

## Minutes

### Cherokee County Tourism Development Authority

April 13, 2020

The Cherokee County Tourism Development Authority met on April 13, 2020 at the Cherokee County Courthouse, meeting the mandate of "distancing" during the Coronavirus pandemic gripping the nation. Board members present were Phylis Blackmon, Steve Dickey, Joan Posey-Neumann, Cal Stiles and Aurelia Stone. Absent were Chair Sandra Daley and Mike Sheidy.

Also attending were TDA Visitor Centers Manager Cabrina Scianti, Information Specialist Sandra Kimball, clerk to the board; Candy Anderson, Cherokee County Finance Officer; Paul Neufeld, WLOS TV, and Jan Olsen, Andrews Chamber of Commerce.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Joan Posey-Neumann a 2:10 p.m. followed by a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the agenda and minutes of March 9, 2020 followed with motion by Aurelia Stone, seconded by Phylis Blackmon and approved unanimously. Visitor numbers from March at the Murphy Visitor Center were included and reports from the Cherokee County and Andrews chambers on use of funds from the TDA spent on supporting tourism.

After a cursory examination of the financial reports, with no comment, Cal Stiles asked that the agenda be amended to allow Paul Neufeld of WLOS to present the television stations' Road Trippin' proposal. Mr. Stiles said that discussion of the financials would be lengthy and since Mr. Neufeld traveled to Cherokee County from Asheville it would be better to hear this proposal at this time in the agenda than to have Mr. Neufeld sit through a lengthy finance discussion. Mr. Neufeld was very appreciative.

The WLOS Road Trippin' is a one week program feature focusing on communities and what they have to offer visitors. Mr. Neufeld said it is a popular program and will not begin until July 13 and will run only 5 weeks instead of 7. The cost is a \$5,000 package price that includes Facebook repeats, a video to the participating community to put up on their respective promotion pages – i.e. Facebook, web sites. Mr. Neufeld said he believes people will be looking for someplace to escape to following the lifting of the quarantines. The station's Facebook ads reach 350,000 Facebook fans and "hit on a number of cylinders," he said. A crew would come out on one day to film the seven segments that last 2+ minutes during the news programs.

Cal Stiles asked that a commitment be tabled to the May 11 board meeting. Aurelia Stone was of the opinion that the program would be a "good thing" to spotlight the county and bring back tourism. "We need all the help we can get," she said. After more discussion on the pros and cons, Aurelia amended her motion to "table" a decision to the May 11 meeting, seconded by Phylis Blackmon. This motion passed unanimously.

County Finance Office Candy Anderson covered the TDA finance status. Cal Stiles said he was "concerned" about the numbers. Mrs. Anderson said the account has "a healthy reserve" and if we continued on the same path the TDA could operate for 2 years with no revenue. She doesn't see this

happening, although there will be a reduction in the occupancy tax collections during the shutdown and for how long is still to be determined.

In an effort to not erode the funds, Mr. Stiles asked that three employees be "temporarily" unemployed until the hotels, motels etc. are back up operating. Mrs. Anderson said the largest portion of expenditures is payroll and chamber support. Mr. Stiles commented that since the doors to the visitor centers are closed, it wasn't prudent to keep paying employees not to come in. The manager and one other employee will remain as their work purviews have continued from the office as well as from their respective homes.

The three (temporarily put on furlough) employees were encouraged to file unemployment claims and they will also be eligible for added benefits being applied through unemployment practices because of the pandemic. Once the restrictions on business operations are lifted, these jobs will be reinstated to those persons. Mrs. Anderson noted that the goal on unemployment is to pay out two-thirds of the regular salary.

To save more in the budget, each of the chambers were temporarily reduced \$500.00 per month from the support dollars being paid to the chambers to promote tourism.

In other business the board:

\*Approved two ads in the July and August publications of Our State Magazine. The commitment was earlier approved. Cabrina Scianti said there is a \$1,575.00 credit with Our State and the August ad will be an expenditure of \$1,575.00.

\*Commended Reed Caldwell with the Piney Knob hiking/biking site for work to finish this project which is a favorite of hikers and bikers. The board committed to helping with funds for the project but will discuss at a later date after the 2020-2021 budget is in place.

\*Heard Candy Anderson's recommendation that the board has two months to have a budget in place for 2020-2021.

There being no further business, Phylis Blackmon moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Aurelia Stone. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting concluded at 3:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted*

SANDRA N. KIMBALL  
CLERK TO BOARD

## **Amendment**

### **April 13 TDA Board Meeting Minutes**

The April 13 TDA Board Meeting minutes were approved on May 11, 2020 with the following amendment:

“Approval of the agenda and minutes of April 13 followed with discussion amendments to both items. Added to the agenda was to review COVID-19 cutbacks that included personnel and monetary support of the two chambers. The April minutes were amended to include the board’s decision on April 13 to continue to ‘review the COVID-19 cutbacks impacting personnel and the two chambers.’”

S. P. Kimball

Clerk to the Board

Selva B. Dalry

Approved

5-20-20

Dated