



**Haywood County Tourism Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting**

HCC Hemlock Board Room | Wednesday, May 27, 2026 | 9 AM

**AGENDA**

**Members Present:** Jim Owens, Mike Huber, Angie Frisbee, Gail Mull, Hannah White, Case Brown, Jeremy Boone, Scot Blair, Bridget Shaughnessy, Chad King, Terry Spalding, Kristian Owen, Jeff Hillis, Corrina Ruffieux, Ashley Rice, Amie Diehl, Hayley Printz, Aycin Ray

**Members Absent:** Chuck Dickson, Tommy Long

**Guests Present:** Jane Mauer, Sam Cullen, Sam Dunbar, Jeanne Forrest, Gregory Forrest

1. **Call to Order** – Chair Jim Owens called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.
2. **Introductions**
3. **Adjustment of Agenda-** Add Our State contract under New Business
4. **Public Comment Session (12 minutes total, limit 3 minutes per person)**
  - Jane Mauer announced that year to date visits to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park are slightly up from pre-Helene numbers. April 2026 was the fifth highest April on record, with over 12,700 visitors to Cataloochee Valley.
  - Sam Cullen announced that several organizations will be hosting a Small Business Resource Day in Maggie Valley on June 10<sup>th</sup> 10AM-2PM at the Maggie Valley Pavilion.
5. **Board Comments** – Mike Huber stated that he watched the Papertown Documentary and it was well done.
6. **Consent Agenda | VOTE**
  - Request approval of minutes – April 22, 2026. Chad King made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Jeremy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
7. **Finance Reports**
  - [April Finance Report](#) – *Kristian Owen presented April financials as follows:*
    - Total Checking/Savings: \$5,238,794.94
    - Total Assets: \$5,251,322.21
    - Total Liabilities: \$271,731.38
    - Net Position: \$5,110,101.64
    - Occupancy Tax April: \$165,404.04
    - Occupancy Tax YTD: \$2,141,634.44
    - Total Income April: \$188,741.13
    - Total Income YTD: \$2,361,888.30
    - Total Expenses April: \$236,038.82
    - Total Expenses YTD: \$2,131,681.72

- Occupancy Tax & Lodging Data – *Corrina Ruffieux*
  - Corrina Ruffieux presented Occupancy Tax & Lodging Data, noting that from July to March, numbers are tracking up. January is down due to losing two weekends from winter weather. April, May, and June are pacing ahead of last year.

## 8. Old Business

- [Grant Extension Request – Raccoon Creek Bike Park](#) | **VOTE**

Haywood County Government has had some construction delays on the Raccoon Creek Bike Park. The new completion date is only one month later than originally planned but moves into the new FY, so the funds will be rolled over into FY 26-27. Jeff Hillis made a motion to approve the grant extension request. Bridget Shaughnessy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

## 9. New Business

- [Marketing and Communications Plan](#) | **VOTE**

A Marketing & Communications plan for FY 26-27 was developed, in collaboration with the HCTDA Marketing Committee and our Advertising and PR agencies. The plan focuses on strategic initiatives and supports the recommended \$2,663,500 Marketing & Sales component of the proposed 26-27 budget. Jeff Hillis made a motion to approve the Marketing and Communications plan, as presented. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- Budget Forum
  - [Budget Narrative](#)

The budget narrative was presented, and proposed revenues and expenses explained. There will be a significant fund balance rollover from FY 25-26 to account for unfinished projects and other fund balance revenues for grants that will be awarded this year.

- [Proposed FY 26-27 Budget](#) | **VOTE**

The detailed budget was reviewed, highlighting amounts recommended for upcoming strategic priorities, alignment with the Destination Master Plan and noting the budget is full balanced, as required. Scot Blair made a motion to move the budget forward and call for a public hearing on June 24, 2026. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [FY 2026-2027 Grant applications plus recommendations from PDC and EC](#) | **VOTE**

A summary of the FY 26-27 was presented, noting that guidelines were updated in December 2025, one-on-one grant coaching sessions, as well as ongoing applicant support and suggested revisions to applications, were provided to applicants. The Product Development Committee reviewed and scored all applications and were discussed at a full-day committee meeting. The Executive Committee reviewed and discussed all applications and PDC recommendations.

