

Transylvania County Tourism
Minutes of March 26, 2020 Board Meeting
(Virtual Meeting)

Present: Layton Parker, Dee Dee Perkins, Grant Bullard, Tad Fogel, Libby Freeman, Tracie Trusler, Mac Morrow, Mike Hawkins, Aaron Baker

Absent: None

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, Mary Jo Gordon, Prentiss Brewer

Guests Present: Jonathan Griffin

Call to Order – Layton Parker

The meeting was called to order at 8:32am by Layton Parker.

Layton welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

Clark explained how this meeting has been made available to the public.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

Minutes of February 27, 2020 were sent out via email in advance of the meeting. Dee Dee made a motion to approve as presented. Mac seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark reported that revenues were 10% over budget and 19% over prior year. We are \$60,000 ahead of budget year-to-date. None of the expenses are slated to go over although some will be under. Dee Dee made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Tad seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Office – Clark noted that he had been in “triage mode” since the closing of the office. He is part of a task force focused on helping businesses navigate this crisis. A chat function has been added to the explorebrevard website, as well as a COVID-19 webpage. Informational emails have been sent to partners. E-blasts will come back soon but with different messaging. Clark asked MJ to make sure all board members are on our local partner list.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

Marketing Strategy for the Remainder of FY20 – Layton went over the talking points and communication strategy handout. Discussions were held regarding messaging and dissemination of information to partners. Layton informed the group that TCT would continue to be a source of information for its partners. MC and staff quickly identified \$35K of expenses that can be relatively easily pulled from the marketing plan. After discussion, Tad made a motion to go ahead and cancel the \$35K right away. Mac seconded. Motion passed. Layton indicated that we’re currently working on additional cuts that go a bit deeper.

FY20 Finances - Projections of income in the last months of FY20 were discussed. It was acknowledged how challenging this is to do in the rapidly changing environment with an unprecedented event. Further discussion resulted in a consensus to cut as much marketing as possible, including looking at MC's retainer. Clark will take this message to MC. Layton asked for feedback for the FY21 budget.

Additional COVID-19 Actions – Discussion was held on ways to support local businesses financially, in addition to the communications we were sending out.

Misc. – Prentiss asked for direction in handling grant requests, noting that a quarterly review is necessary prior to our next meeting. Layton said to continue, but with awards being contingent on an event or project actually happening.

Old Business – Clark asked the board to think about anything with the strategic plan that might slip through the cracks. Aaron asked Clark to send out a revised budget once marketing cuts have been made.

New Business – None

Public Comment – None

Meeting Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 9:58am by Layton Parker.

Minutes respectfully presented by Prentiss Brewer.

March Board Meeting Handout

COVID-19 COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES

SAFETY

Transylvania County Tourism's first priority is the safety and welfare of its citizens, visitors and especially critical health care and public service personnel.

MESSAGES

TCT recommends that potential visitors remain at home at the present time to decrease the possibility of a wider spread of the contagion.

TCT recommends that everyone follow the CDC Guidelines as the best way to combat the virus.

TCT recommends that visitors and local citizens refrain from going to Pisgah, DuPont and Gorges at present. These public lands have limited staff and resources.

TCT is encouraging visitors to do a "Staycation" with a special giveaway: to enter, share your favorite Brevard/Transylvania County Vacation Memory. When you do, you'll be rewarded with one-year of free streaming on Netflix and Hulu, \$500 in gift cards to support your local restaurants, a leather journal, etc.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

TCT believes that taking extraordinary measures now will benefit the community in the long run and help us return to normal sooner.

MESSAGES

TCT invites visitors to "virtually" visit Brevard and Transylvania County by following our Facebook and Instagram feeds. These will feature exclusive video and photo content from Explore Brevard plus user generated content as always.

TCT invites visitors to use this time to plan a Land of Waterfalls experience when it is safe to travel. Inspiring travel planning ideas.

TCT is sharing information about virtual concerts and activities by community partners like Brevard Music Center and others.

OUR COMMUNITY AND ITS ECONOMY

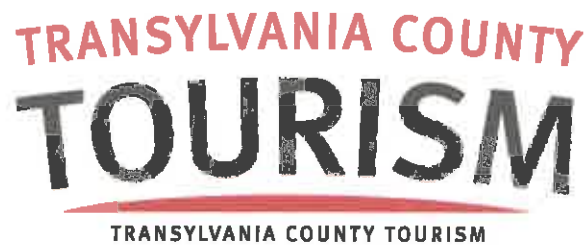
Transylvania County understands the incredible stress the current conditions are placing on local businesses, both tourism and non-tourism related, and believes it can play a role in helping to communicate important news and resources to the community.

