

## Town of Franklin Tourism Development Authority Meeting

September 14, 2015

Present: Vice-Chair and Town Manager Summer Woodard, Cheryl Pullium, Vickie Springer, and Connie Grubermann.

Members absent were Chair Person Candy Presley.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Town Manager Summer Woodard noted that Josh Drake would be joining the meeting later.

**Motion was made by Pullium, seconded by Vickie Springer to add Dusty Allison with Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine to the September 14, 2015 Proposed Agenda. Motion carried. Vote: 4 to 0.**

### Approval of August 10, 2015 Board Minutes

**Motion was made by Springer, seconded by Pullium to approve the August 10, 2015 Board minutes as presented. Motion carried. Vote: 4 to 0.**

### New Business: Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine

Dusty Allison – Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine – Thanks for having me on short notice. As Ms. Woodard mentioned, I'm with Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine and we are based out of Asheville, North Carolina and Charlottesville, Virginia. We are a free outdoor lifestyle and travel magazine, and we have been around twenty years. We come out monthly. Annually, we have done a top outdoor town competition. Our editorial team entered Franklin this year, first year ever. We have been running this for six weeks now. Franklin is in the small town category. Franklin is doing very well. We will release the results Friday. You were up against Addington, Virginia. It is something to be very proud of. Our November issue will chronicle our top town. People look forward to it. We will be showcasing all three winners in our November issue. I'm here because I'm the digital publisher of the magazine. I'm from Andrews, a small town. I always try to leverage attention when something like this comes up. I work a lot with chambers and other organizations across the Southeast. Folks who read our magazine are tourists looking for travel destinations, and some are looking at real estate. The top towns issue is always of interest to them. Franklin is up there this year, because it is a true Cinderella story. We had over 106,000 votes in total. That says a lot that Franklin did so well. So I'm here because in the past, when other towns have won, we offer an advertising co-op to leverage the exposure. I've worked with Tourism Development Authorities to subsidize the purchase, which allows motels and merchants to come in and get some exposure at a much cheaper rate. It would be a two page spread, creating a page treatment that would anchor all the ads together. Allowing for quarter page and half-page ads. They sell very quickly, so my suggestion is for the Tourism Development Authority to subsidize half of our circulation by contributing \$1,000 per page. So a total of \$2,000 for a two page spread – allowing businesses to come in at over 50 percent. A quarter page ad for one issue is typically right at \$1400. This would cut that to \$570 for a business. A half page discount would be \$1100, which is typically \$2300. What I do, I go in right behind and I do the selling. We don't issue invoices until we come out, so you wouldn't get an invoice until November. We also have our own designs. That's a free service. I try to customize the co-op as best as I can. We try to make it exclusive as well. We did this for Bryson City last year. There are over 800 cabins there, and we only included one lodging cabin in Bryson City last year.

**September 14, 2015 meeting continued,**

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Do you have any examples of what one looks like?

Dusty Allison – Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine – I did bring Bryson City's last year. It's different this year, because it is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. So disregard that this is news print. They did two pages, and in three days it sold out. They opted to increase it to a third page, and we had to stop there because we ran out of time.

Summer Woodard – So basically the Tourism Development Authority gives \$2,000 for a two page, and then you would go out and sell to local businesses and organization, and they buy into the co-op?

Dusty Allison – Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine – Yes, that's correct. Here is the sheet that I will give them. I know you normally take two months to decide, so I understand that. I will still try to go out and customize ads for local businesses.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – What will be the total cost?

Vickie Springer – The article will be a full page piece?

Dusty Allison – The feature will consist of six to eight pages, but within those six to eight pages all three towns will be written about and covered. In that sense, Franklin will be showcased and profiled. Editorially speaking, it will be like a weekender's guide. Where to go, hike – leaning toward outdoor pursuits.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Given the circumstances, I think it's notable that we make an exception about the two month rule. I will make one recommendation. Please take miscellaneous/festival line item that you have \$30,000 in.

Cheryl Pullium – What if there is a third page? When we make a motion, can we leave room for three pages?

Dusty Allison – Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine - Good question. The cost of three would be \$3,000. If for some reason we can't sell, we will just make a bigger ad for the Tourism Development Authority.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – So the Board can put in the motion to spend up to \$3,000.

**Motion was made by Pullium, seconded by Springer to spend up to but no more than \$3,000 from miscellaneous/festival line-item, and to work with Premiere Marketing in Advertising to Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine's November 2015 issue that will feature Franklin as a winner of the small towns contest. Motion carried. Vote: 4 to 0.**

Springer – In keeping with the theme, I think maybe we should stay with the outdoor theme.

Dusty Allison – Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine – I agree. Knowing our demographic, you're right. There are clients we will approach first. I don't have a dog in the fight.

