

Tryon Tourism Board
(Tryon Tourism Development Authority)
Minutes
April 3, 2023
4:30 P.M.

Vice-Chairman Vining called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with three members present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Vining, Vice-Chairman; Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep; and Jeff Fissel,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marie Mason-Freeman, Chairman; and Allan Casavant

STAFF PRESENT: Meg Rogers, Secretary; and Tracey Daniels, Website & Social Media Manager

Approve Minutes from March 6, 2023

Minutes from the March 6, 2023 regular meeting were reviewed. Fissel made a motion to approve the March 6, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. Crowell seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Approve Financial Report for March 2023

The FY 2022-23 Tryon Tourism Development Fund financial report for March 2023 was reviewed.

Occupancy tax collections for the month of February 2023 remitted to the Town in March 2023 totaled \$2,374.03. Total Revenues for the month of March 2023 were \$2,374.03. March 2023 expenditures totaled \$1,747.03. FY 2022-2023 Tourism Development Fund revenues as of March 31, 2023 totaled \$20,266.89. FY 2022-2023 Tourism Development Fund expenditures as of March 31, 2023 totaled \$18,995.05. Fund balance as of March 31, 2023 was \$64,649.60.

It was reported that the Pine Crest Inn had recently been sold and, after renovations, occupancy tax collections would increase.

Crowell made a motion to approved the March 2023 financial report as presented. Fissel seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

FY 2023-2024 Tourism Development Budget Discussion

Authority members discussed where to spend occupancy tax revenues in Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Recent budgets included substantial expenditures for website design (which included website management, updates and social media operations by Tracey Daniels). Daniels' contract was set to auto-renew yearly with a 90-day notice to cancel by either party.

Vining raised the question of whether revenue could be generated by selling ads on the Exploretryon.com website. Daniels would check with Polk County Tourism Director Melinda Massey on the North Carolina General Statutes rules and regulations regarding collecting advertising revenue on a website maintained using occupancy taxes. Pros and cons of paid advertising on a government website were discussed.

Advertising options for the coming year were discussed. Magazine advertising was too expensive for the current level of occupancy tax revenue collected by the Town of Tryon. Facebook advertising had been budgeted at \$100 per month. Demographics for major social media sites were discussed with

Snapchat and TikTok reaching 20+ year olds, Instagram reaching 30+ year olds and Facebook reaching 40+ year olds and older. Daniels had been doing fewer Facebook ads during the winter because few downtown events were happening during those months. Doubling the social media advertising expense line item for FY 23-24 was suggested with half spent on Facebook ads and half spent on Instagram ads. Daniels stated she would have to learn how to do the Instagram ads. Fissel offered to assist Daniels with Instagram platform advertising. Daniels was currently using MetaSuite for social media work.

Advertising budget for local event advertising grants was discussed. No applications had been submitted so far for the 50:50 match grants. Crowell had told Polk County Film Initiative/Tryon International Film Festival and other local organizations about the grant program. Vining wanted to tap into the high volume tourism on the Blue Ridge Parkway in marketing. However, with the closest access to the Parkway 45 minutes away, this was considered problematic. The Board made a request that Michelle Newman include a reminder about the advertising grant program in the next Tryon Downtown Development e-newsletter.

Including planning and preparation expenses for the Saluda Grade Rail Trail in the FY 2023-2024 budget was recommended.

Website & Social Media

Tracey Daniels reported:.

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

- 3-5 posts per week; tourism focused,
- Total Facebook likes – 7,685 (5 new past 30 days)
- Average post reach 3.588
- Post engagement was up: 763 shares, likes, etc. (down compared to 1051 in March)
- Links to website: 155
- Most liked posts - Carrie Bass “Welcome to Tryon Sign” photo post (2000+ likes) & St. Patrick’s Parade Poster
- Will focus on 4th Friday event in April

Website

• BUSINESS CHANGES & UPDATES

Added or updated the following:

