

Graham County Travel & Tourism Regular Board Meeting

November 7, 2019

5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

Attending: Dale Wiggins; chairman, Billy Brown, Jessica Wehr, Rick Davis, Mary Griffin

Absent: Robin Turner, Meredith Jenkins

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Chairman Wiggins asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the October 3, 2019 regular meeting. Billy Brown made a motion to approve the minutes, Mary Griffin second the motion.

VOTE UNANIMOUS

Becky Garland, finance officer, gave the financial and budget report. Currently, total cash available for expenditures has \$404,184.68, and there is 82% remaining in budget. After giving the report, Ms. Garland gave the Board a brief update regarding Air BnB and VRBO.

Chairman's Report: Chairman Wiggins said he had no comment.

Committee Report: Daniel Allison explained the interior additions have been ongoing and are now nearing completion. The Partners of Joyce Kilmer mini exhibit, a corner mural being done by Erin Emmons is almost finished. Only a few finishing touches still remain: a Lake Santeetlah picture, trail sign installation, open/closed sign, a few additional literature holders, and possibly a life size wood carving of Smoky the Bear.

Daniel also stated that the committee is working on the plan for exterior signage.

Director's Report: See attached sheet

Mary Griffin asked Chairman Wiggins several questions: 1) Status of the Recovery to Work Grant. Chairman Wiggins said that it is in the hands of ARC and the county is still waiting to hear. 2) Status of the "Kid's in Parks" Track Trail project. (Involving the Robbinsville Fitness Trail and the CCC Trail) Rick Davis explained that the project is progressing and the kid's passports are being developed. 3) If the Graham County Travel & Tourism could partner with the RTA and fix the fence on the Five Point intersection. Commissioner Wiggins commented that this is a project for the town and should be brought before the RTA. 4) Could Travel & Tourism give money to pay for prizes for the Christmas decoration contest that is being held by REVVEDUP. Michelle Shiplet, chairman of REVVEDUP, stated that the prize money is already covered. 5) Asked if the accommodations were being shown on Facebook as much as before. Daniel Allison, director, answered that there should be more soon; Chelsea is working on it now.

Ms. Griffin also suggested putting up billboards. Chairman Wiggins said that statistics show that money is better spent on internet marketing.

Public Comments: Jim (Jimbo) Kalamasz talked about how VRBO operates from an accommodation owner's perspective.

He then commented that he had been doing this for 22 years and he thinks we need to bring more families to Graham County to stay and shop. Families who stay at his farm, often rent guides for fishing and hiking, buy a fishing license and spend lots of money at Ingles. Mr. Kalamasz stated “We don’t need more places to rent, we need bodies.”

Bob Wehr spoke in reference to a recent Southwestern Commission email Newsletter that had a section listing the published plans for each of its counties. He explained that according to that newsletter Graham County had fewer published plans than most counties. Chairman Wiggins and Daniel asked Mr. Wehr to email this information to them so they could look at it.

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Commissioner Wiggins thanked everyone for coming and asked for a motion to Adjourn. Billy Brown made a motion to **ADJOURN**. Jessica Wehr second the motion. **Vote Unanimous**

Next meeting December 5, 2019

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