

**HCTDA Board Meeting Minutes**  
**December 3, 2025**  
**Springdale Resort**

**Members Present:** Jim Owens, Mike Huber, Dr. Shelley White, Gail Mull, Bridget Shaughnessy, Kristian Owen, Chuck Dickson, Angie Frisbee, Jeremy Boone, Scot Blair, Hannah White, Jeff Hillis, Jennifer Best, Corrina Ruffieux, Alycin Ray, Ashley Rice, Amie Diehl, Hayley Printz, Joya Darville

**Members Absent:** Chad King

**Guests Present:** Jane Mauer, Andrew Marshall

1. **Call to Order** – Chair Jim Owens called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM
2. **Introductions**
3. **Adjustment of Agenda**
4. **Public Comment Session (12 minutes total, limit 3 minutes per person)**
  - Jane announced that the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is open, but they don't have any recent attendance data.
5. **Board Comments** – Jim Owens wished everyone a great holiday and happy Christmas. He said it's been a challenging year for everyone, and he and the HCTDA appreciate everyone's ongoing commitment to the Board.
6. **Consent Agenda | VOTE**
  - Request approval of minutes – [November 5, 2025](#)

Jeff Hillis made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Chuck Dickson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

7. **Finance Reports**
  - [October Financial Report](#) – *Kristian Owen*

Kristian Owen reminded the Board that we are still catching up from the 3-month accruals, and presented the October financials as follows:

- Total Checking/Savings: \$4,836,322.30
- Total Assets: \$4,885,672.54
- Total Liabilities: \$304,759.49
- Total Occupancy Tax Revenue, October: \$297,764.02
- Total Occupancy Tax Revenue, YTD: \$642,890.00
- Total Income, October: \$327,553.76
- Total Income, YTD: \$738,412.52
- Total Expenses, October: \$211,250.43
- Total Expenses, YTD: \$891,877.00
- Change in Net Position, October: \$116,303.33
- Change in Net Position, YTD: (\$153,464.48)

- [Occupancy Tax & Lodging Data](#) – Corrina Ruffieux

Corrina Ruffieux presented that the September occupancy tax data shows a 30% increase from last year, but to take it with a grain of salt because last September was affected by Helene. Overall, we are still slightly below 2023 data, which is our baseline year. She also pointed out that hotel occupancy rates on a national level for October 2025 were 2.4% lower than October 2024, indicating the continuing softening of the travel economy.

## **8. Old Business**

- [Round Two FY 25-26 Promotion Grant Application](#) | **VOTE**

Corrina Ruffieux explained to the board that for the second round of grants, we received one application. The Pioneer Heritage Festival will also be an America 250 event. The Product Development Committee and Executive Committee recommended to approve funding in the amount of \$2,000, with the caveat that the applicant must meet the 75/25 advertising requirement per the grant guidelines.

Angie Frisbee made a motion to approve grant funding in the amount of \$2,000 with the advertising spend caveat. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

## **9. New Business**

- [Calendar Year 2026 Meeting Dates](#) | **VOTE**

Corrina Ruffieux presented the proposed 2026 meeting dates and said that all committees have had input into the dates.

Chuck Dickson made a motion to approve the dates, as presented. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- Improvements to [Promotion](#) and [Capital](#) Guidelines for FY 26-27 | **VOTE**

Corrina Ruffieux presented the proposed improvements to the grant guidelines which have come from learnings over the most recent grant cycle and applications. Changes were noted in red, reviewed and discussed by both the Product Development Committee and the Executive Committee.

Dr. Shelley White made a motion to approve the grant guidelines, as presented. Bridget Shaughnessy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [Proposed FY 26/27 Grant Timeline](#) | **VOTE**

Corrina Ruffieux presented the grant timeline, noting that instead of offering grant workshops, we have blocked 3 full days to offer individualized grant coaching sessions. Chuck Dickson asked if this timeline is for both capital and promotion, and Corrina confirmed that the timeline is for all grant programs.

Chuck Dickson made a motion to approve the FY 26/27 grant timeline, as presented. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [Proposed Officers](#) | **VOTE**

Corrina Ruffieux reminded the board that the officers are elected for a 2-year cycle and the last time we voted was in June 2024. The Executive Committee recommended electing Jeff Hillis to the Vice Chair position and Chad King to the Member at Large position. Corrina stated that these officer positions would be for the balance of the July 2024-June 2026 term and then we would vote again at that time.

Chuck Dickson made a motion to elect Jeff Hillis as Vice Chair and Chad King as Member at Large for the remainder of the term. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

## 10. Staff Reports/Announcements

- Public Relations Coverage – Amie Diehl
  - Amie Diehl announced that we had several press mentions because of hosting journalists in-destination.
- EA Ignite Conference – Hayley Printz
  - Hayley Printz announced that she attended EA Ignite, a conference for administrative professionals.
- NCTIA Tourism Leadership Conference
  - Corrina Ruffieux explained that she was a panelist about grants at the NCTIA conference. She also announced that we had submitted the Ice Festival for an award, and were presented with the Gold award.
- Ice Fest Update
  - Corrina Ruffieux stated that the ticket website is live and we have sold 63 tickets so far, noting that we have already sold some in Florida. She also announced that we have new merch this year and merch is discounted on the ticket site when people buy in advance. The custom sculpture sales for Waynesville are doing well, but we need more sculptures for Maggie Valley. Mike Huber added that Board members should put on their calendar to volunteer during the Ice Extravaganza.
- Open Haywood Results
  - Corrina Ruffieux reminded the Board that we did a special summer campaign for Haywood County to rebuild traveler confidence. The data initially showed that we were pacing 20% down, and behind our neighboring counties. We created the Open Haywood & Elk Bucks campaign in less than a month. The total investment for this campaign was \$70,000 and the reach was over 4.2 million people. Over 155,203 unique views on OpenHaywood.com and it became the #2 visited page.
- Holiday Office Closures
  - Corrina Ruffieux stated that the Welcome Center will be closed for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years Day, and that the office will be closed from Christmas Eve through January 4, 2026.
- Next Mountain Mornings is February 12<sup>th</sup> at The Scotsman Public House.
- Dr Shelley White was thanked for her dedication to the HCTDA Board over the years.
- Corrina Ruffieux announced that Visit Haywood, DCI & MMGY have been honored with an HSMAI Adrian Award for the multi-channel Integrated Marketing award for our joint work following Hurricane Helene. We won the Silver award against all applicants and Best of Category award in the small budget range.
- Next TDA Board meeting is January 28, 2026 at 9 AM – Gaines Auditorium

Chuck Dickson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Scot Blair seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 10:49 AM.