

**TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
ANNUAL RETREAT – December 6, 2022**

The Tourism Development Authority (TDA) held their annual retreat on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The retreat was held at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock. Present were Chairman Dean Bullis, Vice-Chair Kevin Walker, Members Greg Tarbutton, Tim Gupton and Pete Gherini. Others present were TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown, Assistant Director Amanda Lugenbell, Ex-Officio Members Nicole Norman, Ex-Officio Member Shane Fox and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bullis called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Gherini made a motion to approve the September 6, 2022, regular meeting minutes as written, seconded by Member Gupton. Unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT/BUDGET REVIEW

• **FY 2020-2021 Audit Report**

Jason Carpenter from Combs, Tennant and Carpenter reviewed the fiscal year 21-22 audit with the Board and asked for questions. With no questions Mr. Carpenter thanked the TDA Board for allowing Combs, Tennant and Carpenter to serve as their audit firm for fiscal year 21-22. **FY 21-22 Audit – Attachment A**

• **FY 2022-2023 Audit Contract**

The Board briefly discussed the audit contract. Member Gupton made a motion to accept the FY 22-23 audit contract from Combs, Tennant and Carpenter, seconded by Member Gherini. Unanimously approved. **FY 22-23 Audit Contract - Attachment B**

• **Occupancy Tax Collections & Financial Statement Review**

Ex-officio Member Nicole Norman stated occupancy tax collections were down 6.82% or \$16,375 for the month of October compared to last fiscal year. She noted occupancy tax collections were down \$22,000 or 2.73% from the previous fiscal year 20-21 but were still above the fiscal year 19-20. Ms. Norman further reviewed expenditures to date with the Board.

• **Fund Balance Update**

Ms. Norman briefly reviewed fund balance numbers. The majority of the board expressed how pleased they were with the healthy fund balance.

• **Update from Chamber of Commerce**

Executive Director Charles Hardin reviewed the Chamber sponsored events; including Winterfest, Art and the Park and Symphony. Mr. Hardin further reviewed some of the Chamber's Projects both past and current. **Chamber Update – Attachment C**

- **Operations Update and Annual Report**

Executive Director Tracy Brown reviewed the first quarter operations report and annual report via PowerPoint. **Operations Update 4th Quarter – Attachment D**

- **Occupancy Tax Proceeds Allocation – Don Cason, Rutherford County TDA**

Mr. Don Cason with the Rutherford County TDA read a letter that he had written and submitted to the Travel Coalition Board for their consideration to change the formula to a 50/50 split for occupancy tax proceeds. Mr. Cason explained more than at least a dozen western communities are in favor of the change. He further explained in his opinion if the Travel Coalition and the NCTIA would support this change then everything else would work out to make the change happen.

- **Postcard Selfie Spot Relocation Discussion**

Mr. Brown stated in the current budget \$10,000 had been earmarked to relocate the Post Card Sign to the Chamber building. However, it's been advised the Chamber Board doesn't want the sign to be moved to that location. The \$10,000 will be left in the budget for the time being and can always be reallocated later.

- **Sustainable Tourism Management Plan Update**

Mr. Brown stated to keep in line with Roger Brooks suggestions, he and his staff have reframed some of the TDA website to speak to the seasonality and planning from a seasonal standpoint. He also stated adding the two new staff members was a huge help.

Ex-officio Officer Shane Fox advised Rodger Brooks had suggested some items that needed to be fixed including the bathroom signage, the changes to the steps on the back of the American Legion and making Maple Street a one way. All of which have done.

- **Paid Parking Update**

Ex-officio Member Fox gave an update on parking. The parking committee met with parking companies and will take an update to Council at the January meeting. Following that meeting it will then go to Town Council Retreat for more in depth discussion on how Council would like to move forward.

- **Infrastructure Support Review**

Mr. Brown asked the board and Mr. Fox if they were ok with the way the current infrastructure support is being distributed. Mr. Fox advised from the Town's perspective they are very happy how it's being allocated.

- **Wayfinding Proposals**

Mr. Brown stated that four proposals had been received and his recommendation was to go with Destination by Design. He explained that DbD had designed and managed the execution of the Wayfinding for the County and done an excellent job. Director Brown also explained the advantages of consistent design throughout the County and economies to scale. The design proposal is for \$78,000. Member Gherini made a motion to hire Destination by Design for the first step at a cost of up to \$78,000, seconded by Member Gupton. Unanimously approved.

- **Rebranding Discussion**

Mr. Brown advised that the TDA hasn't rebranded since 2004 and that Destination by Design had given a proposal. After a lengthy discussion Chairman Bullis suggested going with Destination by Design and piggyback off the county's current work with "Imagine Watauga". The consensus was to move forward with rebranding and for Mr. Brown to move forward with getting RFQ's, quotes and other necessary steps to move forward.

Other

None

EXCUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss Member Tarbutton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:35 p.m., seconded by Vice-Chair Walker. Unanimously approved.

TDA Chairman, Dean Bullis

Town Clerk, Hilari Hubner

Attachments

FY 20-21 Audit – Attachment A

FY 22-23 Audit Contract - Attachment B

Chamber Update - Attachment C

Operations Update 4th Quarter – Attachment D