

**Tryon Tourism Board**  
**(Tryon Tourism Development Authority)**  
**Minutes**  
**June 5, 2023**  
**4:30 P.M.**

Chairman Mason-Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with three members present. Ex-Officio Treasurer Fatland asked that approval of the Budget for FY 2023-24 be added to the meeting agenda after agenda item 4. Approve Financial Report for May 2023. The addition to the agenda was approved by the Authority members present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Maria Mason-Freeman, Chairman; John Vining, Vice-Chairman, and Jeff Fissel

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep; and Allan Casavant

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jim Fatland, Ex-Officio Treasurer; Meg Rogers, Secretary; and Michelle Newman, TDDA Downtown Director

**Member Reappointments for July 1, 2023**

Secretary Rogers informed the Authority that four current members were up for reappointment to begin terms on July 1, 2023. Casavant had been contacted and agreed to serve another term. Chairman Mason-Freeman and Fissel stated they would be willing to be reappointed for another term. Secretary Rogers stated she would prepare an agenda item for the June 20, 2023 meeting of the Tryon Board of Commissioners to reappoint the four members for another term.

**Approve Minutes from May 1, 2023**

Minutes from the May 1, 2023 regular meeting were reviewed.. Vining made a motion to approve the May 1, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. Mason-Freeman seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Approve Financial Report for May 2023**

The FY 2022-23 Tryon Tourism Development Fund financial report for May 2023 was presented by Ex-Officio Treasurer Fatland.

Occupancy tax collections for the month of April 2023 remitted to the Town in May 2023 totaled \$1,860.44. Total Revenues for the month of May 2023 were \$1,860.44. May 2023 expenditures totaled \$1,450.10. FY 2022-2023 Tourism Development Fund revenues as of May 31, 2023 totaled \$25,155.19. FY 2022-2023 Tourism Development Fund expenditures as of May 31, 2023 totaled \$22,108.99. Fund balance as of May 31, 2023 was \$61,452.94.

Fatland noted that occupancy tax revenues were coming in below the budgeted \$35,000. Fatland recommended budgeting a lower amount for occupancy tax revenues in FY 2023-2024 at \$28,000. Vining asked for a breakdown of individual expenses for website hosting, website maintenance, social media ads, social media visitor mail handling work done by Tracey Daniels so the Authority members could better understand expenditures for these individual items in future financial reports. Occupancy tax reporting was discussed briefly regarding late fees for late reports. Mason-Freeman stated her wish that the occupancy tax reports could be filled out and submitted digitally through the Town of Tryon

website. The Authority asked that Tax Collector Jordan McKeown attend the next meeting to answer questions regarding collection procedures, reporting, penalties and late fees.

Vining asked about collecting information from online booking sites on average room fees being charged in the Town of Tryon occupancy tax jurisdiction. Mason-Freeman stated that room fees changed seasonally, but a two bedroom vacation rental in this area generally charged around \$200 per night.

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

### **Approve Revised FY 2023-2024 Tourism Development Budget**

Ex-Officio Treasurer Fatland reported that the Town of Tryon was working with Tryon Downtown Development Association (TDDA) on installing electric vehicle charging stations at Tryon Depot building. Becker Electric had been selected to provide a quote to install the charging stations. The Town of Tryon wanted Tourism Development Fund to pay a share in this project as it would promote tourism. Currently the Tourism Development Fund was budgeted to cover 15% of two staff support people, Secretary Meg Rogers and TDDA Downtown Director Michelle Newman. However, that expense would not leave enough to pay for the annual website and social media contract services provided by Tracey Daniels, as the projected occupancy tax revenues budgeted for FY 2023-2024 were \$30,500. Fatland recommended eliminating the 15% for TDDA Downtown Director Newman from the Tourism Development budget. Newman stated that she would like to see the Tryon Tourism Development Authority work more closely together with TDDA to promote downtown Tryon. Vining suggested reducing the percentage from 15% to 5% for TDDA Director Newman's services. Fatland would revise the budget expenditure numbers based on that suggestion and bring the proposed line-item expense budget to the next Authority meeting. The total budget amount would remain at \$30,500. Fissel stated he would like to see as much as possible of the occupancy tax revenues spent on promoting tourism and less on personnel. Mason-Freeman stated she would prefer that the Town pay personnel, if possible. Mason-Freeman, Vining and Fissel were in agreement with a total 2023-2024 revenue-expense budget of \$30,500. The detail allocations still needed to be adjusted in the expense line item budget for FY 2023-2024.

Fissel made a motion to approve a Tryon Tourism Development Budget for FY 2023-2024 of \$30,500 total revenue and \$30,500 total expense. Fissel seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

### **Saluda Grade Trail Update**

Neman reported that the project administrators were in the due diligence process and the formal survey of the trail route would be completed by the end of 2023. There had been meetings with attorneys about right-of-way property owners rights to apply for Federal reimbursement for their property and providing information to those property owners on the process to apply for reimbursement. The Tryon Board of Commissioners had approved formation of a Tryon-based Saluda Grade Trail Advisory Committee and the chairman of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was invited to be a member of this new advisory committee. Stakeholder meetings would be held this summer. The Town of Tryon would be voting on participating in the suit to get Federal Government compensation for the trail right-of-way parcels as the Town of Tryon owned four properties along the route, at Tryon Depot, Vaughn Creek

Greenway, and two parcels at Rogers Park. The legal process for compensation was expected to take about two years. Conserve Carolina had the project's Steering Committee. Saluda had formed an advisory committee to get ready for the trail. Vining asked if Newman might attend a Saluda Advisory Committee meeting to see what Saluda is planning to do.

