



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

MEETING MINUTES

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

June 19, 2024 (Wednesday) at 1:00 p.m.

98 Cope Creek Rd., Suite D

Sylva, NC 28779

Public Hearing on Budget FY 2024-2025

The public hearing was called to order at 12:55 p.m. by Megan Orr.

Nick Breedlove summarized the budget and asked for public comments. There were no comments from members of the public.

MOTION: Robert Jumper motioned to close the Public Hearing. Craig Smith seconded. The motion carried.

The hearing was closed at 12:58 p.m.

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Mr. Fletcher.

- **Members in attendance:** Executive Director Nick Breedlove; Daniel Fletcher, Chair; Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary; Megan Orr, Vice Chair; Board Members Craig Smith, Darlene Fox, Mandy Cantrell, Trevor Brown, Robert Jumper, Mark Jones, Susan Gregory and Mandi Cantrell
- **Members absent:** Julie Spiro
- **Others in attendance:** Cheryl Osborne, Minutes Clerk; Kara Addy, TDA Social Media Manager; Michael Hopkins, Jackson County Parks and Recreation; Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development

Approve Amended Agenda

MOTION: *Mr. Brown moved to approve the amended agenda. Mr. Jumper seconded. The motion carried.*

Public Comment

None

Recognize Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and County Commissioner

Mr. Fletcher, Chair – Had no comments.

Ms. Orr, Vice Chair – Had no comments.

Ms. Mitchell, Secretary – Had no comments.

Mark Jones, County Commissioner – Mr. Jones commented that the county budget was passed last night, and he understood there was support for an increase in occupancy tax among commissioners should we move forward with those discussions. The proposal should be brought up to the County Commissioners soon after the TDA board meets to discuss the topic. This activity will be on the agenda for the TDA August meeting.

Review and Approval of May 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the meeting are available on the JCTDA website. They were also attached to the agenda for this meeting. No comments were made.

MOTION: *Mr. Jumper moved to approve May 15, 2024 meeting minutes. Trevor Brown seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approval of May 31, 2024 Financial Report

Ms. Fox presented the financial report as follows: Highlights for May 2024 include Occupancy Tax collections of \$135,216.14 with penalties of \$102.53 and YTD collection totals of \$2,024,049.20 which is 80.96% of the budget. Airbnb collections totaled \$48,512.00. The Home Away and VRBO total was \$9,143.87 and the VACASA, NC total was \$4,730.09. Seventy-eight (78) accounts reported rentals for April (an increase of 9 accounts from last year). Collections were down 8.07% from the same period in 2023. The May 31, 2024 cash balance is \$102,981.89 with investments totaling \$3,600,000.00. May expenses were \$350,574.57 with FYTD expenses totaling \$2,127,060.17 with encumbrances of \$17,403.44 for a combined total of \$2,144,463.61, equaling 60.55% of the budget.

MOTION: *Mr. Jumper moved to approve the May financial report as presented. Trevor Brown seconded. The motion carried.*

Review and Approve FY 24-25 Budget Ordinance

Mr. Breedlove presented the draft budget in the May meeting. The Budget Ordinance was attached to the agenda for this meeting. Ms. Fox summarized the Budget Ordinance. There were no questions, and Mr. Jumper thanked Ms. Fox and Mr. Breedlove for preparing an excellent budget.

MOTION: *Mr. Brown moved to approve the Budget Ordinance. Ms. Mitchell seconded. The motion carried.*

Set TCPF Cycle

Mr. Breedlove explained there has been a great deal of interest in the TDA Tourism Capital Fund grants; however, because of the current application process and the need to start work on projects, some partners are requesting funds after work has begun. The current process does not allow reimbursement for work done prior to grant approval, and this is best practice with grants, Breedlove said. Mr.

Breedlove and the Executive Committee proposed a quarterly cycle application process to allow entities to apply for the funds more often so that work will not be delayed.

The following is the cycle for funding applications: Executive Committee review and approval; TDA Board approval at next meeting; County Commission approval at their meeting. This timeline will be flexible and follow TDA procedures.

- Third quarter, Q3 2024: July – September, Applications Due October 1
- Fourth quarter, Q4 2024: October – December, Applications Due January 1
- First quarter, Q1 2025: January – March, Applications Due April 1
- Second quarter, Q2 2025: April – June, Applications Due July 1

No vote is needed to implement this process and there were no objections. The timeline will be on the JCTDA website and there will be a press release to make the community aware of the new process.

Closed Session

The state statute G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property for a closed session was read by Mr. Fletcher.

MOTION: Mr. Brown moved to go into closed session. Mr. Jumper seconded. The motion carried.

JCTDA Director's Brief

Mr. Breedlove presented the report highlights as follows:

- Hotel occupancy is down; however, short-term rentals are increasing.
- The marketing plan is focused heavily on wedding planning with partners LHG, BGRM and social media. Mr. Breedlove will brief the board on activities during August meeting.
- Mr. Breedlove has made presentations to various groups to promote tourism. In July he will present a summary of TDA activities with the JC County Commission.
- Mr. Breedlove and Ms. Addy will be out of the office July 15-19 to attend the Destinations International Annual Conference.
- TDA staff have been working on the AI Chatbot to appear on the website soon.
- Waterfall hiking maps are available. It was noted that the Soco Falls renovations are expected to be completed this fall.
- There will not be a board meeting in July. The August meeting will focus on the potential occupancy tax increase.
- Ms. Addy reported that the social media report was emailed with the agenda for this meeting.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Director Report

Ms. Spiro was absent. Mr. Breedlove presented the highlights of the latest report as follows:

- Concerts on the Creek received recognition from *USA Today* as one of the 'Top Ten Outdoor Concerts in the U.S.'
- The Chamber golf tournament will be held August 28.

- July 4 fireworks in downtown Sylva are set. If you miss this, you can see fireworks on July 3 and July 5 near Cashiers.

Cashiers Chamber Directors Report

Ms. Gregory presented the report. Highlights are as follows:

- The new online platform for Chamber members will go live July 1.
- Ms. Gregory is interviewing candidates for the Visitor Center Host position.
- Four new kiosks were received.
- July 24 will be the ribbon cutting event for Walk Cashiers (The Cashiers Ramble).

Updates from Individual Board Members

Mr. Jumper announced that the EBCI has begun renovations on the fountain in downtown Cherokee.

Ms. Mitchell updated the board on activities at The Village Green.

Announcements

There will not be a meeting in July. The August meeting will focus on discussion about the potential increase in the occupancy tax rate.

Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Brown motioned to adjourn. Mr. Jumper seconded. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m. as called by Mr. Fletcher.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held August 15, 2024 in person at JCTDA headquarters, unless otherwise posted.

Ashlie Mitchell, Secretary
Jackson County TDA Board
Approved: August 15, 2024