

HCTDA Product Development Committee

September 4, 2025 | 1:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Members Present: Jeremy Boone, Jane Mauer, Dr. Shelley White, Ken Howle, Jerry Jackson, Bridget Shaughnessy, Angie Frisbee, Kevin Fitzgerald, Corrina Ruffieux, Hayley Printz

Members Absent: Terry Spalding, Becca McMahon, Gail Mull, Alycin Ray, Amie Newsome, Ashley Rock

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Call to Order – Jeremy Boone called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM
3. Conflict of Interest Policy
 - a. Jeremy Boone reviewed the Conflict of Interest Policy, noting that any Committee member who has a conflict of interest shall disclose their conflict.
 - b. Dr. Shelley White made a motion to acknowledge Ken Howle's conflict of interest for the Lake Junaluska Stuart Auditorium and Mini Golf grant applications. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion.
 - c. Dr. Shelley White made a motion to acknowledge that Kevin Fitzgerald does not have a conflict of interest with the Raccoon Creek Bike Park grant application. Jerry Jackson seconded the motion.
4. Occupancy Tax Review

Reviewed 4% occupancy tax distribution requirements and restrictions.
5. Capital Grant Guidelines
 - Reviewed eligibility/ineligibility criteria.
 - Clarified that HVAC replacement is ineligible per HCTDA guidelines (though not state law).
 - Discussion emphasized measurable tourism impact as the standard for funding.

6. Waynesville Capital Grant Applications

Raccoon Creek Bike Park

Discussion Highlights: Delayed by Helene; significant prior investment; adds diversity to biking assets; potential to attract overnight visitors. Some uncertainty about Red Bull certification.

Recommendation: Full funding recommended.

Waynesville Dog Park

Discussion Highlights: Viewed as community-focused but could appeal to traveling pet owners; dog-friendly amenities align with visitor demand. Noted high search ranking on Visit Haywood Wander Map.

Recommendation: Full funding recommended.

Waynesville Arch Mural

Discussion Highlights: Concerns about lack of community involvement and whether mural qualifies as capital project; difficulty linking art directly to overnight visitation.

Recommendation: Not recommended for funding.

Roots to Sky Sculpture

Discussion Highlights: Concerns about placement in roundabout related both to safety and lack of ability for visitors to engage with the art; limited tourism value identified.

Recommendation: Not recommended for funding.

Additional Recommendations: The Committee suggested that the Town consider developing an art-focused master plan. Such a plan could help identify larger, more impactful projects that align with long-term goals, rather than funding smaller, one-off initiatives.

7. Lake Junaluska Capital Grant Applications

Stuart Auditorium Infrastructure Enhancement

Discussion Highlights: HVAC replacement ineligible; lighting component unclear due to incomplete budget. Debate over whether upgrades to existing facilities should be allowed.

Recommendation: Not recommended under current guidelines; refer to Executive Committee for possible review of guidelines (esp. regarding upgrades to existing facilities).

Mini-Golf Experience

Discussion Highlights: Support for additional activities, but concerns about religious elements, large funding level requested, and existing mini-golf supply. Religious symbols disqualify under TDA guidelines.

Recommendation: Not recommended for funding. Applicant may withdraw if desired.

Canopy Zip Line Tour

Discussion Highlights: Overall, strong interest from the committee in large-scale, new projects such as this. Per a recent conversation with one expert based in Asheville, it's possible zip line tours seen as outdated; suggestion to consider hybrid models.

Recommendation: No funding recommendation at this stage; suggest further exploration.

Christmas Voyage Concept

Discussion Highlights: Potential for large-scale event tied to Elf on the Shelf; concerns about cost and early planning stage. Idea raised to consider using fund balance for transformational projects.

Recommendation: No funding recommendation at this stage; suggest further exploration.

Future Exploration: The Committee discussed the value of possibly establishing a dedicated fund to support feasibility studies, planning efforts, and tourism-related economic development initiatives. This could provide resources to evaluate transformational projects before committing significant investment. It would be helpful to research how other TDAs approach this type of funding.

Meeting adjourned at 3:13 PM