### **Website & Social Media**

Tracey Daniels written report was reviewed.

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

- 3-5 posts per week; tourism focused,
- Total Facebook likes – 7,690 (5 new past 30 days)
- Average post reach 3.278
- Post engagement 763 ; Links to website: 201; Shares: 20; Reactions: 305
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- Most liked posts – Nina Simone house article from Tryon Daily Bulletin; May 4<sup>th</sup> Friday event; new restaurant coming to former Harper's location
- Will focus on summer activities & 4<sup>th</sup> Friday events

### **Website**

#### **• BUSINESS CHANGES & UPDATES**

##### **Added or updated the following:**

Back Alley Bud Bar

Soul Edit (move)

Harper closing (temporary closing to officially closed)

Added two new lodging options in Tryon radius

### **Miscellaneous**

- Answered incoming questions via e-mail
- Continued communication with Melinda Massey at County regarding updating shared calendar and possible new visual for calendars
- Researched information on changing design of event calendar
- Researching and preparing for upcoming G4 migration and changes (July 2024) and website SEO design tips; will make some SEO changes after July 1, 2023
- Attended Free seminar from Asheville's JB Media regarding Google changes

### **SWOT Analysis Update – Work Plan Assignments**

Newman distributed a handout listing upcoming events for downtown Tryon in June 2023. Summer Tracks – Sol Driven Train at Rogers Park and West Side Mixer at Tryon Arts & Crafts School on June 9, 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday event at 80Six Gallery on June 10, Back Alley Boutique Pride Pop-Up Store and TRIFF movie fund raiser at Tryon Theatre on June 11, Juneteenth event at Tryon Fine Arts Center on June 17, Tryon Summer Solstice Celebration at Rogers Park on June 21, Fourth Friday in Downtown Tryon on June 23, TDDA Annual Meeting at Tryon Country Club on June 26, Air National Guard Band Full Throttle at Rogers Park on June 27 and Summer Tracks-Reedy River String Bank on June 30, 2023. Fatland asked Newman for copies of the event schedule to hand out at the Town of Tryon's information table at the next Summer Tracks concert. Newman reported that Brooks Tavern would be opening soon in the former Harpers Pub location and Brooks would be open seven day a week until 9 or 10 pm.

Newman thanked John Vining for helping her visit downtown businesses to urge the owners to extend their operating hours. Newman has spoken with the editor at Tryon Daily Bulletin regarding a monthly column or center section for a TDDA business spotlight ad section with 1/8 page ad sections. Newman asked if the Tourism Authority would be interested in participating in co-op ads in the Foothills Magazine. Distribution would be Polk County and Rutherford County at a reasonable cost for print ads. Newman was temporarily helping Tracey Daniels with website e-mails and Instagram for the ExploreTryon tourism accounts while Daniels was on medical leave.

#### **Approve Meeting Schedule for FY 2023-2024**

The proposed meeting schedule for FY 2023-2024 was reviewed. Some Authority members and staff were not available on July 3, 2023 so the Authority unanimously decided to cancel the proposed July meeting date and hold the next regular meeting in August. Fissel made a motion to approve the amended meeting schedule for FY 2023-2024. Mason-Freeman seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

#### **Other**

**Downtown Improvements** – Fatland thanked Vining for providing updates on things that needed to be done around downtown. The Rotary Clock Tower and streetlights had been fixed. Fatland asked the Authority members for comments, suggestions and observations for improving downtown Tryon for tourism. Mason Freeman recommended flower baskets for downtown. Newman suggested that the Authority could partner with TDDA to help the downtown businesses add flower baskets. Vining recommended that the Rogers Park bathrooms be open more of the time. Fatland suggested having the Rogers Park restrooms open between 7 am and 7 pm daily. Vining made a motion to request that the Rogers park Restrooms be open daily for reasonable hours. Mason-Freeman seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Tryon International Film Festival (TRIFF) 2023 update** – Polk County Film Initiative Executive Director Debra Torrence reported that the TRIFF 2023 poster designed by artist Lorie Sullivan had been released. A movie fundraiser event with a showing of Electric Jesus would be held at Tryon Theatre on June 11. TRIFF 2023 was schedule to be held October 6-8, 2023 and would include a arts career education fair with 30 schools and colleges invited to participate. EQUUS Equine Lifestyle Magazine would be broadcasting from Tryon during the festival. Torrence briefly described the TRIFF event budget of \$90,000 and told the Authority that TRIFF would be applying for an advertising grant of \$1,000 from the Tryon Tourism Authority. TRIFF had asked the Town of Tryon for fee waivers for use of McCown Street and the Tryon Depot parking lot. TRIFF was selling program ad spaces and invited the local B&Bs and vacation rental businesses to advertise in the event program. A “Best of TRIFF” film would be shown at the Spartanburg Film Festival. Torrence could be contacted at Director@pcfi.org if the Authority members had any questions. Vining liked that colleges had been invited to participate. Polk County High School was providing funding for students to attend. A TRIFF 2023 Kick-Off event for TRIFF partners was scheduled on October 6, 2023 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

#### **Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was confirmed for Monday, August 7, 2023 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

**Adjourn**

Vining made a motion to adjourn. Fissel seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 3 to 0. Meeting was adjourned at 5:35 pm.

**Prepared by**

*Meg Rogers*

Meg Rogers  
Secretary

**Approved:**

*Marie Mason-Freeman*

Marie Mason-Freeman  
Chairman