September 14, 2015 meeting continued,

**New Business: Macon County Transit and Appalachian Trail Committee Request**

Rob Gasbarro – Outdoor 76 – Macon County Transit this year began a new initiative, picking up and taking hikers to and from Winding Stairs Gap in an effort to accommodate Franklin’s outdoor market. Before I go further, I know this is an unusual request and I’m open to suggestions and criticism in order to get to an amicable solution. But they started this year, running it for six weeks for five days a week – two shuttles a day. They did this in March and April, and I’m almost certain their efforts brought a new infusion of hikers into town. I know this firsthand being an outdoor business owner in downtown. Hikers tend to stay and spend their money here. The transit rates are \$3.00 per person, which is very, very low. Macon Transit, according to Kim Angel, director of Macon Transit, collected \$1,608 in fares but their services cost them \$3,518 – about \$1,900 in the red. I can’t get into the accountability purposes, but when we look at this – that debt is nothing compared to what they brought in to the community. This service needs to be significantly increased next year. Duration was the biggest thing. We saw hikers in a steady flow as early as mid-February, and all the way until May 30, 2015. Any given day we saw 10 to 15 hikers a day. They would always ask about Macon Transit, and we would have to tell them they stopped the service. We know there is a service provider that brings hikers into town, and I don’t know the arrangements. We have reason to believe things may change next year, and we don’t know if it is going to be status quo next year or not. Regardless, on behalf of the Appalachian Trail Commission, we believe it should be the community to step up – not a private individual. Because it benefits us. The movie is out, and trail hikers will increase significantly I’m sure. If this was a free service it would be \$13,700. Macon Transit will acquire half of that in ridership fares. So we are looking to raise \$6,750 to supplement Macon Transit for next spring – to bring hikers into town for 15 weeks, three days a week. They will be 100 percent unbiased on where they will take hikers. We are asking for something, not the full \$6,750 – because that wouldn’t be fair. I think this is something that benefits everyone. We are bringing this up now because we need Kim Angel to commit to this service to update our hiker books by November.

Vickie Springer – Macon County Transit, how did they get approval to do this?

Rob Gasbarro – It’s my understanding that Kim Angel made an executive decision, but don’t hold me to that. It’s a county program. Think about it like the New York City subway system. Our public transportation system is a county effort. We will also be working really hard in the several weeks to get the funding elsewhere. And \$3.00 a board is really cheap. For some reason, she said she can’t increase it over that amount. I don’t know why.

Corey McCall – This is the only county program that we’ve heard of on the trail. It’s really cutting edge for a town to step up and be willing to help hikers.

Member Josh Drake arrived at the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**Old Business: Board Decision on Parker Meadows Coupon Book**

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – They requested \$2,000 per quarter. Any discussion?

Josh Drake – Based on their projected budget, we will be contributing \$8,000 to their net profit. So I’m not going for this.

**September 14, 2015 meeting continued,**

Motion was made by Drake, seconded by Pullium to deny the funding request for Parker Meadows Coupon Book. Motion carried. Vote: 5 to 0.

**Old Business: Board Decision on Naturalist Event**

Motion was made by Grubermann, seconded by Pullium to approve the requested \$2,500 for the Naturalist Event. Motion carried. Vote: 5 to 0.

**Old Business: Board Decision on Vacation Guide**

Motion was made by Grubermann, seconded by Pullium to deny funding request for Vacation Guide. Motion carried. Vote: 5 to 0.

**Financial Report**

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Our finance officer is working on the reserve total. I didn't forget about it. She is going to split the account. I have attached a copy of the financial report. The Charlotte Chamber that you see is from last year. The only thing you have that is outstanding is the Smoky Mountain Center for Performance Arts, which is \$15,000. If you turn to the next page, looking back at fiscal year 2010, this is the best we have ever been. I've also attached a corrected and updated budget for 2015/2016.

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Motion was made by Pullium, seconded by Grubermann to approve the financial report. Motion carried. Vote: 5 to 0.

**Sub-Committee Reports**

Finance/Budget Chair Report – No report

Policy and Rules of Procedure Chair Report – No report

Application Review Chair Report – No report

**Items from the Board**

Pullium – We should tell Josh what we did before he got here?

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Yes.

Cheryl Pullium -We had a speaker form Blue Ridge Outdoors, and it's not supposed to leave the room, but Franklin did win the Small Town awards. They came here for us to fund the co-op pages, and we approved up to \$3,000 for pages. It will be distributed through D.C. and Alabama.

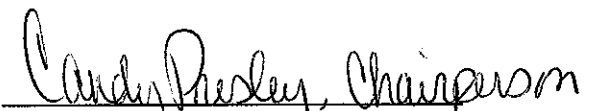
September 14, 2015 meeting continued,

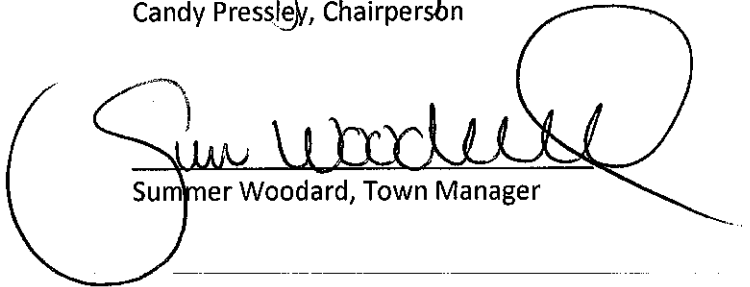
**Announcements**

The next regularly scheduled Tourism Development Authority Board meeting will be Monday October 12, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room.

**Adjourn**

Motion was made by Pullium, seconded by Drake to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:30 p.m.  
Motion carried. Vote: 5 to 0.

  
Candy Pressley, Chairperson

  
Summer Woodard, Town Manager

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