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**Keep Carter County Beautiful (KCCB) Board Meeting Minutes**

Chamber Conference Room, 615 W. Elk Avenue, Elizabethton & Zoom

February 26, 2025, at noon

***Board Members Present:*** Don Hlavaty, Ed Basconi, Ed Jordan, Caleb Krebs, Seth Hice, Mike Simerly and Melinda Maddock

***Board Members Absent:*** Ross Garland, Simon Maddock, Lisa Vezzosi, Dave Nanney

***Guests Present:*** Mary Ellen Hlavaty

***Call to Order:*** Don Hlavaty opened the meeting at 12:01 pm. A quorum was present.

An opening prayer was given by Ed Jordan and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mike Simerly.

***Approval of today’s agenda:*** A **motion to approve today’s meeting agenda** was made by Ed Jordan, seconded by Caleb Krebs and **unanimously approved.**

***Approval of last month’s meeting minutes*:** A **motion to approve the January 22, 2025, meeting minutes** was made by Mike Simerly, seconded by Ed Jordan and **unanimously approved.**

***Public Comments:*** None.

***Next Board Meeting:***The next KCCB board meeting will be Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at noon in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room, 615 West Elk Avenue, Elizabethton, and available by Zoom.

***KCCB Treasurer Report – Don Hlavaty:***

* The January 2025 month-end balance was $26,412.08 with revenues of $800.00 in Microsoft Benevity donations for disaster relief bringing the total to $4,400.00 and there were no January 2025 expenditures.
* The 3rd quarter funding of $1,875.00 from the City of Elizabethton was received in February and the last quarter funding check is expected in May 2025. There were two expenditures of $71.32 for website maintenance and $16.00 for the Elizabethton High School Art Class project (painting pavers), totaling $87.32 in February.
* Paperwork for funding requests were submitted to both Carter County and the City of Elizabethton for 2025-2026 fiscal year and shared with the board. KCCB finance reports were edited by Don Hlavaty to match headings on required forms for the city/county funding requests. The current account balance is $28,999.76 which is nearly the amount of our budgeted expenditure for the fiscal year with four more months to accrue revenue including the final quarter funding of $1,875.00 from the City of Elizabethton. Budgeted expenditures were reviewed and although we have many projects planned, we currently have $30,010.00 budgeted for 2024-2025. We have Keep America Beautiful 2024-2025 available funding for reimbursement until June 30th of this year. Don Hlavaty suggested changing the budgeted amount for Beautification Supplies from $6500.00 to $2,000.00 since we will not be purchasing trees until Fall and Keep America Beautiful 2025-2026 matching funding would be available for the project. He further suggested moving $4500.00 to the City & County Beautification budget line bringing the total from $6,000.00 to $10,000.00 and adding $500.00 to the Disaster Relief fund bringing the total to $6,500.00 ($4,400.00 donated from Microsoft Benevity and $2,100.00 from KCCB reserve funds - $444.83 of which we have already spent).
* Mike Simerly again discussed the Hurricane Relief project at the Compassion Center in Elizabethton. They received some funding from a Lutheran Church in North Carolina to provide a full-time field social worker and part-time, on-site social worker to help Carter County citizens access available hurricane relief funds and assistance in recovery. Mike Simerly requested donating the KCCB $6500.00 disaster relief funds to the Elizabethton Compassion Center would be greatly appreciated. All distributed funds would be approved by the Compassion Center Board. Melinda Maddock agreed that Microsoft Benevity donations from Microsoft employees would be appropriately donated to the Compassion Center, and she would then communicate to the donors how the donations were given to the Compassion Center in KCCB’s name. Mike Simerly also reported that the Elizabethton Compassion Center is having a fundraiser for Disaster Relief at the Valley Forge Freewill Baptist Church March 9th. A **motion to approve the increase of the Disaster Relief Funds to $6,500.00 in the budget and donate $6,000.00 to the Elizabethton Compassion Center** was made by Ed Jordan, seconded by Melinda Maddock and approved by all (7) members present and Mike Simerly abstained.
* Don Hlavaty confirmed consent to reallocate the $4,000.00 budgeted amount for Beautification Supplies from $6500.00 to $2,000.00 and adding $4,000.00 to the City & County Beautification budget line bringing the total from $6,000.00 to $10,000.00 and the added $500.00 to the Disaster Relief fund. Don Hlavaty also told the board about a new program operated by Keep America Beautiful partnering with Retreet, an organization dedicated to replanting trees in communities impacted by natural disasters. The Keep America Beautiful RETREET program will provide grants and tools for communities to plant trees in post-disaster communities and plant trees, flowers, shrubs and more in public spaces to mitigate future damage from disasters. KCCB can utilize this program to supplement tree planting in disaster areas not covered by the Carter County or City of Elizabethton TDEC recovery projects. A **motion was made to reallocate the budgeted funds** by Ed Jordan, seconded by Seth Hice and unanimously approved. It was decided that we would create a plan to submit for planting including description, scope, quote for expenses including both supplies and contract work. KCCB volunteers would be able to participate if interested.
* Ed Basconi suggested additional signage for littering fines and using KCCB funds to purchase/install, however, permission from TDOT and/or Carter County is required to post signage on public roads, and we have received no cooperation from the County Commissioners or Department Heads to install the remaining signage from 2023. We can again contact the appropriate authorities for permission and assistance in getting signs installed by KCCB volunteers. Caleb Krebs suggested asking local groups to join as many are required to participate in community service (Carter County Drug Prevention Coalition, local sports teams, high school/college students) and may be willing to participate in the projects.
* KCCB has again attained KAB President’s Circle status which entitles KCCB to participate in additional programs and funding opportunities. This requires annual training, conferences, annual street indexing and participation in specific programs.
* The KCCB website(s) maintenance and dues were renewed as approved in last month’s meeting.
* Funding requests for the 2025-2026 fiscal year were submitted to both Carter County and the City of Elizabethton. An opportunity for public comments to the County Commissioner’s Board will be March 10, 2025, at 6:00pm, and to the City of Elizabethton Commissioner’s Board on April 10, 2025, at 6:00pm, if anyone would like to attend and/or speak in support of KCCB.

***Review of Previous Events – Don Hlavaty***

* Don & Mary Hlavaty attended the annual Keep American Beautiful Conference in Washington D.C. February 9-13, 2025. Registration, hotel and travel expenses will be reimbursed by Keep Tennessee Beautiful and the request for reimbursement has already been submitted. The theme of the conference was “The Greatest American Clean up” in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. There were several breakout sessions/presentations for discussion of funding opportunities, public engagement, recycling programs, disaster cleanups and there was also an opportunity to meet with federal representatives on Capital Hill. Only Marsha Blackburn was available to briefly meet with Tennessee members and she made no commitment to assist in KAB or affiliate programs other than what Tennessee was currently providing for Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief. There has been an issue with local groups wanting to help with cleanup efforts in some affected areas of Tennessee with current FEMA and TDEC supervised contracts. This resulted in some communities losing their FEMA & TDEC support including funding. Specifically in Carter County, Kathleen Gibi scheduled a cleanup at Watauga Lake on February 22, 2025, but was told the event must be canceled by County Mayor Woodby due to FEMA/TDEC work on the reservoir. The restrictions are in place because of hazardous waste exposure, safety concerns and previously negotiated contracts with state and federal contractors. Hurricane Helene Cleanup will take years in Tennessee and there will be many opportunities to participate in the future so citizens must be patient and wait for jurisdiction approval before scheduling cleanup events to ensure safety and to properly dispose of trash/waste.
* Ed Jordan distributed a “Call to Action” email for citizens to contact their Tennessee state representatives about proposed state funding programs to increase recycling programs in each county/city. The proposed legislation will be addressed in committee for the next Tennessee legislative session.
* Keep Tennessee Beautiful was given an award at the KAB Conference for creation of a new state affiliate – Keep the Mississippi River Beautiful. This program will partner with other KAB affiliates along the Mississippi River both within Tennessee and in other states to specifically coordinate cleanup projects along the Mississippi River watershed including tributary rivers, streams and runoff. It will also address sources of pollution from communities, businesses and forests/farmlands. Tennessee is the only state that specifically has affiliates addressing rivers.
* KAB.org has a pledge for individuals to participate and support the Greatest American Cleanup efforts, Don Hlavaty will post the link on KCCB websites.
* Ed Basconi discussed the new spring Elizabethton High School Art class project to paint paver stones and place them at the school. He showed pictures of their completed project. Don Hlavaty will post pictures on KCCB websites.

***Keep Tennessee Beautiful 2025 Great American Cleanup Conference – Don Hlavaty***

* Lisa Vezzosi and Mary Hlavaty will attend the conference on March 6, 2025. It will be held in Pigeon Forge at Dollywood HeartSong Lodge and Resort.

***Discussion of 2025 Proposed Events and Projects – Don Hlavaty***

* In the interest of time in the meeting, the proposed events listed from the meeting agenda were not each individually discussed. There are several proposed events, and each board member needs to volunteer to plan/supervise events in the coming year. Please review the list of events as previously discussed, choose a date and coordinate with Lisa Vezzosi for needed supplies and volunteer needs.
* Caleb Krebs discussed the Elizabethton Stormwater Management project to label drainage access points to the rivers (sewer/drain). New metal plates “No Dumping” will be placed, and some drains will be painted. He is currently sourcing supplies and funding. He is also speaking with Payton Brondos from Hellbender’s Outfitters to coordinate an Earth Day cleanup event. The major obstacle to the proposed cleanup is that no one has permission to clean up in Covered Bridge Park or along the rivers yet. Caleb Krebs will discuss both projects with the appropriate county/city authorities. The Main Street Elizabethton group has volunteered to assist in each project also. When the appropriate authorizations are obtained, the projects will be scheduled.
* Melinda Maddock and Ed Basconi were asked to continue coordinating KCCB Educational Projects with the Elizabethton School system.
* KAB annual indexing survey will be done in May. Each board member has their assigned area and will give their results to Lisa Vezzosi to be recorded with KAB.
* Garden Signs were discussed, and several members feel they need to be larger and more permanent than the cardboard yard signs previously used. It is also best that the signs only be posted when the gardens are in bloom and be removed in winter. A **motion was made to make larger, more permanent signage** was made by Caleb Krebs, seconded by Melinda Maddock and unanimously approved. Since Seth Hice is leaving the Carter County Chamber of Commerce as of 2/28 to start a new job, he will work on researching permanent signage options for the pollinator gardens and report back in the next meeting.
* Ed Basconi was asked to continue with the seed project. He reviewed plans for planting brighter wildflowers that bloom spring through fall in more areas within the county and for purchasing seed packets. A **motion to approve $1,000.00 to purchase the needed seeds and supplies** was madeby Mike Simerly and seconded by Melinda Maddock and **unanimously approved.** He will order the supplies needed for all future planting projects and work with Mike Simerly on planned landscaping and planting projects within Elizabethton and Carter County.
* The Great American Cleanup on the Tweetsie Trail will be scheduled at the next meeting.
* A Milligan Highway partial cleanup is planned for Friday 2/28 by Ed Jordan and Don Hlavaty. Anyone who would like to join is welcome. They will meet at 10:30am at the Happy Valley Elementary School parking lot and clean from the Milligan Apartments to US 321.
* A regular quarterly Milligan Highway Clean Up is scheduled for March 22nd at 10am at the Happy Valley Elementary School parking lot. This event will be posted on the website and Facebook page for volunteers to join.
* Caleb Krebs was also asked to coordinate a cleanup in Mill Race Park along the drainage creek and along the Watauga Riverbank. Elizabethton Parks & Recreation have been clearing downed trees and brush along the trail. Since the area along the river is restricted, he will coordinate a cleanup with the Carter County Sheriff Office to clean the park. This is a well-known area for dumping within the city since it is remote. The streets at the Carter County Recycle Center also needs cleaning. Mike Simerly mentioned the city was planning to purchase property/homes along the Doe River to expand the park area.
* Additional events from the agenda will be discussed at the next meeting.

***Adjournment:***

* A **motion was made to adjourn the meeting** by Ed Jordan, seconded by Mike Simerly and **unanimously approved.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:15pm.

Submitted by: Mary Ellen Hlavaty, Secretary