MESSAGES

The Chamber, in concert with multiple other government and non-government organizations, are compiling useful information about event cancellations,

postponements, take-out food availability and resources available to businesses and individuals who have lost employment. TCT is passing on this information, when appropriate, through its communications channels.

TCT encourages local citizens to purchase gift cards from local restaurants and retailers as a way to “pay it forward” and support local businesses during this extraordinary time.



MARKETING REPORT

April 2020

COVID-19 - Messaging & Response

Beginning in early March TCT and Market Connections began to shift marketing messaging and strategy in response to the global pandemic. The initial response included:

- Provided COVID messaging via social media followed by a dark period March 25 - April 15
- Paused all digital advertising
- Created a new landing page for COVID-19 as well as a live chat function on ExploreBrevard.com
- A landing page for COVID appropriate outdoor activity was also created, launched and subsequently deleted due to changing circumstances in state parks and national forests
- Eliminated any print advertising possible
- Created a marketing messaging matrix in response to COVID
- Created a 4th quarter savings and contract cancellation strategy to recoup any funds possible on behalf of TCT

The e-newsletter platforms were utilized in tandem with the new landing page to provide a series of messages that updated our visitor base and tourism partners with new information as it became available. This series grew in engagement from our average 20th percentile open rate to a 28% open rate with the final message.

A marketing messaging matrix was also created which outlines a two phased approach to the pandemic.

Phase One (current phase) - messaging is focused on staying home and staying safe. Emphasis is on dreaming and planning with a call to action to order an adventure guide. Digital advertising and SEO was paused on March 15. TCT staff is currently managing social media with oversight and feedback from Market Connections.

Phase Two (next two months) - messaging will shift in focus away from shelter in place to focus on the fact that Brevard and Transylvania County will be here for you when the time is right. Some new minimal tactics will be introduced on the website like blogs and virtual tours of state parks and national forests. Social media will ramp up to support these new efforts. Digital advertising will be utilized in a strategic fashion with messaging that speaks to the situation on the ground in real time.

Marketing Plan

A marketing plan for the new fiscal year is currently in development. The marketing committee is meeting late next week. Market Connections will reconnect with the committee in two weeks to present a draft. The marketing committee is expected to present a plan to the board at the May meeting along with macro approach for marketing in FY21.

MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

April 2020

Public Relations

- Reach Global Marketing (through VisitNC) has offered distribution and pitching of all virtual tours for ExploreBrevard.com throughout Canada. Brevard has been given priority in the state due to our participation in the Canadian Media Mission earlier this year.
- WNC Magazine highlighted - Southern Highlands Reserve, Mountain Song Festival and mini dining guide for Transylvania County
- VisitNC is developing a Hunger Games feature for VisitNC.com
- Blue Ridge Country is publishing a reader's choice award issue. Transylvania county has won for:
 - Best waterfall: Looking Glass Falls
 - Best swimming hole: Sliding Rock
 - Best state park with water: Gorges State Park
 - Best outdoor outfitter: Headwaters Outfitters
- Our State Magazine
 - July issue features Southern Highlands Reserve and Transylvania County's Waterfalls
 - August issue features Lake Toxaway (specific stories TBD)
- Narcity.com has profiled Brevard as a location for filming of the Hunger Games

Social Media

- Facebook audience is up to 15,028 from 14,753
- Instagram audience is up to 13,836 from 13,400

Digital Advertising

- March report from Digital One highlighted our best month to date before pausing due to COVID. Paid Search: the first two weeks of March saw the best performance since the campaign began
Native: similar to paid search, this channel achieved a high-water mark, campaign to date, for average session duration.

Key Strategies Going Forward

- Maintain strong brand presence with access to information.
- Provide virtual tours to encourage future planning and activities.
- Utilize digital to reach and target new and existing audiences with flexible and targeted messaging.
- Carefully follow metrics to test efficacy of tactics and messaging.
- Maintain aspirational tone with integrity.
- Utilize native channels like social media, blog and newsletters to maintain and encourage engagement with visitor base.
- Primary target - southern regional driving markets
- Save money wherever possible to spend at time of market reentry.