There was a reminder that the HCTDA is funded by occupancy tax, collected by lodging properties, and legislation states that funds must be used for at least two-thirds to promote travel and tourism and the remainder for tourism-related expenditures. The scoring rubric was presented.

A summary of the 5 capital applications, their project details, average score, and PDC and EC recommendations were presented.

**Capital Grants:**

*Clyde Riverfront Park* – Case Brown made a motion to fully fund this project, with \$54,710 coming from Clyde 1% and \$18,010 coming from 3%. Bridget Shaughnessy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Stuart Auditorium Modernization* – Mike Huber recused himself. Jeff Hillis made a motion to fully fund this project, with \$126,730 coming from Lake Junaluska 1% Capital Funds and \$48,270 coming from 3% Capital Funds. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Boyd Ave Greenway Connector* – Scot Blair made a motion to fully fund this project, with \$127,500 coming from Waynesville 1% Capital Funds. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Angie Frisbee opposed. Motion passed.

*Kiwanis Playground 2.0 Enhancement* - Bridget Shaughnessy made a motion to approve funding this project up to \$90,000 from the Waynesville 1% Capital Funds, contingent upon Kiwanis receiving the PARTF grant and submitting a revised plan for the park to HCTDA incorporating artistic and ecological elements to make the park a more unique Haywood-focused asset. Case Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Upper Falls Connector Trail* – Case Brown made a motion to fully fund this project at \$66,808.17 from 3% Capital Funds. Bridget Shaughnessy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Canton Grants:**

*118<sup>th</sup> Labor Day Festival* – Gail Mull recused herself. Angie Frisbee made a motion to fully fund this event at \$15,000 from Canton 1% Promotion Funds. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Cold Mountain Music Festival* – Gail Mull recused herself. Jeff Hillis made a motion to partially fund this event at \$10,000 from Canton 1% Promotion Funds. Case Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Haywood Grows Farm Fest* – This grant was discussed in further detail because the average score fell below the threshold of 12 points listed in the guidelines, partially due to the timing of it being a one-day event in August. A board member noted that the guidelines are in place for a reason and it could set a bad precedent to allocate funding to a project that falls beneath the required score. However, there was further discussion that due to the current economic and storm-related challenges in Canton, a new event could be important for the town. Gail recused herself. Chad King made a motion to partially fund the event at \$7,000 from Canton 1% Promotion Funds, considering all that Canton has been through, with the contingency that the marketing plan be revised to increase marketing outside a 50-mile radius. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Angie Frisbee and Jeff Hillis opposed. Motion passed.

*Mill Around Town* – Gail Mull recused herself. Chad King made a motion to fully fund the event at \$3,000 from Canton 1% Promotion Funds, with the contingency that the marketing plan be revised to increase marketing outside a 50-mile radius. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Lake Junaluska Grants:**

*Independence Day Celebration* – Mike Huber recused himself. Angie Frisbee made a motion to fully fund this event at \$9,150 from Lake Junaluska 1% Promotion Funds. Bridget Shaughnessy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Lake Junaluska Promotions* – Mike Huber recused himself. Jeff Hillis made a motion to partially fund this project at \$16,286 from Lake Junaluska 1% Promotion Funds, with the contingency that the funds must be specifically used to promote the following items: Friends of the Lake 5K, US Army Chorus 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert, Smoky Mountain Ukulele Zen Retreat, Historical Audio Walking Tour of Lake Junaluska, Cherokee Lake Cruise, and Wildflower Walks. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Steve Sutton Festival* – Mike Huber recused himself. Bridget Shaughnessy made a motion to partially fund this event at \$5,722 from Lake Junaluska 1% Promotion Funds. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Maggie Valley Grants:**