- Added “Relax” drop down for spas, hair salons, wellness & fitness
- Added multiple listings for hair salons, researched images, addresses, websites, links to social media, descriptions, etc. (ex. Sheer Magic, Alcove Beauty, walk-ins)
- Changed Sunoco to Marathon logo
- Deleted Alert bar regarding checking restaurants for times/updates
- Added art galleries under “shop” (now under “art” and “shop”)
- Deleted “for the home” category
- Edited/tweaked Tryon about description for SEO
- Modified Tryon Tourism grant page; better logos; clearer directions for downloading
- Deleted annual Rhythm & Wine Fest
- Added St. Patrick’s Day Parade to annual event list
- Fixed Blockhouse Races link (TIEC defunct link)

Fixed link to Tryon Film Festival (their link changed)
Created link to Nina audio tour to First Peak website

Miscellaneous

- Answered incoming questions
- Attended full day NC 360 Tourism Conference on March 6, 2023; Fantastic information about new SEO changes coming in July 1, 2023 (Google Analytics 4 (GA4)) and new website needs. Will work on summary of notes to submit to Tourism Authority. New SEO changes would favor government entities because of high value of authenticity, authority and trust. Increasing the number of local businesses and organizations linking back to ExploreTryon social media and website would have a big impact on search ratings. TDDA Director Newman and Vining could approach local business owners and organization directors to encourage more link backs. Daniels also cited new information on customizable website experience technology presented.
- Attended Polk Economic & Tourism quarterly meeting to represent Town of Tryon on March 14, 2023
- Continued communication with Melinda Massey at County regarding updating shared calendar and possible new visual for calendars – difficulty with adding photos was the massive effort required to get good photos for all events and balancing the number of events per date to reduce scrolling required.
- Researched information on changing design of event calendar

Vining suggested setting a goal to increase social media followers to 10,000. Daniels stated she would be posting the 2023 Summer Tracks concert information on social media the Monday before each concert using information that Peter Eisenbrown would send her. Daniels wished other event groups would be as helpful as Eisenbrown to send her information, dates and photos before their events. Vining and TDDA Director Newman could work on getting local organizations and businesses to send info to Daniels before planned events.

Vining recommended temporarily removing Ziglar Field, Bryan Park and Polk County Agriculture Center from the Things to Do list as those sites were not suitable for tourists at this time.

SWOT Analysis Update – Work Plan Assignments

Handouts from TDDA Director Newman were distributed wherein she provided a link to an online survey site for Authority members to use to submit suggestions and recommendations for goals and activities to include in the work plan for the coming year for further discussion at the next meeting.

OTHER

Rail Trail Update – Secretary Rogers was asked to add a recurring agenda item for “Rail Trail Update” on future Tryon Tourism Development Authority agendas. It was known that the City of Saluda had a full committee preparing for the Saluda Grade Rail Trail rails-to-trails project with one-year, three-year and five-year plans in place that included a land use plan and studies of parking expansion potential. Similar planning by the Town of Tryon was recommended that could include cooperative agreements with businesses and land owners with parking capacity adjacent to the trail route for convenient parking access for visitors. Commissioner Bill Crowell and Jeff Fissel suggested that the Tryon Tourism Development Authority should send a recommendation or resolution to the Tryon Board of Commissioners asking that a similar rail-to-

trail planning committee be created by the Town of Tryon to help prepare for the impacts of the new tourism attraction. Crowell agreed to do a draft resolution to the Tryon Board of Commissioners. Crowell stated that major trail construction would occur within three years and the Town of Tryon, through this new planning committee, should build a link with the organizations overseeing the Saluda Grade Rail Trail to exchange information and get recommendations to help Tryon become ready for the influx of visitors. Daniels stated she would be willing to attend rail-to-trail meetings for Tryon Tourism to gather information. John Cash, owner of Nature's Storehouse was named as a potential source of helpful information related to bicycling enthusiasts.

Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was confirmed for Monday, May 1, 2023 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.


Adjourn

Fissel made a motion to adjourn. Crowell seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Prepared by


Meg Rogers
Secretary

Approved:


Marie Mason-Freeman
Chairman