Transylvania County Tourism Minutes of April 23, 2020 Board Meeting (Virtual)

Present: Layton Parker, Dee Dee Perkins, Grant Bullard, Tad Fogel, Libby Freeman, Tracie Trusler, Mac Morrow, Mike Hawkins, Aaron Baker

Absent: None

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, Mary Jo Gordon, Prentiss Brewer, Nathan Jordan, Karen Tessier

Guests Present: John Lanier, Kate Hayes, Nancy DePippo

Call to Order – Layton Parker

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am by Layton Parker.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

Minutes of March 26, 2020 were sent out via email in advance of the meeting. Dee Dee made a motion to approve as presented. Aaron seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark reported on revenues from the month of March which represent February's returns. Revenues were 1.5% over budget and 11.6% over prior year. Budget was high due to expectations of the new Holiday Inn opening. Year-to-date is 9% over budget and 18% over prior year. Expenses are at or below budget. Dee Dee made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Tad seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Amended Budget – Layton indicated that the finance committee met with Clark and created an updated FY20 budget. This document was sent to the board ahead of time and shared during the meeting as well. Layton reviewed year-end projections and highlighted cuts in the marketing plan, lower revenues from occupancy tax and ads, underspending in strategic plan and Transylvania Always, suspension of the grant program and a \$10,000 contribution to the Transylvania Tomorrow Small Business Emergency Relief Fund. This was presented as a motion from the finance committee. Discussion was held. Mike seconded the motion to make these changes and approve the amended budget as presented. More discussion was held. Motion carried.

Transylvania Tomorrow Small Business Emergency Relief Fund – Clark explained the history and partners of the task force and Transylvania Tomorrow. There is over \$60,000 in the fund right now with 70 applications already received. The first deadline is April 24 then every 2 weeks until the funds run out.

Misc. – Clark updated on what he's been hearing from TDAs within the region and VisitNC. He indicated that VisitNC was working on getting some marketing-related funding for DMO's from the state but had no other details at this time.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

Strategy for Closing Out FY20 – Layton reiterated that we have cut all non-essential funding, including all advertising. We are focused on maintaining necessary basics of our marketing plan, with limited, but important messaging. He asked Nathan and Karen to provide an update on our marketing plans over the next three months.

Market Connections Update – Nathan shared the April Marketing Report and reviewed COVID messaging. The FY21 marketing plan is in the works with the Marketing Committee meeting next week. Two weeks later, the draft plan will be presented to the Marketing Committee and then to the full board at the May meeting. Nathan also reviewed, and shared onscreen, the marketing highlights. Karen shared key strategies for moving forward. Layton thanks them for their work in cutting expenses, etc.

Grants – Layton informed the board that the finance committee met regarding grants and decided to recommend suspending the grant program until further notice. Tad seconded the motion from committee. Motion passed.

Ecusta Trail – Layton reminded that Clark sent out an email detailing Henderson County's contribution and the request for funds to be distributed in May. Mac made a motion to disburse the funds provided the proper documentation was provided. Aaron seconded. Motion passed.

Committees

Layton stated that we should touch on the work of each committee to ensure that we're focused on what is necessary right now. He highlighted the following:

- **Finance** - Working on year-end. Note that other expenses could be cut if revenues come in lower than forecasted. Will finalize a tentative budget prior to the marketing committee meeting so they can have a figure to work with for next year's marketing plan.
- **Marketing** – As mentioned earlier, the focus is on a marketing plan for FY21.
- **Transylvania Always** – Funding has been cut at this point. Staff and MC are working on messaging asking visitors to explore responsibly. Aaron and Clark will connect on getting the committee back together.
- **Destination Infrastructure** – Role will be different in the short-term. Should get together to discuss.

Old Business – None

New Business – None

Public Comment – None

Meeting Adjourn – Dee Dee made a motion to adjourn. Libby seconded. Motion passed.
Meeting was adjourned at 10:16am by Layton Parker.

Minutes respectfully presented by Prentiss Brewer.

EXPLORE BREVARD - TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM COVID-19 MARKETING MESSAGING MATRIX

Below is a detailed overview of each of our current marketing channels with details on how they currently communicate and additional information on how those messages evolve as the situation with COVID-19 continues.

Organizational Messaging (e-news): Nimble device for quick communications directly from Explore Brevard that addresses issues on the ground.

Adventurist: Upcoming issues will focus on stay safe and sheltering. In future this will be an informational resource with updates from the area and tips for planning future adventures.

Field Notes: This will serve as a singular deep dive into a series of themes including, virtual escapes, how-tos for planning future adventures, photo and video tours.

