

**Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA)**  
**Board Meeting**  
**September 25, 2025**

**Minutes**

**Board Members Present:** Dee Dee Perkins, Lauren Wise, Dionne Hodgeson, Madeline Magin, Jessica Whitmire, Dana Antonuccio, Larry Chapman, Catherine Lemel

**Board Members Absent:** Nory LeBrun

**Staff:** Virginia Watkins, Clark Lovelace

**Zoom Attendees:** Julie Hooten, Tommy Harkey

**Members of Public:** Meagan O’Neal (TC), Chris Cavanaugh, Jason Cox (TC)

**Call to Order**

**I. Welcome**

Board Chair, Dee Dee Perkins, called the meeting to order at 8:31am and noted a quorum. She asked the board and staff to briefly introduce themselves.

**II. Public Comment**

Dee Dee welcomed Chris Cavanaugh, who will be presenting later in the agenda. No members of the public chose to speak at this time.

**III. Agenda Modifications**

Larry made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. With a second from Lauren, the motion unanimously carried.

**IV. Consent Agenda**

- A. Minutes from August 28, 2025, Board Meeting
- B. FY26 Financials (as of August 31)
- C. FY26 Partner Funding List
- D. Contracts

Lauren made a motion to accept the consent agenda as presented. With a second from Jessica, the motion unanimously carried.

**V. Presentations**

- A. Director’s Report – Clark Lovelace

Clark reported on the Outdoor Economy Conference, PBS film shoot, the Helene community event by SparkPoint, Helene milestone coverage, Tourism Trailblazer Award, Partner Marketing Opportunities Kickoff Social and the NC Weekend story.

- B. FY23/24 Audited Financial Statements – Martin Starnes & Associates

Tommy Harkey from Martin Starnes & Associated presented the results of the audit followed by a brief discussion among board members.

## **VI. Old Business**

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Funding Request – MountainTrue (Lyon’s Mountain River Access Construction)**

Jessica presented the request with a presentation slide covering the previous work on the site plan funded by the TCTDA and the Transylvania Always Committee’s recommendation to fund the construction request in full. To the committee’s recommendation as a first, Madeline seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion passed.

### **B. Transylvania County Occupancy Tax Rate – Chris Cavanaugh**

Chris Cavanaugh presented trends in the region to increase occupancy tax rates and the driving forces at play that have influenced these changes. He then facilitated a discussion amongst board members regarding the possible increase of the tax rate in Transylvania County. There were various opinions. In the end, the board asked Chris to provide a post-conversation report where he highlights what was covered today and includes research on a couple of items that came up. It was also decided that each board member should solicit input from other tourism-related business owners/operators to get a feel for how others feel about this issue.

### **C. 2026 Board Positions**

Dee Dee noted that it’s time for the board to consider positions for the coming year. She asked Clark to provide an update on protocols and current applications on file. He then covered a detailed slide. Dee Dee then asked the board if they preferred to form a task force and have it provide recommendations, or each board member review the applications and come prepared to make a decision at the next meeting. Consensus was for the latter. Clark volunteered for any board members with questions on the openings or candidates to reach out to him or Dee Dee. Dee Dee then reminded that a chair needs to be recommended as well. A motion to nominate Jessica was made, followed by a second, and unanimous approval.

## **VIII. Public Comment**

There was no comment from the public present.

## **IX. Board Member Comments**

The popularity of the first section of the Ecusta Trail and its anticipated ridership in Transylvania County was shared and discussed.

## **Adjournment**

The next monthly board meeting will be on Thursday, October 23 at 8:30am. With a motion from Madeline and a second from Dana, the meeting was adjourned at 10:54am.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Watkins.

**TCTDA Mission Statement** - *To generate and enhance tourism opportunities in Transylvania County through strategic promotion coordinated with tourism-related businesses and local government, and to contribute to a vibrant, sustainable economy.*