*Backyard 4<sup>th</sup>* – Chad King made a motion to fully fund this event at \$6,570 from Maggie Valley 1% Promotion Funds. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Fall Days* – Jeff Hillis made a motion to fully fund this project at \$7,775 from Maggie Valley 1% Promotion Funds. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Smoky Mountains Bluegrass Festival* – Bridget Shaughnessy made a motion to fully fund this event at \$10,000 from Maggie Valley 1% Promotion Funds. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Barbecue Festival* – Chad King made a motion to fully fund this event at \$12,500 from Maggie Valley 1% Promotion Funds, contingent upon the applicant working with the HCTDA to revise the marketing plan. Case Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Waynesville Grants:**

*Independence Day Celebration* – Chad King made a motion to fully fund this event at \$3,750 from Waynesville 1% Promotion Funds. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Pride on Main* – Bridget Shaughnessy made a motion to partially fund this event at \$4,700 from Waynesville 1% Promotion Funds, contingent upon receiving a revised marketing plan with all forms of marketing, including free, listed. Chad King seconded the motion. Angie Frisbee opposed. Motion passed.

*Appalachian Heritage Weekend* – Bridget Shaughnessy and Scot Blair recused themselves. Case Brown made a motion to partially fund this event at \$30,000 from Waynesville 1% Promotion Funds. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Shelton House / Haywood Co Arts Trail* – Chad King made a motion to fully fund this project at \$2,000 from Waynesville 1% Promotion Funds. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Haywood County Grants:**

*Haywood County Fair* – Case Brown made a motion to partially fund this event at \$12,000 from 3% Promotion Funds, contingent upon the applicant collecting zip code data with their ticket sales so HCTDA can run the Economic Impact Calculator. Jeremy Boone seconded the motion. Angie Frisbee opposed. Motion passed.

*Studio Tour* – Jeff Hillis made a motion to fully fund this event at \$6,000 from 3% Promotion Funds. Angie Frisbee seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Proposed 2026-2027 Agency Contracts**
  - [DCI FY 26-27 Scope of Work](#) | **VOTE**

The Scope of Work for DCI was discussed. There was some discussion regarding agency fees accompanying the proposed media buys. Further conversation explained that the HCTDA staff is happy with the agency, we are producing award-winning work, and much of the creative also supports additional advertising not included in the DCI contract. Jeff Hillis made a motion to approve the scope of work, extending the Advertising Agency Contract through the end of June 2027, noting the funding is included in the budget, and authorizing the Executive Director to sign the contract. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [DCI Research Proposal FY 26-27](#) | **VOTE**

Mike Huber made a motion to approve the scope of work, noting the funding is included in the budget, and authorizing the Executive Director to sign the contract. Case Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- [MMGY PR Scope of Work](#) | **VOTE**

Angie Frisbee made a motion to approve the scope of work, extending our Public Relations Agency contract through the end of June 2027, noting the funding is included in the budget, and authorizing the Executive Director to sign the contract. Jeff Hillis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- Our State Magazine Contract | **VOTE**

Mike Huber made a motion to approve the Advertising Agreement with Our State Magazine, noting that the funding is included in the budget, and authorizing the Executive Director to sign the contract. Chad King seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **10. Staff Reports/Announcements**

- Product Development Committee – There is a Canton vacancy for someone who represents the Town of Canton and is in Outdoor Recreation, Arts & Culture, Retail, Dining, or Attractions. Deadline to submit an application is June 16.
- National Travel and Tourism Week Recap – Scott Peacock from Visit NC was a guest speaker, Fat Burger Month awards were announced.
- [Partner Marketing & Collaborations Guide](#) – A new, year-round guide has been developed for Haywood County businesses and organizations to plan how they would like to align with Visit Haywood, including new co-op marketing opportunities available.
- Annual T Shirt Contest Update – Sabine Allen’s “Mountain Serenity” was the winning design. T-Shirts will be available for sale at Welcome Center, online, and Mast General beginning in July.
- Maggie Valley Small Business Resource Day – Visit Haywood is collaborating with the Town of Maggie Valley and other local business-resource groups to host this event to provide resources to small business owners in Maggie Valley on June 10.
- Next Mountain Mornings – July 30<sup>th</sup> at Springdale Resort
- Next Meeting – June 24, 2026 at 9 AM – Gaines Auditorium

**11. Adjournment** – Jeff Hillis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike Huber seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:28 AM.

#### **12. Ten Minute Media Communication Session**