Social Media: Our social channels will not go dark, our current message will focus on stay home stay safe, they will evolve to communicate the following -

- future trip planning ideas
- moments of zen/escape
- virtual tours
- photo tours
- live stream features of local attractions (waterfalls, Pisgah Pete, etc)
- local information on businesses and restaurants

Digital Marketing: Currently on pause. Select portions of our digital advertising have been pulled entirely. A new full digital suite is in development to promote future trip planning in the short term through Media One. This includes display, SEM, Pre-roll and Native

Get Out Guide: On hold for now, developing new content feature ideas - we will collaborate with Transylvania True on this - shifting to digital in the short term, no print distribution at this time.

Print Advertising: Next 30-60 days can not be cancelled or modified. All remaining print through end of year will be cancelled.

Website Content: Will maintain updated COVID-19 messaging. Virtual tours will go online in future.

Digital Blogs on Website: Will continue, future trip planning temporary posts will go live soon - including promotion on social.

Visit NC Co-Op Advertising: Cancelling for short term.

COVID-19 Communication Priorities & Talking Points

Below are the three pillars of TCT/Explore Brevard messaging and communications going forward until the pandemic dies down. Please use the following as a guide when creating marketing materials or addressing questions regarding our marketing and communications.

1. SAFETY

Transylvania County Tourism's first priority is the safety and welfare of its citizens, visitors and especially critical health care and public service personnel.

Messages

TCT recommends that potential visitors remain at home at the present time to decrease the possibility of a wider spread of the contagion.

TCT recommends that everyone follow the CDC Guidelines as the best way to combat the virus.

TCT recommends that visitors and local citizens refrain from going to Pisgah, DuPont and Gorges at present. These public lands have limited staff and resources.

2. TAKING THE LONG VIEW

TCT believes that taking extraordinary measures now will benefit the community in the long run and help us return to normal sooner.

Messages

TCT invites visitors to "virtually" visit Brevard and Transylvania County by following our Facebook and Instagram feeds. These will feature exclusive video and photo content from Explore Brevard plus user generated content as always.

TCT invites visitors to use this time to plan a Land of Waterfalls experience when it is safe to travel. Inspiring travel planning ideas.

TCT is sharing information about virtual concerts and activities by community partners like Brevard Music Center and others.

3. OUR COMMUNITY AND ITS ECONOMY

Transylvania County understands the incredible stress the current conditions are placing on local businesses, both tourism and non-tourism related, and believes it can play a role in helping to communicate important news and resources to the community.

Messages

The Chamber, in concert with multiple other government and non-government organizations, are compiling useful information about event cancellations, postponements, take-out food availability and resources available to businesses and individuals who have lost employment. TCT is passing on this information, when appropriate, through its communications channels.

TCT encourages local citizens to purchase gift cards from local restaurants and retailers as a way to "pay it forward" and support local businesses during this extraordinary time.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM

MARKETING REPORT May 2020

COVID-19 - Messaging & Response Update

COVID messaging began in early March. The Explore Brevard website landing page is continually updated with new information as the county enters new phases of re-opening. TCT and Market Connections have been in collaboration with local business owners and representatives of state parks and national forests. Ahead of Phase One reopening, a responsible visitation campaign was created that addressed the needs of the community. Its purpose was to educate visitors to conditions within the county, and to encourage visitor responsibility to keep themselves, locals, other visitors and essential workers safe. This campaign, known as "Explore Responsibly," includes the following:

- Poster and social media messaging geared toward visitors who are considering a trip to a restaurant or small business
- Poster and social media messaging geared toward visitors who plan to explore parks and national forests with additional messaging highlighting waterfall safety

These posters have been printed and shared digitally with local stakeholders as well as shared via Explore Brevard social media channels.

As we move into Phase Two re-opening, we've created a timeline to guide overall TCT messaging, which will stair step into an increasingly overt invitation to visit Brevard and Transylvania County. We are taking a tempered and nimble approach before making any adjustments to messaging. The first round of adjusted messaging will be utilized at the end of May with the release of the May Adventurist and shifts in social media content.

Marketing Plan

A new FY 20-21 marketing plan has been developed and will be presented to the TCT board with recommendation from the marketing committee. At the marketing committee's direction, the FY budget has been significantly reduced as a result of Covid. The new plan includes cuts in traditional marketing/media. An increased focus on digital advertising, due to its flexibility and responsiveness is a priority in the new budget. Pending visitation and occupancy at end of the first six months of the fiscal year, the plan can be adjusted.

