



**Ocoee River Recreation and Economic Development Fund Board  
Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes  
September 30, 2024  
2:00 pm Eastern Time  
Hiwassee/Ocoee Scenic River State Park  
404 Spring Creek Road  
Delano, TN 37325**

**Voting Committee Members Present:** Angelo Giansante, Macy Brower, Drew Freeman, Lynne McClary, Tim Henderson, Keith Jenkins, Lamar Davis, Ryan Cooke

**Nonvoting Committee Members:** Deputy Comm Carlton, Rep Dan Howell, Rob Sherrill

**Voting Board Members not present:** Mayor Robbie Hatcher

**Meeting called to order by:** Rep Dan Howell at 2:00pm

**Roll Call:** Kari Moates

**Approval of Minutes:**

March 21, 2024 Board Minutes passed with comment that the OORED Finance Report was not available ahead of time as agreed upon. Motion made by Ryan Cooke, seconded by Keith Jenkins.

August 20, 2024 Subcommittee Minutes passed Motion by Keith Jenkins, seconded by Ryan Cooke.

**Public Comment:** No official public comment was made after it was solicited.

**Fund Balance Presentation:** 2024-2028 financial report shared via Teams screen presentation. F & A shares the financial report Scott Grammar attended to present, and shared that the financial report is produced by F&A, so there may be delays in obtaining the information at least two weeks ahead of meetings as the Board requested, but the team would strive to get it as soon as possible.

**Marketing Reimbursement Discussion:**

- Ryan Cooke shared that he had called around and talked to a few outfitters in the Ocoee River Outfitters Association on this topic and the people are not necessarily interested in in doing a combined marketing with a grant or money back. He stated that in order to make informed decisions and allow the river to prosper for the next 10 years, they must see the financial reports prior to meetings.
- Lamar Davis stated the group of co-op outfitters feel the same.

- Chairman Howell stated the board must get serious about conserving these funds to pay for the water if we cannot convince TVA to eliminate the water fees.
- Sara Page brought up two points:
  1. Legally yes, no concern for reimbursements. It can be structure it similarly to the board's previous attempts to do bus driver reimbursement. However, the board needs to keep in mind the overall purpose of the fund.
  2. Legal costs have not been accounted for in the current administrative costs for the department. It was uncovered recently that legal fees need to be added back into tracked fees. OGC is making a strong effort to reduce any administrative work done for the board.

Lamar Davis asked if there was any way that the board could get out of the Liquid Spark contract because it's underperforming without waiting for the third full three years

Sara Page: Yes, but not without legal risks and cost. Two more years--April 13, 2026, end date of contract.

- Lynne McClary stated that grants would be an option for funding. That the board is authorized to apply for grants but has not yet. Potentially, park staff would be able to assist the board with applying for grants, but the board would incur the cost of that staff member's time.
- Sara Page suggested if the board finds a grant, look at the amount of time/work needed to apply then she can look at that and see how park staff could assist.
- Angelo Giansante suggested forming a sup-committee focused on grants. Chairman Howell suggested appointing Lynne as chairperson with Angelo and Ryan.

#### **ORRED Board Manual Review: Sara Page**

Board was supplied with a new copy in their packets. Manual has been recently updated with no large changes. Any additions or changes will be shared with the board via email.

#### **Liquid Spark Marketing Review: Keith Jenkins**

- Keith has had a few Outfitters contact him with their concerns that the website competes with their website on Google. Other concerns brought up regarding descriptions of the management fees and the referral rate from the marketing site.
- Ryan Cooke stated what is being reported to him is outfitters are very upset on the amount of money that we're spending and based on reports.
- Keith agreed he was hearing the same-that the campaign doesn't seem to be as effective as they had hoped.
- Ryan Cooke requested a quote on how much keeping the contract would cost versus ending the contract.
- Julie Thorner stated year one of the contract will use more of the allotted time and funds due to building and creating a brand. Also, that her reporting to the subcommittee must be categorized as stated in the contract which may not be as distinguished or clear as the board may like. Regarding number of clicks, "destination marketing" may not cause the audience to click on a site, but it's building brand awareness.
- Keith reflects on the original goal of the marketing efforts, which was to spend money on something unique that the Outfitters weren't already doing. Additionally, they note that when Outfitters see their website being overshadowed by competing state funds, it raises further

concerns. The outfitters would like to understand how many hours were spent on something so they can evaluate that themselves.

- Ryan Cooke proposed a motion to ask Sara to look into avenues of canceling the advertising contract if that would conclude costs on both sides involved.

Lamar Davis second

All Approve

#### **Tennessee Vacation Guide Ad Discussion: Ryan Cooke**

Ryan Cooke proposed a motion to approve the funds for 2025 and 2026 Tennessee Vacation Guide ad.

Lamar Davis seconded.

All approved

#### **Park and Infrastructure Update: Angelo Giansante**

- **Ramp Issues:** The boat ramp was experiencing significant issues, including washouts and water-related problems. After discussions, it was confirmed that the ramp belongs to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), not TVA or Tennessee State Parks. Recent work was done to improve the ramp, which involved moving rocks and stabilizing it. Further repairs are planned, including the potential hiring of engineers. Funding for this work is available in a dedicated fund (not affecting the general budget), and the goal is to stabilize the ramp long-term.
- **Private Boat Owner Concerns:** A suggestion was made to create designated lanes for private boaters to avoid conflicts with commercial outfitters, especially during busy times. The team is considering adding a separate path to improve safety and efficiency.
- **Ocoee River State Park Developments:** The development of Ocoee State Park is progressing, with funding for new positions, equipment, and infrastructure. A vacant ranger residence may serve as temporary office space for new staff.
- **Recreational Release Schedule:** Changes to the release schedule were discussed. A proposal to switch a May release to June 1st was mentioned to help align with Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends. There were no major scheduling conflicts identified.
- **Rule Updates:** A new set of rules is being drafted and has passed through the Commissioner and Governor's office. It will be reviewed by the Forest Service, and public meetings will be scheduled for feedback. The draft is similar to previous rules, with some clarifications and changes.
- **Miscellaneous:** Discussions included branding ideas for the Ocoee and Hiwassee rivers, including possible recognition as a state scenic river to improve visibility and tourism.

**Other Business:** None.

**Schedule Spring Meeting:** The Spring meeting was scheduled for March 20, 2025, 1:00pm pending final calendar checks from staff.

**Adjournment at 3:25pm**