

## **GRAHAM COUNTY TRAVEL & TOURISM REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**March 4, 2021**

**3:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

The meeting was held in the Graham County Community Building, 196 Knight Street, Robbinsville, NC 28771

Present: Dale Wiggins: chairman, Robin Turner: vice-chairman, Billy Brown, Rick Davis, Meredith Jenkins, Valerie Frapp

Absent: Mary Griffin

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chairman Wiggins asked if there were any questions about the December 3, 2020 meeting minutes and asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Robin Turner made a motion to approve the December 3, 2020 minutes.

Billy Brown second the motion. Vote Unanimous

Chairman Wiggins asked Rick Davis to lead the Board in a review of the Graham County Strategic Tourism Plan Destination – 2025.

Mr. Davis began by explaining that the plan originated as a citizen based initiative led by GREAT and conducted by Magellan Strategy Group. He then went on to lead the Board through a detailed review of the plans goals and strategies. This process enabled the Board to understand what had been accomplished and what still needs to be worked on.

During this discussion Chairman Wiggins commented that thanks to Federal COVID Relief Allocations and actions by the State Legislature, Graham County is much closer to having high speed internet available in most parts of the county.

He also pointed out that Graham County needs to promote birding as a winter activity. There are many different species that can be seen around the county, especially from the Cherohala Skyway. Some of them can only be seen during the winter months.

Mr. Davis concluded by congratulating and thanking the Board for the progress already made and the items already implemented from the 10 year plan.

He then noted that there were some projects that could help further the progress, such as organizing a destination marketing council made up of representatives from all 4 of the TDAs in Graham County. This marketing councils' job would be to develop a county wide marketing plan. The development of this plan could be funded by left over grant money that GREAT can repurpose.

### **Financial Report:**

Becky Garland, financial officer, distributed and went over the Financial Statements Audit from June 30, 2020 from Turner & Company CPAs O.A. It was a clean audit and there were no violations and everything was in order. The Board thanked Ms. Garland for her hard work and for keeping everything in order.

Ms. Garland then presented the Board with the financial report ending 2/28/2021. She pointed out that there is \$503,832.99 total cash available for expenditures. There is \$87,974.65 in Capital Reserve and 59.90% of the budget has been expended. Ms. Garland commented that she is very pleased with the budget and that there is room for some projects.

**Chairman's Remarks:**

Chairman Wiggins said that he had no remarks except that it is good news that Fontana Village is back up and running again.

Chairman Wiggins was excited to tell the Board that the Santeetlah Lake Trail project will be started soon. The trail will be open for horseback riding, hiking and bicycle riding. He has met with Dalton Adams who has agreed to perform the work on the project.

Chairman Wiggins explained our difficulty in getting the project started. The initial bids came in much higher than we and the USFS had anticipated. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach an acceptable agreement with the low- bidder, a USFS - approved local contractor, Chairman Wiggins and Director Allison met with the USFS and they agreed to allow Travel and Tourism to do the work in phases. Dalton Adams' crew will do the work with Chairman Wiggins overseeing their work.

Billy Brown made a motion to go ahead with the project. Robin Turner second the motion. Vote Unanimous

**Committee Report: Welcome Center/Office:**

Robin Turner told the Board that he had two items to report to them. The first item was that had met with the land owners and they have agreed on the exact location for the Travel and Tourism outside sign to be placed.

The second item was the need for more storage space in the Visitor's Center. He explained that the original remodeling plan had included storage cabinets under the counters, but they had not been built. He then said that he had met with Mitch Crowe about building the cabinets and had gotten an estimate for \$2400 plus materials to build them.

Billy Brown made a motion to approve spending up to \$3000 for this project. Rick Davis second the motion. Vote Unanimous

**Director's Report:**

Daniel Allison, director, gave the director's report. Included in his report were four action items for the Board to consider:

- 1) Spending up to \$11,750 for the firework display for July. Robin Turner made a motion to approve the project. Billy Brown second the motion. Vote Unanimous
- 2) Spending \$1,000 for the Boy Scout's Fishing Tournament. Robin Turner made a motion to approve the project. Billy Brown second the motion. Vote Unanimous
- 3) Spending \$12,000 for the Native Azalea Festival social media promotions, virtual events and COVID safe activities. Billy Brown made a motion to approve the project. Valerie Frapp second. Vote Unanimous
- 4) Spending \$10,000 for a two page ad in a special "Our State" magazine publication. Billy Brown made a motion to approve the project. Robin Turner second. Vote Unanimous

**Public Comments:**

Bob Wehr showed the Board a stuffed Otter and suggested using it for the Graham County mascot/brand.

Mr. Wehr also suggested turning Elk out on Hooper Bald, or somewhere in the county to bring in more visitor.

Chairman Wiggins asked if there were any old business or new business.

Rick Davis offered to help work with GREAT and the TDAs to begin producing a County Wide Tourism Marketing Plan.

Chairman Wiggins asked if there was anything else and for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Robin Turner made a motion to adjourn. Billy Brown second the motion. Vote Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

**Next meeting April 1, 2021**

**4:00 P.M.**