The Adventurist & Field Notes

The 125th edition of The Adventurist went out on April 22nd to 18,821 recipients with an open rate of 19%, equating to 3,577 opens. It was a break from our "normal" format, which included information on COVID-relevant topics and highlighted the Transylvania Tomorrow initiative. It generated 193 clicks to through to outbound links including ExploreBrevard.com. Field Notes has been placed on hold.

Social Media

Our Facebook audience has expanded to 15,068. We are currently averaging six new fans daily. Our Instagram app now has 13,910 followers. Our twitter account now has 2,479 followers with an average of 4,000 - 6,000 impressions per tweet. Explore Brevard YouTube channel currently has 164 subscribers with 226,878 total views among 43 videos.

Public Relations

- Our State Magazine
 - July issue features Southern Highlands Reserve and Transylvania County's Waterfalls
 - August issue features Lake Toxaway and John Nichol's porch as the feature/lead story
 - These two-month placements are a direct result of TCT's FAM investment with Our State editor Elizabeth Hudson. Altogether, the FAM has resulted in five major Our State features and at least one cover. TCT's FAM investment of \$2500 has generated approximately a quarter million dollar return on investment in marketing exposure.
- Reach Global Marketing (through VisitNC) has offered distribution and pitching of all virtual tours for ExploreBrevard.com throughout Canada. Brevard has been given priority in the state due to our participation in the Canadian Media Mission earlier this year. The Toronto Times will also profile Skyterra Wellness Retreat in an upcoming article as a direct result of our participation.
- WNC Magazine highlighted - Southern Highlands Reserve, Mountain Song Festival and mini dining guide for Transylvania County, and is scheduled to feature the wooden boats of Lake Toxaway in the upcoming summer edition.
- Blue Ridge Country will feature their Reader's Choice Award in their upcoming summer issue. Transylvania County has won for:
 - Best waterfall: Looking Glass Falls
 - Best swimming hole: Sliding Rock
 - Best state park with water: Gorges State Park
 - Best outdoor outfitter: Headwaters Outfitters

Sweepstakes

The spring sweepstakes launched on February 20 and ended April 2. It generated 1,463 total entries. The page was viewed 1,289 times leading to a 113.5% conversion rate. The top referrer for the sweepstakes was the paid partnership with Romantic Asheville, which generated over 600 responses. Facebook generated 469 responses followed by Instagram with 183.

Print & Digital Advertising

- All print advertising has been canceled with some limited exceptions. Print advertising in the first six months of the new fiscal year will also be limited. Exceptions to this include insertions in publications where Brevard is prominently featured like Our State's July issue.
- March report from Digital One highlighted our best month to date before pausing due to COVID. Paid Search: the first two weeks of March saw the best performance since the campaign began. Native: similar to paid search, this channel achieved a high-water mark, campaign to date, for average session duration.
- Limited digital advertising is ramping up. Paid search was active as of May 15th and Youtube advertising is in development with a goal of launching in early June. The remainder of our digital advertising channels will remain dark until the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Website Metrics

Overall site traffic is down year over year 14.61% with mid-March through early May taking a dramatic hit due to going dark on social media and cancellation of all digital advertising due to COVID. Conversely, due to strong performance of the site earlier in the year (January through early March), our year-over-year site visitation has not taken as dramatic a hit as other tourism entities. Media One reports other partners with whom they work are as much as 40% down year-over-year.

The top three visited pages during the fourth quarter were our COVID landing page, Top 10 waterfalls blog post and Waterfalls landing page.

Our top four metro markets were Charlotte, Asheville, Nashville and Atlanta.

Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority Minutes of 5/28/20 Virtual Board Meeting

Present: Grant Bullard, Aaron Baker, Layton Parker, Dee Dee Perkins, Mac Morrow, Libby Freeman, Tracie Trusler, Tad Fogel, Mike Hawkins

Absent: None

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, Prentiss Brewer, Mary Jo Gordon, Karen Tessier, Nathan Jordan

Guests Present: Jonathan Griffin, Kate Hayes

Call to Order – Layton Parker

The meeting was called to order at 8:32AM by Layton Parker.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

