

Graham County Travel & Tourism Board

Continued Meeting

May 16, 2019 5:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

The Graham County Travel & Tourism Board met Thursday, May 16, 2019 at 5:00 P.M. in the Travel & Tourism office located at 474 Rodney Orr Bypass, Robbinsville, NC 28711 for a continued meeting to discuss the 2019/2020 budget.

Present: Dale Wiggins; chairman, Robin Turner; vice-chairman, Billy Brown, Mary Griffin

Absent: Jessica Wehr, Michelle Redmon, Meredith Jenkins

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Chairman Wiggins thanked everyone for coming

Chairman Wiggins suggested they start with the first line item and go thru each one

Daniel Allison distributed a copy of what had been worked on. He stated that they used the format from last year's budget. They could compare the two.

Finance officer, Becky Garland, stated that the new retirement rate was based on the new retirement plan.

Chairman Wiggins stated that there was a state mandated contribution of a 15% increase in retirement.

Chairman Wiggins pointed out that there was some merging of line items, that some line items had been done away with, and that other line items had either been increased or decreased.

Chairman Wiggins asked the Board to look at the line items and see if anything needed to be changed.

Chairman Wiggins explained that although having a healthy bank account is nice, we need to be willing to spend wisely to promote Travel & Tourism in Graham County.

Chairman Wiggins then asked Robin Turner to talk to the board about a market study that his company had commissioned, William and Mary, to conduct. This study revealed that millennials now make up 25% of the total population and that they are by far the biggest spenders on travel & tourism. Mr. Turner thinks that Travel & Tourism should begin marketing to the millennials. He explained that millennials are very much into hiking and camping and they are buying the best of equipment. They need good WIFI. They like to share their stories and meet other families. They love selfies and there are many placed in Graham County for these selfies. He stressed that this needs to be promoted in Graham County.

Chairman Wiggins stated that we should do what we can to get the millennia's attention.

Mr. Turner said that we need better local ambassadors for Graham County.

Chairman Wiggins explained that there was a grant being applied for to do that.

The Board continued to brainstorm briefly about ways to attract millennials.

Beth Fields, Stecoah Valley Center, asked if there were any plans to resurrect the Ramp Festival. Chairman Wiggins stated that she would need to ask the Rescue Squad about that.

Chairman Wiggins asked Rick Davis, GREAT, to go ahead with any budget requests he may have.

Mr. Davis stated that there is a couple projects he wanted to discuss.

1. Training and creating advocates for Graham County. This would be an 8 month series of workshops. ARC grant would total \$22,990. The match amount would be 20%, \$4598. Chairman Wiggins stated that this was covered in the draft budget.
2. Kids and Parks Track Trails. This Proposal is for two additional track trails in Graham County. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation created this program to take existing trails and turn them into kids track trails.
 - The trails would include activity points where the activities would be completed and then information sent to a website where stickers and prizes would be awarded for each goal achieved.
 - One trail would be the fitness trail at the Robbinsville High School. The second trail would be the trail on Massey Branch and would be tied into the CC Camp trail.
 - Mr. Davis stated that Duke Power is interested in helping to fund this project.
 - GREAT has submitted a grant proposal thru ARC
 - The total cost would be \$20,000
 - Duke Power submitting \$7500
 - GREAT submitting \$5000
 - Travel & Tourism submitting \$7,500
 - They will know in June about the ARC grant. The earliest beginning would be after July. The trail could open within 6 months.
 - Chairman Wiggins suggested forgoing the ARC and going ahead with the project.
 - \$1,000 will be added to line item 20, to cover this.
 - The Board members all agreed to add this to that line item. It will be discussed when the Board comes back in June.

Chairman Wiggins asked Beth Fields to speak on her budget request.

Ms. Fields began by reviewing some of the projects Travel & Tourism had contributed to last year.

The Board discussed the music at Stecoah Valley Center. They discussed different types of bands and how much it costs to get a popular group.

Ms. Fields requested an additional \$5,000 for matching grant funds, to the \$10,000 already contained in the draft budget for Stecoah Valley Center.

The line item for Stecoah Valley Center line item was changed from \$10,000 to \$15,000, with \$5,000 earmarked for matching grant fund.

Board members all agree to this line item change.

Robin Turner stated that Fading Voices should be put into the next budget to be promoted.

The board discussed the importance of the Fading Voices Event.

Chairman Wiggins stated that we need to talk with Roger Smoker and find out what we can do to promote Fading Voices.

Chairman Wiggins stated that next year there would be a Graham County Marketing Plan which would include Stecoah Valley Center and other entities.

Chairman Wiggins stated that the changes have been noted by Ms. Garland.

Mary Griffin asked if Travel & Tourism could help the Historical Association with the next step on the museum project. Chairman Wiggins stated that this may be a possibility for next year.

Mary then requested \$1,500 for activities at the Graham County Library.

Chairman Wiggins asked Daniel to work with Mary to develop a tourism related activity like some of the rainy day library activities on Ocracoke Island that Ms. Garland had mentioned to the Board. Once developed, this activity could be proposed to the Board for funding.

Chairman Wiggins asked for a motion for approval of the budget with the changes.

Robin Turner made a motion to approve the budget with the changes made today. Billy Brown second the motion as stated. Vote Unanimous

The meeting was ADJOURNED

Next meeting June 13, 2019

Closed session if necessary- G.S.143-318.11 (a)(1)(3)(5)(6) For privileged or confidential and Attorney/client, contract, personnel privilege

