

Minutes of
CHEROKEE COUNTY
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
January 13, 2014

The Cherokee County Tourism Development Authority met at 2:00 p.m. on January 13, 2014 at the Cherokee County Courthouse.

Members present were Margaret DeLuna, Robin Sargent, Aurelia Stone, Anthony El-Khouri, David Wood and Phylis Blackmon. Absent were Steve Dickey and Candy Roberts. Also present were Nancy Lane, who serves as Clerk to the Board, Andrew DeLuna, Erica Wood, Bertha Guffey and Donna Ratzlaff.

The meeting was called to order by Margaret DeLuna, Chair, after which there was a moment of silence and the pledge of allegiance.

Motion was made by Phylis Blackmon, seconded by Robin Sargent, and unanimously adopted, to approve the agenda.

After motion made by Anthony El-Khouri, seconded by Robin Sargent, and unanimously adopted, the minutes of the December 2, 2013 meeting were approved.

Margaret DeLuna reported on the Financial Report received from Randy Wiggins. Occupancy tax revenue for five months is at 41% trending a 10+% increase.

The next item on the agenda was the status of the Tourism Development Authority website. Robin Sargent provided an update and asked the Board to review the site and provide feedback. Mr. Sargent stated the site was 90 – 95% complete and that the event calendar would be up shortly. After discussion, Aurelia Stone made a motion to use a link to the Mountain Lakes Board of Realtors rather than list individual Realtors under Additional Services. The motion was seconded by David Wood and unanimously adopted. It was also decided that links should be provided for the U.S. Forest Service, hunting, fishing, mapping and other areas of interest.

The next item on the agenda was the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition update on proposed projects that would impact tourism. Ms. DeLuna passed on information provided by Callie Moore regarding the Andrews tubing site.

Budget items were next on the agenda. After discussion, motion was made by Mr. Sargent, seconded by Mr. El-Khouri, to fund a cell phone to be used for the Welcome Center located on Hwy 64, Murphy, to replace land lines currently shared with the Chamber of Commerce, with that phone number to be published on the website as the primary Tourism Development Authority number. The motion passed, with four voting in favor of the motion and two voting against the motion. Mr. Wood made a motion that any Tourism Development Authority employee should be able to answer any telephone line, with Mr. Sargent seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board then went into an executive session to discuss a payroll consistency matter between Visitor's Centers. Ms. DeLuna stated that she had spoken with Candy Roberts and Randy Wiggins about equal opportunities where male and female employees had the same job title but received different salaries even though some employees have been in their job longer with more experience, or were full time rather than part time employees. Ms. DeLuna stated that according to Cherokee County policies, employees should be paid by position rather than experience. After discussion it was decided that the TDA needed a policy. Margaret DeLuna will research and present findings at the February meeting.

The next item on the agenda was long term designated use of funds. Margaret DeLuna discussed analyzing next years' budget numbers to plan for major projects and take some use of funds and pick two or three projects such as the train, Mountain Folk Center or regional fair as examples. Either may qualify for a grant and if the Tourism Development Authority was willing to commit an amount the grant providers would see that the TDA was willing to commit. David Wood suggested that we have a presentation each month by various project coordinators.

The next item on the agenda was a request to replace the copier that is owned by the Tourism Development Authority. Phylis Blackmon stated that the copier was purchased in May of 2001 for \$6,613.34 and had given excellent service but that she had been told many times by Mountain Office Systems, Inc. that parts are no longer available for that model and that it needs to be replaced. She provided samples of the poor quality of copies it now makes, which are currently being mailed to potential visitors. She presented quotes for similar copy machines in the amount of \$4,584.91 and \$4,157.91, depending on the speed. She stated that these prices would only be in effect if the copier was purchased by the county with a county purchase order, and that the quotes include tax which the county would probably be able to have refunded.

After discussion, Mr. Sargent made a motion to table this discussion until the next meeting, the motion being seconded by Mr. El-Khoury, and unanimously adopted. The board requested that Mrs. Blackmon bring examples of materials printed on the copier to the next meeting, as well as the costs of ink for the computer printers and the costs of having certain pieces copied outside the office.

The next item on the agenda was the possibility of marketing at the Expo Management, Inc. Spring Home and Garden shows. After discussion it was determined that this venue did not fit the Tourism Development Authority marketing objectives and was not conducive to tourism.

In the discussion of marketing opportunities, Mrs. Blackmon restated that the January issue of Blue Ridge Country had been published and that inquiries were being received and responded to. After discussion the Board decided not to participate in the April issue of Our State magazine or in a summer camp issue of North Points.

It was decided to keep the February meeting at the Court House rather than the Mountain Folk Center but it was suggested that those Board members who have not been to the Mountain Folk Center plan a visit.

There being no further business, Aurelia Stone made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Robin Sargent and unanimously adopted.



Nancy Lane, Clerk to the Board

APPROVED:


