

Joanna Padgett Atkisson made a plea to the Hayesville Town Council Monday, April 11 for funding for a videographer to create a series of videos highlighting the assets of Clay County and Hayesville - and got it.

Atkisson, a Clay County Communities Revitalization Association board member, told the council CCCRA had applied for a grant requesting \$9,300, the amount a professional videographer quoted to create the videos. The cost of production plus marketing the videos was estimated at \$15,800. CCCRA was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Conservation Funds Resourceful Communities 2022 Creating New Economics and Atkisson said Clay County government officials had committed to help with marketing through its Travel and Tourism committee.

This left a shortfall of \$4,300 to produce the videos.

"I'm asking for whatever you can help us with, monetarily," Atkisson told the council. "We've got the grant and a commitment from the commissioners to help."

The council voted to commit \$3,300 to the project. Councilman Harry Baughn made the motion with Councilwoman Lauren Tiger offering the second.

Volunteer Sandy Zimmerman said she was pretty sure she could get a vote from Historic Hayesville Inc.'s Economic Vitality Committee to allocate \$1,000 from the upcoming Steins & Wine event on the square "pending approval from the board."

Atkisson said the videographer, who is from the Asheville area, would create videos urging visitors to the area to "come play and stay for more than a day."

The videos would be marketed throughout the southeast and potentially to midwest and northern states where biking trails and natural resources are not usable during winter months, she said.

"We want to promote the town, the businesses, the arts and crafts, our heritage, the Peacock, places to stay in the area and things to do," she said. Visitors often come through Clay County but go on to Towns County, she added.

The Jack Rabbit trails get thousands of visitors every year but many stay in Towns County because that location pops up on their search engines, Atkisson noted. North Carolina Commerce Dept. statistics show Towns County's visitor spending for lodging at \$30.6 million, compared to \$6.1 million in Clay County, she said.

"In Jack Rabbit I see every state's license plate in the parking lot. We had two from Quebec last month. Students from Minnesota came down during their winter vacation. You can't mountain bike in Minnesota in the middle of winter.

"This project started with Jack Rabbit but it's way broader than that," she continued. "We've got so many things families love to do. Our goal is to have an all-encompassing video showing and promoting what we've got here.

"We are small. We are authentic. We are understated. I'm tired of seeing people leave Jack Rabbit and turn right into Hiwassee," Atkisson said. "We need more money. Otherwise, we'll scrimp on this video. We've got the grant and a commitment from our commissioners to help with Travel and Tourism dollars."

In other discussion at the meeting members were told owners of food trucks have been informed about the town's ordinances concerning parking on town property and told to relocate trailers to private property locations.

Zoning Administrator Ron Wallace told the council both the town's Planning and Zoning Board and the Board of Adjustment are fully staffed now.

He said the Board of Adjustment had no meeting in March but will meet this week. Sara Smith chairs that board with Sandy Zimmerman as vice chair. Other members are Bert Schafer, Suzy Christensen and Stuart Jenner. Alternates are Theresa Holbrook and Betty Schopp.

Rachel Baughn has resigned as the board's secretary but Hayesville Town Clerk/Finance Officer Suzanne Hedden has agreed to take over the secretarial duties.

The Planning and Zoning Board met in March and meets again in May. That board is chaired by Mayor Joe Slaton with Randy Canup, Rachel Baughn, George Gaines and Richard Cary as members. Alternate members are Tighe White and Teresa Waldroup. Baughn serves as secretary.

The Board of Adjustment meets as needed, usually on the second Thursday of the month. Planning and Zoning Board meetings are held the first Tuesday of odd numbered months. Both meetings begin at 6 p.m. At the end of the council meeting, Mayor Slaton presented Zoning Administrator Wallace with a sympathy card and gift commemorating the passing of Wallace's wife Fran on March 30.