

TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOURISM DEVELOPEMNT AUTHORITY

MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2024

Present: Chairperson Connie Grubermann, Members Josh Drake, Rob Reale, Amie Owens, Tim Crabtree, Angela Martin, Kevin Covell, Matt Holland, Guy Gooder and Hannah Edwards joined via Zoom.

Others present: Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk
Robbie Tompa, Town Council Member
Stacy Guffey, Town Council Member
Carly Moser, Drake Enterprises Limited (DEL)
Morgan Stewart, Stewart Communications and his team
Lindsey Bnadad, Kudzo Brands
Mary Guercio, Tribal Vibe Promotions
Mia Overton, The Franklin Press
Dan Finnerty, Macon Sense
Various other Franklin Business Owners

1. Call to Order- Chairperson Connie Grubermann

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m.

2. Approval of the May 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Member Kevin Covell made a motion, seconded by Member Angela Martin to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2024 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

3. Financial Reports- ending April 30, 2024

Town Manager Amie Owens presented the Financial Report through the end of April 2024. She noted that the month of April 2024 was the 2nd highest April on record, with \$14,456.82 in occupancy tax collected.

Total expenses year to date are \$212,905.54 leaving negative balance of \$75,525.45 of collections minus expenditures. TDA Fund Balance is \$166,456.16. The reports are incorporated into these minutes as Exhibit A.

Member Tim Crabtree made a motion, seconded by Member Josh Drake to approve the financial report ending April, 30 2024. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

4. Continued Business

A.) Continued discussion Marketing Services for FY 2024-2025

Carly Moser provided a recap of the proposal submitted by DEL including continued partnership with Local iQ and Eric Haggart. Ms. Moser has provided her marketing service for 2 years, but DEL has worked with the TDA for the last 12 years.

Town Manager Owens asked Ms. Moser how would she work through a transition if her firm was not chosen. Ms. Moser said she would do wherever it takes and would hand over as much information as possible. Additional questions were asked and answered.

Lindsey Bnadad, Kudzu Brands, gave a recap of the proposal submitted including information on campaign management, staffing and content.

Town Manager Owens asked about the transition period if Kudzu Brands was chosen. Ms. Bnadad said they would meet with the outgoing firm, ask questions and get the information they needed to move forward. Additional questions were asked and discussion was held about developing the cost for their service after the initial discovery meeting.

Morgan Stewart, Stewart Communications, provided a recap of the proposal submitted including the various partnerships the firm has in place for co-op advertising, social media and the website being a digital store front.

Town Manager Owens asked about the transition period if Stewart Communications was chosen. Mr. Stewart said they would communicate with the TDA and the outgoing firm. They would then hit the ground running. Additional questions were asked and discussion was held about partnering with TDC and Smoky Mountain Host.

Additional discussion was held by TDA Board Members. Member Josh Drake said he didn't feel he could vote for a company that charges a fee to manage the marketing service. He noted that DEL had worked with the TDA for 12 years and never charged a staffing fee. Member Angela Martin spoke about her personal experience; her eco-tour business and how other companies offer similar tours for free. She stated that when you get something for free you don't always have someone looking out for your interest. Member Kevin Covell said he felt it was a good time to check out a different perspective.

Member Guy Gooder made a motion, seconded by Member Angela Martin to select Stewart Comminutions as the vendor for FY 2024/2025 for marketing services. Motion carried by a vote of 7-3. Members Josh Drake, Tim Crabtree and Matt Holland voted in opposition.

5. New Business

A.) Vote on Application for Funding

Taste of Scotland Celtic Festival and Highland Games – event is scheduled for June 14 – 16, 2024. The requested amount is \$5,000. The TDA provided funding of \$3,000 in FY 2022-2023 for this event.

Member Rob Reale made a motion, seconded by Member Kevin Covell to approve a funding request of \$3,000 for the Taste of Scotland Celtic Festival and Highland Games. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

B.) Vote on Application for Funding

Macon Music and Arts Festival– the event is scheduled for October 25 and 26, 2024. The requested amount is \$5,000. This is a new event for the area.

Member Amie Owens made a motion, seconded by Member Tim Crabtree to hold this request until closer to the event to see the additional event plans. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

C.) Reports from TDA Sponsored Events

1. Folk Heritage Association of Macon County – infrastructure Women’s History Park
The information report was included in the agenda packet.
2. Folk Heritage Association of Macon County – Celebration/Installation of sculpture *Sowing the Seeds of the Future*
The information report was included in the agenda packet.
3. NC Trail of Tears Association – reprinting of “A Guide to Trail of Tears”
The information report was included in the agenda packet.

D.) New Application for Consideration

Mary Guercio, Tribal Vibe Promotions, was in attendance and discussed her request for TDA support for the Tribal Vibe Promotions 4th Annual Come Together Festival – event is scheduled for September 27, 2024. The requested amount is \$1,000. The TDA provided funding of \$1,500 in FY 2022-2023 for this event. This request will be voted on at the July meeting.

6. Items from the Board

A.) Finalize Budget for Upcoming FY 2024-2025

Member Tim Crabtree made a recommendation for FY 2024-2025 budget of \$180,000: \$130,000 towards advertising, \$30,000 towards festivals/events, \$3,650 toward audit/bond, and \$16,350 in undesignated funds.

Member Tim Crabtree made a motion, seconded by Member Kevin Covell to approve the recommended structure of FY 2024-2025 budget. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

B.) Request from Town Council regarding use of Tourism Related Funds

Town Council has requested TDA to provide a list of how TDA plans to spend their funds. TDA members stated they could provide a historical list of what festivals/events they have provided funding for. They said they have no way of knowing who will submit funding request in the future. Discussion was had about TDA reserve funds. Chairperson Grubermann stated they like to keep enough funds in reserve to operate for one (1) year if zero occupancy taxes are collected. The TDA board will put together some information for Town Council and present to them at their August meeting.

Member Hannah Edwards left the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

7. Announcements

A.) The next regular scheduled TDA meeting will be held on Monday, July 8, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room.

8. Adjourn

Member Tim Crabtree made a motion, seconded by Member Josh Drake to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m. The motion carried unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

Connie Grubermann, Chairperson

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk