Tryon Tourism Board
(Tryon Tourism Development Authority)
Minutes
November 6, 2023
4:30 P.M.

Chairman Mason-Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with five members present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Maria Mason-Freeman, Chairman; John Vining, Vice-Chairman, Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep; Allan Casavant and Jeff Fissel

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Meg Rogers, Secretary; and Michelle Newman, TDDA Downtown Director

Input Session with Occupancy Tax Collectors
Newman had sent invitations to all occupancy tax collectors currently listed in the Town of Tryon jurisdiction, but none had responded or attended.

The recent TDDA BeerFest event was discussed briefly. Newman reported that attendance for the 2023 event exceeded previous years' BeerFest with approximately 750 people including vendors and volunteers. Other recent events were noted and included the Green River Races, Tryon Fine Arts Center events that fostered overnight stays, and the fall colors peaking in Tryon on the same weekend as the BeerFest and the Green River Races.

Newman made a brief report on an unexpected visit by a prestigious magazine columnist who drove from Durham, North Carolina to visit specific sites in the Town of Tryon related to Nina Simone. At the request of the North Carolina State Tourism Board, Newman assisted with the VIP visitor's itinerary and arranged free accommodations, meals for the columnist as well as access to the Nina Simone Childhood Home historic site.

Newman suggested that development of fan tours targeted to specific events and interest groups rather than the mass market might be an important tourism tool for Tryon.

Approve Minutes from October 2, 2023
Minutes from the October 2, 2023 regular meeting were reviewed.. Fissel made a motion to approve the October 2, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. Vining seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Approve Financial Report for October 2023
The Tryon Tourism Development Fund FY 2023-24 financial report for October 2023 was reviewed.

Tryon Tourism Development Fund Total Revenues as of October 31, 2023 were $8,110.89 (22.85%). FY 2023-2024 Tourism Development Fund expenditures as of October 31, 2023 totaled $9,368.73 (26.39%). Fund balance as of October 31, 2023 was $ 63,537.39.

Vining noted that the financial report Occupancy Tax Collected by month page had a date typo "22" in the 2023 collections column.

Fissel made a motion to approve the financial report for October 2023 as corrected. Mason-Freeman seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Saluda Grade Trail Update

Newman reported that an online survey to get public input on the project was currently active and asked all members to share the link to the survey that she would forward to them. Possible options for acquisition of property adjacent to the Saluda Grade Trail route for development of a loop connector side trail and options for parking in Tryon convenient to the Saluda Grade Trail were discussed briefly.

Website & Social Media

A printed report from Tracey Daniels was reviewed.

Website

- **Added to website (photos, address, FB page links...) for the following:**
  - Southern Agenda
  - Wildflower Wellness (Spa)
  - Brooks Tavern
  - Discount Emporium
  - Tryon Carwash & Laundry (convenience/service)
- **Removed from website**
  - Cafe La Gaule
  - Bird Mountain
- **Updated on website**
  - Marengo information and photos

Social Media Status Report-ExploreTryon Facebook Page (for last 30 days)

- 5-8 posts per week; tourism focused,
- 6 new followers in past 30 days
- Average post reach 3,757
- Post engagement August-509 (likes, shares, comments, etc) and 232 clicks to website
- Most liked posts – Fall photo with red leaves & Morris and Tryon BeerFest

Miscellaneous

- Answered incoming questions
- Webinar for Canva update with JB Media (tourism angle)
- Researched information on changing design of event calendar

It was noted that Tryon BeerFest brought in a lot of outside visitors to downtown Tryon. Staffing issues for downtown restaurants was discussed briefly with Casavant offering tips on recruitment. Crowell made a motion to accept Daniels's report. Mason-Freeman seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

SWOT Analysis Update – Work Plan Discussion

Newman reported that TDDA was hosting a "Morning Mingle" networking coffee event on Tuesday, November 14 at 9:00 am at Wildflower Wellness on Pacolet Street and invited the Authority members to attend. The goal for the monthly networking events was to increase business through encouraging mutual assistance and cooperation. The need for fresh volunteers for downtown development as new movers & shakers was noted. Newman noted upcoming events including Small Business Saturday on November 25, 2023, and Tryon Christmas Stroll on Friday, December 1, 2023. Newman reported that the 2023 Tryon BeerFest sold 700 tickets and included more than 50 volunteers with some of the profit from the event to be directed to downtown beautification, banners and planters.

Newman was reaching out to VISIT NC for potential partnership opportunities in conjunction with Polk County Tourism Director Melinda Massey. Newman reported that VISIT NC was responsive to western NC tourism promotion. A recent PBS NC Weekend segment had featured Iron Key Brewery in Columbus, NC. Promotion of businesses in the immediate area would serve Tryon well to attract visitors. Digital advertising was discussed briefly. A 3-foot by 5-foot digital sign at the intersection of New Market Road and North Trade Street to display upcoming events and attractions to increase public awareness and enthusiasm for local and regional events was suggested but might require changes to central business zoning requirements. Other options to widen the broadcast of event information such as more prominent downtown information kiosks were discussed.

Possible additions to holiday events were discussed and included placing Santa and a sleigh at Maple Street Plaza for photo opportunities, offering horse & buggy rides in downtown Tryon, contests for best photos posted on social media for the event to generate online enthusiasm for downtown Tryon, and development of event packages with accommodations tied to event tickets and other promotional discounts. The next step in promotion of tourism in Tryon was getting occupancy tax collecting business owners involved in networking with the Authority and other local businesses, possibly at the TDDA's monthly coffee networking events.

Development of a wildflower photography package was discussed. Partnering with Tryon Arts & Crafts School new photography classroom program for a conference event that could include a noted photographer offering tips to participants on improving technique and encouraging participants to post photos online as part of the event. All Tryon accommodations could benefit from providing a list of all vacation rental providers, B&Bs and inns to event planners in the region.

Other

Advertising Grant Application from Tryon Arts & Crafts School – The Authority members reviewed a grant application from Tryon Arts & Crafts School requesting $500 for marketing for the February 2024 FuseFest multi-day event. Final reporting was discussed briefly. Vining made a motion to approve the grant award of $500 to Tryon Arts & Crafts School 2024 FuseFest for marketing. Casavant seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0. It was requested that Tryon Arts & Crafts School would include Tryon Tourism Development Authority name/logo in event outreach marketing materials. Newman would notify Tryon Arts & Crafts School that their grant request had been approved.

Request for Volunteers for the TDDA Morning Mingle networking coffee event – Newman asked for volunteers to help with the TDDA Morning Mingle networking event at Wildflower Wellness on Pacolet Street in downtown Tryon on November 14, 2023.

Update on new event venue being developed at former Bank of America Building on Pacolet Street – Casavant provided a short update on the project to convert the former Bank of America building on Pacolet Street in downtown Tryon into an event venue. Phase 1 would include conversion of the 5900 square foot main floor, addition of a covered patio, a big commercial kitchen and a big fountain in front of the building. Phase 2 would include adding a pool hall/"speak easy" bar in the upstairs of the building. Phase 3 would include a future roof-top bar. The venue had already been booked for an event in March 2024. John Walters was the project architect.

Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was confirmed for Monday, December 4, 2023 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

Adjourn

Mason-Freeman made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Casavant. Motion was approved unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm.

Prepared by

Meg Rogers

Meg Rogers
Secretary

Approved:

Marie Mason-Freeman
Chairman