The minutes of April 23, 2020 were presented for review by Layton Parker. Tad Fogel made a motion to approve as presented. Dee Dee Perkins seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark reviewed financials. We did not receive returns for two of the larger accommodations nor from Airbnb. Clark has spoken with other WNC TDAs who also did not get payment from Airbnb. One of the larger payments has since come in. We are trending about where expected on revenues with our updated budget with the absent March revenues factored in, but it is still a lot of guesswork. YTD for the chamber contract is correct. Two TCT contract payments ended up in strategic plan instead of the contract line. Corrections were made this month. Projected year-end grew by \$10,350. We were going to push these three months of a billboard payment out to FY21 when we thought we could get multiple free months. Turns out we only get one, so it will come down after July. Current expenses are trending a little ahead of where we budgeted. There are a lot of moving parts. We have a couple of refunds received in May for cancelled advertising. Clark is reviewing county finance numbers and market connections numbers to balance everything and figure it out. The Strategic Plan includes the \$100K for the Ecusta Trail and the above-mentioned corrections. Dee Dee made a motion to approve financials as presented. Tad seconded. Motion passed.

Prentiss reminded Clark that TCT has the opportunity to acquire the downtown Brevard tear-off map for \$2K, which the marketing committee wants to do. Tad seconded, as this was a motion from committee. Motion passed.

Office Report and Tourism Updates – Clark covered the following:

- **Messaging to Partners**
 - Have prioritized communicating with our local tourism partners since COVID-19 began. We were planning on starting something monthly or quarterly with MJ on board but have been sending weekly updates due to the crisis.
 - We shared our Explore Responsibly information with partners and offered printed posters.
- **Business Support Task Force**
 - Have organized 2 surveys, 3 town halls, 4 reopening huddle ups (retail, lodging, restaurants and art).
 - Transylvania Tomorrow Fund hit the \$150K mark with 80 businesses receiving funds so far.
 - Sought and received clarification on Phase 2 for breweries and taprooms.

- Planning on opening the visitor center on June 8. Will use the Foot Locker approach and take all precautions. Still working on details.
- Local Tourism News
 - Sully's Steamers has opened.
 - Brevard Marketplace with eclectic booths at back of rice building is opening.
 - Chris Cavanaugh is the Interim Executive Director at the Buncombe County TDA.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

FY21 Budget – The proposed budget was reviewed by Layton Parker. The goal was to be both conservative and flexible. This is basically the same as it was last month.

FY21 TCT/Chamber Contract – The FY21 TCT/Chamber Contract was reviewed by Layton Parker. In the past, contracts have been for 5 years. The main change this year is that the contract is for one year, which provides more flexibility. There is a plan to discuss a 5-year option again in 2021.

A motion to approve the FY21 budget was made by Dee Dee. Tad seconded. Aaron asked about the process for adjusting the budget if needed. Layton answered by saying that many expenses are designed to be flexible and that Market Connections knows all of this depends on income. Jonathan Griffin suggested that we wait to approve the budget until the next meeting because a public hearing is required. Discussion was held and a vote was put off until next month's meeting. Clark is to get with Trish about notification of a public hearing.

FY21 Audit - Jonathan Griffin

Jonathan reviewed and explained the letter that was sent out from the auditor. It only needs to be seen by everyone, not signed or acknowledged.

FY21 Marketing Plan - Market Connections

Karen Tessier and Nathan Jordan went over the FY21 Marketing Plan highlights. Nathan shared a document via Zoom. Tad asked how we are targeting tourists from Asheville. Karen touched on the Play and Stay campaign from the past and explained that overnight trips are our goal, but day trips also have value. We are focusing on pulling our target markets closer now due to the pandemic. Aaron Baker seconded the motion from committee to approve the marketing plan as presented. Motion passed.

Further discussion was held regarding the timing of messaging due to COVID-19 and the fact that that messaging plan should be shared with elected officials. Clark and Mike will work together to reach out to elected officials individually.

Old Business

None

New Business

Brevard Music Center sold all its first drive-in movie tickets in two hours. The story was picked up by Forbes Magazine. Clark mentioned that the Transylvania Tomorrow video will be showing before the movies. He also thanked Mac & the City of Brevard for the \$30,000 donation to the fund.

Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourn

Mac Morrow made a motion to adjourn. Grant Bullard seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Prentiss Brewer

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TOURISM

MARKETING REPORT

June 2020

COVID-19 - Messaging & Response Update

As we move through Phase Two re-opening, we've created a timeline to guide overall TCT messaging, which will stair step into an increasingly overt invitation to visit Brevard and Transylvania County. References to our COVID landing page have been modified to "Travel Information". We are taking a tempered and nimble approach before making any adjustments to messaging. As the state begins to assess moving into phase three we are actively monitoring trends and adjusting messaging accordingly.

The Adventurist & Field Notes

The 126th edition of The Adventurist went out on May 29th to 18,832 recipients with an open rate of 19%, equating to 3,554 opens. The break from our "normal" format continued and content this month included a feature on Explore Responsibly followed by a highlight of the Transylvania Tomorrow initiative. **It generated nearly triple the amount of average clicks to through to outbound links** including ExploreBrevard.com with nearly 400 clicks. Field Notes will resume in July.

Social Media

Our Facebook audience has expanded to 15,095. We are currently averaging three new fans daily. Our Instagram app now has 14,037 followers. Our twitter account now has 2,461 followers with an average of 4,000 - 6,000 impressions per tweet. Explore Brevard YouTube channel currently has 168 subscribers with 238,293 total views among 44 videos.

Public Relations

- Our State Magazine
 - Early distribution for the July issue featuring Southern Highlands Reserve and Transylvania County's Waterfalls is out now. There is a full waterfall photo feature on "The Land of Waterfalls" as well as other waterfall features. Looking Glass falls is featured on the cover.
 - August issue features Lake Toxaway and John Nichol's porch as the feature/lead story
 - These two-month placements are a direct result of TCT's FAM investment with Our State editor Elizabeth Hudson. Altogether, the FAM has resulted in five major Our State features and at least one cover. TCT's FAM investment of @ \$2500 has generated approximately a quarter million dollar return on investment in marketing exposure.
- Reach Global Marketing (through VisitNC) has offered distribution and pitching of all virtual tours for ExploreBrevard.com throughout Canada. Brevard has been given priority in the state due to our participation in the Canadian Media Mission earlier this year.
- Drift Travel's "Wellness Retreats for Serious Wellness Seekers" and TO Times' "Wellness retreats for when it is okay to travel again" highlighted Skyterra Wellness Retreat in recent issues.
- WNC Magazine highlighted - Southern Highlands Reserve, Mountain Song Festival and mini dining guide for Transylvania County, and is scheduled to feature the wooden boats of Lake Toxaway in the upcoming summer edition.

Print & Digital Advertising

- All print advertising has been canceled with some limited exceptions. Print advertising in the first six months of the new fiscal year will also be limited. Exceptions to this include insertions in publications where Brevard is prominently featured like Our State's July issue.
- Limited digital advertising has launched with YouTube, paid search and native. Paid search was active as of May 15th and Youtube advertising launched in early June. The :45 YouTube ad entitled "The Waterfalls Will Be Waiting" has already generated **over 10,000 views**.

Website Metrics

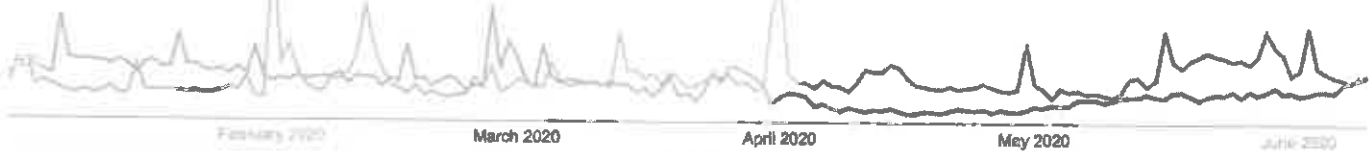
Overall site traffic is down year over year 19.7% with mid-March through early May taking a dramatic hit due to going dark on social media and cancellation of all digital advertising due to COVID. Conversely, due to strong performance of the site earlier in the year (January through early March), our year-over-year site visitation has not taken as dramatic a hit as other tourism entities. Media One reports other partners with whom they work are as much as 40% down year-over-year. As digital advertising comes back online and visitation begins to increase we are seeing traffic patterns begin to normalize.

Jan 1, 2020 - Jun 9, 2020: ● Users

Jan 1, 2019 - Jun 9, 2019: ● Users

1,500

1,000



Users

-19.71%

36,808 vs 45,841

New Users

-19.05%

36,329 vs 44,876



The top three visited pages during the fourth quarter were our COVID landing page, Lodging main page and Waterfalls landing page.

Our top four metro markets were:

#1 Charlotte with over 10% of site visitation

#2 Marietta, GA

#3 Raleigh

#4 Nashville

The top three highlight the need for an increased focus on drive markets in the region.

Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority

Minutes of 6/25/20 Virtual Board Meeting

Present: Grant Bullard, Aaron Baker, Layton Parker, Mac Morrow, Libby Freeman, Tracie Trusler, Mike Hawkins

Absent: Dee Dee Perkins, Tad Fogel

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, Prentiss Brewer, Mary Jo Gordon, Karen Tessier, Nathan Jordan

Guests Present: Jonathan Griffin

Call to Order – Layton Parker

The meeting was called to order at 8:33AM by Layton Parker.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

The minutes of May 28, 2020 were presented for review by Layton Parker. Libby Freeman made a motion to approve as presented. Aaron Baker seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark noted that starting with this meeting, he is now providing detailed comments on monthly financials with the advance packet so board members have time to review and consider prior to the meeting. Rather than review in detail at the meeting he will highlight a couple of key points and ask if there are any questions, as he is doing right now for this month. Discussion was held regarding the fact that Clark recently discovered that Airbnb collects and remits occupancy taxes at time of booking rather than at time of the overnight visit like traditional accommodations. Grant made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Tracie seconded. Motion passed.

Office Report and Tourism Updates – Clark covered the following:

- **Messaging to Partners**
 - We started messaging to partners regularly due to COVID-19 but have backed off recently as there is less new information. We will be starting a monthly eblast to tourism partners with MJ putting it together. It will go out on or around the 10th of each month.
- **Business Support Task Force**
 - Still meeting regularly with Transylvania Tomorrow being the one thing still moving. Now over 150K awarded to almost 90 businesses. Clark expressed gratitude to the city and Oskar Blues for their contributions. Transylvania Tomorrow may be needed again in winter to help tourism businesses through the winter with slower traffic.
- **Visitor Center**
 - Opened on June 8, averaging 25-50 visitors per day. No major incidents with COVID-19 related protocols. Planning on opening on Saturdays for partial days beginning this weekend. Chamber and TCT staff are available by appointment.
- **Local Tourism News**
 - Based on feedback from the board, TCT will be sponsoring the Steep Canyon Rangers' drive-in concert in Brevard for \$1,500. In addition to being a good community event during this challenging time, this will also provide a great virtual experience for our audience.
- **Misc.**
 - Clark has received an open records request through sunshinerequest.com, which appears to be a WNC-based website that creates an easy way for individuals to make such requests. The

request is for all TCT communications regarding marketing and promotion of our destination as state restrictions are lifted. He spoke with county personnel for advice on how to handle the request. This will include any emails board members sent to each other, so he will be reaching out with details on what is needed. For the future, it is recommended that board members have a separate email for board business.

- Clark shared TCT diversity and inclusion efforts over the past six months, including shooting additional footage to include a more diverse example of visitation, efforts with a new business, Black Folks Camp Too, and his role on the newly formed Community Relations Board. Consensus was to hold off on issuing a statement until we have action to put behind it. Project Empathy was also suggested as a good local source of information.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

- **Committees** – We had a set schedule for the year that included MC attending and presenting every other month and each committee presenting quarterly. That has been thrown off recently, but committees are back up and running and we need to hear from them. The plan for the next three months is as follows:
 - July – Transylvania Always, Destination Infrastructure
 - August – Market Connections, Marketing
 - September – Finance
- **FY21 Budget** – This is essentially the same budget that was reviewed last when we were informed of the public hearing requirement. Following announcement of a public hearing during this meeting, no one requested to attend this meeting or to come in to review the budget with Clark. Layton opened the public hearing and asked for comments. Since there were none, Layton closed the public hearing and asked for a motion to approve the budget. Mike Hawkins made that motion. Mac Morrow seconded. Motion passed.
- **FY21 TCT/Chamber Contract** – The contract has been signed by the Chamber and TCT. Layton reminded the board that this is a one-year contract. There is a plan to discuss a 5-year option again in 2021.

Market Connections Report

Karen Tessier and Nathan Jordan went over the Marketing Report that was sent out in advance of the meeting.

Old Business

None

New Business

Aaron asked if the new facemask requirement would affect our messaging. Nathan said he thought it fit well within our current messaging.

Nathan mentioned that VisitNC would be launching a Leave No Trace campaign and that they would bring attention to our Leave It Better campaign at the same time.

Clark explained how the new digital version of the Get Out Guide will work.

Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourn

Mac Morrow made a motion to adjourn. Tracie Trusler seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:46 AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Prentiss Brewer
