to one of the remaining candidates. It was noted that whomever this was, we should stay better connected and have this person report back to the TCTDA board throughout the year.

**Misc.** – Next meeting is December 2, 2021 and an additional meeting was added on January 6, 2022. Committee assignments will be made in January as well.

## **Marketing Report – Market Connections (Christian McLauchlin)**

**Marketing Report – Market Connections** – CM covered the marketing report that was included in the advance packet, highlighting key website and social media statistics, photos from recent photo shoots, as well as images and ads from the new **Be Cool** campaign.

## **Old Business** – None

## **New Business**

GB was disheartened and amazed by the extensive damage caused by Tropical Storm Fred in PNF and expressed a desire for the TCTDA to help. CL stated that he has spoken to Dave Casey, John Cottingham, and others to express this. They have shared that there is available federal and state funding right now, so there is no immediate need, but they appreciate our concern. CL asked them to look for holes where there are funding shortages or things that cannot be addressed with these federal dollars or even advocacy. The Pisgah Conservancy has sent us a funding request for a wildlife habitat project that will be sent to the Transylvania Always Committee. Jessica Whitmire asked about monies coming from the strategic plan. It will take 4-5 river cleanups to get the FBR as clean as it was prior to TS Fred.

**Public Comment** – LP asked all guests to introduce themselves. There were no additional public comments.

## **Meeting Adjourn**

LP made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Corey Gafnea