



## Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority Minutes of 9/23/21 Virtual Board Meeting

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

**Absent:** Dee Dee Perkins

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

**Guests Present:** Aaron Baker, Jonathan Griffin, Dana Antonuccio

### **Call to Order – Layton Parker**

Layton Parker called the meeting to order at 8:34 AM.

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

LP presented the minutes of the August 26, 2021, board meeting for review. Libby Freeman made a motion to approve as presented. Mac Morrow seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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

**Financials** – TCTDA now has one full year of lump sum payments by VRBO (technically VRBO and Homeaway), so the occupancy report now lists STR returns, which includes AirBNB, VRBO and Homeaway booking companies. It's worth noting that we have seen tremendous growth in the revenues coming from these companies. The Director's Report in the advance packet shared information reflecting the growth of the STR market and occupancy revenues from STRs. Mac Morrow made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Libby Freeman seconded. Motion passed.

**Office Report and Tourism Update** – Just a couple of updates in addition to the information in the advance board packet. Member Services Coordinator Willow Walker will be leaving the Chamber of Commerce at the end of the month. The County Commissioners appointed Layton to serve a second, two-year term at their meeting earlier this month based on the recommendation from the TCTDA board. Clark asked if there were any questions about these items or the advance report. There were none.

### **Chair Report – Layton Parker**

**TCT Organizational Structure** – Layton, county staff, and a few individuals from the Chamber Executive Committee met last week to update each other on their research and discussions. It was a good conversation. Layton reiterated the TCTDA board's desire for a dedicated director and staff. The county is currently working on information regarding the option of TCTDA staff falling into the county payroll/HR, specifically looking into job descriptions and salaries for TCTDA staff positions. The county may hire an outside firm to do this work. The Chamber shared that they feel it is in their best interest to have a dedicated director and is working on a job description and plan for operations

under that new structure. They plan to provide a proposal for a contract with the TCTDA that covers the Visitor Center and office space.

**2022 Board of Directors** – Regarding the two open positions for the 2022 board, one for accommodations owner/operator and the other for an interested individual, Clark spoke with Paulette Todd, the GM of the Greystone Inn, and asked her to complete an application. At the last board meeting consensus was to recommend her for the open position as the accommodation owner/operator board member. In addition, there are three individuals who have been discussed for the open interested individual position, including one who completed an application to serve 18 months ago, one who completed one a little over two years ago, and one who has expressed interest, but not yet completed one. Following discussion, it was determined that Mike Hawkins would be the best candidate for the position, in part due to his vast experience on the TCTDA and Chamber boards, which will be beneficial as we alter the relationship in the near future. Grant was asked to reach out to have Mr. Hawkins complete an application. A final discussion and official decision will be made at the October meeting. Guest Dana Antonuccio inquired by chat function about being considered for service on a committee or the board. Corey Gafnea was asked to follow up to cover the process.

**Miscellaneous** – The board needs an appointee to the TEA board. Grant, Libby, and Clark were asked to meet and present ideas at the next meeting. Grant Bullard has generously offered Camp Gwynn Valley to the board for a social event. It will be scheduled for an afternoon. Grant to make the arrangements with CL and LP. It was decided that with so much going on with the TCTDA board currently that an additional meeting will be scheduled on January 6, 2022.

## **Transylvania County Funding Request – Clark Lovelace**

The county submitted a funding request to restart the Transylvania County Community Appearance Initiative. It was sent in the advance packet. The request was directed to the Destination Infrastructure Committee and following a review they made a committee motion to recommend approval of the requested \$20,000 annual funds for a period of three years, with a reassessment at that time based on a report provided by the County on the results and success of the program. Ali seconded the recommendation. Motion carried unanimously.

## **TAC Update – Aaron Baker**

Transylvania County/Brevard is in the running for the Green Destinations Top 100 Stories competition. We will find out on October 5th if they have won. This is a good opportunity for international recognition for the sustainability efforts of the TCTDA through the Transylvania Always initiative. The FBR Blueway plan is on schedule to be completed by the end of December 2021 and TAC will coordinate a meeting in early 2022 to announce the plan and its findings. TAC has funded NEPA work for the Butter Gap Trail in PNF. We have also reached out to the public land managers and let them know that we are ready to help in the aftermath of TS Fred. Currently the best we can do is to advise visitors to the conditions of our public lands.

## **Old Business – None**

## **New Business**

Layton informed the board that Martin Starnes, our auditor, while working with County Finance Director Jonathan Griffin, has uncovered potential issues with certain protocols that are required with

the request and use of federal tax dollars as it relates to the Visit NC Recovery Marketing Credit Program and the EDPNC \$10,000 grant. They are looking into the situation and will alert us if there is, in fact, an issue. If there is, it could result in these dollars needing to be reimbursed.

Layton also shared that with the higher scrutiny due to our increase in tax dollars and the various research and spotlight due to the conversation on the contract with the Chamber, there are a number of protocols and procedures that are now in place moving forward to ensure that we are operating as appropriately as possible. And, more will come. We will continue to keep you updated.

## **Public Comment**

None

## **Meeting Adjourn**

LP made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 AM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Corey Gafnea