

**Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority (TCTDA)**  
**Board Retreat Meeting**  
**March 27, 2025**

**Minutes**

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

**Board Members Absent:** Madeline Magin

**Staff:** Virginia Watkins, Clark Lovelace, Mollie Gordon, Mark Johnson, Karen Tessier, Garnet Fisher

**Presenters:** Chris Cavanaugh, Wilson Hooper, Ashley Minery, Vicki Eastland, Marcy Thompson

**Members of Public:** Layton Parker

- I. **Call to Order & Welcome:** Board Chair, Dee Dee Perkins, called the meeting to order at 8:59am and noted a quorum. She reviewed a slide with plans for the day while noting additional key information.
- II. **Public Comment:** No comment was made by members of the public present.
- III. **Agenda Modifications:** Lauren made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. With a second from Catherine, the motion unanimously carried.
- IV. **Discussion Topics:** Clark introduced Chris Cavanaugh, who then covered parameters for the day's discussion topics.
  - A. **FY26 Outlook:** Chris presented on the post-Helene landscape of WNC, including potential visitor perceptions and the response from other destinations. He covered U.S. and international tourism trends, how national leadership and events impact the tourism industry, and other key factors for the board to consider when planning for FY26. No action was taken.
  - B. **Financial Overview:** Clark covered four key topics through a presentation and discussion to both provide the board an overview of the TDA's current financial situation and to allow he and the budget officer, Dee Dee, to gain insights and priorities as the FY26 budget is developed. The topics were: 1) review of the annual budget development and approval process, 2) projected year-end and those implications for the FY26 budget, 3) guardrails and objectives for the FY26 budget, 4) the current fund balance and projected balance over the next few years. No action was taken.
  - C. **Ecusta Trail:** City Manager Wilson Hooper provided updates on the grant funding and trail development, along with options for a downtown Brevard terminus, plans for the remaining \$750K pledged by the TCTDA with a focus on where the next \$250K TDA investment will go toward. Wilson was asked to make the official FY25 request as soon as possible.
  - D. **Affordable Housing:** City Manager Wilson Hooper presented on the current state of our local affordable workforce housing from the perspective of the City of Brevard, followed by Planner

Ashley Minery, who covered the same from the Transylvania County perspective. No action was taken.

*The meeting paused for a 15-minute break, giving members a chance to stretch their legs and grab lunch before resuming with a working session.*

**E. Marketing:** Karen Tessier, Mark Johnson, and Garnet Fisher with Market Connections gave a presentation on current and upcoming marketing trends, and then led a facilitated discussion on broad strategic priorities, goals and expectations ahead of the development of the FY26 marketing plan. Feedback was collected and no further action was taken at that time.

**F. NCDOT Projects:** Guest Speaker Vicki Eastman, the Asst Regional Transportation Planning Director for Land of Sky, provided updates on key NCDOT projects including roundabout at the PNF entryway, the Estatoe/Ecusta crossing on Hwy 64 near BRCC, Wilson Rd., and other key projects in or adjacent to the county. No action was taken.

**G. 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration:** Guest speaker and local historian, Marcy Thompson, shared basic plans that are underway in Transylvania County regarding the country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She noted recent beneficial conversations with TDA staff that showed ways the TDA could support these efforts and invited the TDA to join the committee. Virginia volunteered to serve on the committee. No further action was taken.

**H. FY26 Agenda Topics:** Clark and Dee Dee led a discussion on potential speakers or topics at board meetings over the next year. Clark will send a survey to board members asking them to rank the speakers/topics that were named at the retreat. He and Dee Dee will then work the top items into upcoming agendas.

**V. Old Business:** There was no old business to discuss.

**VI. New Business:** There was no new business to discuss.

**VII. Public Comment:** There were no public comments made.

**VIII. Board Member Comments:** There were no board member comments made.

**Adjournment:** With a motion from Nory and a second from Dana, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25pm.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Watkins.