

# **Board of Commissioners/Tourism Development Authority**

## **Joint Meeting**

### **Minutes – March 12, 2008**

A joint meeting of the Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners and the Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority was held on Wednesday, March 12, 2008 at 5:20 p.m. at Town Hall. Attending were Mayor Pro-tem Keith Tester, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Albert Yount, Phillip Pickett and Tommy Klutz. TDA members included Chairperson Bernie Keele, Vice Chairperson Kent Tarbutton, Keith Tester, Phillip Pickett and Lynn Drury. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, TDA Director Tracey Brown and Town Clerk Assistant Erica Cline.

Mayor J.B. Lawrence was out of town.

#### **Call to Order**

Mayor Pro-tem Keith Tester called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m. and introduced TDA Chairman Keele.

#### **Tourism Development Authority**

Chairman Keele introduced Authority members in attendance and thanked the Council for the invitation to discuss the 2007 TDA efforts and update the Town Council on future plans. He then invited TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown to discuss the accomplishments and upcoming issues of the Authority.

Mr. Brown began by handing out notebooks with Blowing Rock articles and advertisements produced or coordinated by the TDA in 2007. He then reviewed a power point presentation outlining TDA activities and issues –

## TDA Accomplishments:

- Produced a Visitor Guide- Every tourism business was included at no cost. There have been over 40,000 distributed with a new guide ready for April in time for the Wine Festival.
- Produced an Attractions Guide- Includes operating times and cost of attractions. Distributed to all businesses to hand out to visitors.
- Produced an E-newsletter “The Village Tattler”- Distributed every Tuesday by email to all businesses on the email list. Includes Frontline Headlines, Events, New Businesses, etc.
- Produced a Digital Press Kit- Includes History and Images for Press to assist them while writing a piece on Blowing Rock. Also provides a daily photo of different elevations with up-to-date temperatures.
- Produced You Tube Videos- Includes Area Attractions & Events with a link to the Town website.
- Southern Living- did an editorial piece on Blowing Rock. Mr. Brown commented on how great this was for the Town because of the difficulty getting an editorial piece done, not just an advertisement. He also mentioned the importance of a good relationship with the marketing press and travel writers.
- US Airways- did an editorial piece on the High Country. Good relationship with Boone, Watauga, and Blowing Rock Chamber.
- Occupancy Tax Revenue has grown to \$805,000 and continues to grow.
- Master Signage Plan- New signs have been installed throughout the downtown area which coordinates all signage. Also, the TDA is assisting in getting news racks and information kiosks.
- Eco-Tourism- Place more advertising emphasis on Hiking, Bird Watching, and the Greenway Trail. This is sustaining Tourism and should be utilized.

## TDA Issues:

- Fiscal Year Budgets are at times challenging because of advertising coordination that transcends both fiscal year and calendar year events.
- Occupancy Rates- Continues to be a problem with getting a number of heads in beds. Smith Travel Research provides data on most large properties in Blowing Rock but we have many mom and pop accommodations that don't want to disclose that information. Mr. Brown is creating a survey that would allow these places to share that information without giving away critical information. Mr. Brown also stated that the Occupancy Rates have increased but the actual occupancy has not. A recent Appalachian State University study states the average stay is 3.5 days.
- Sales Tax Collection- Information is only available at the county and municipal level over 5,000 in population. Mr. Brown is looking for alternate ways to gather retail sales information.

Town Council commended Mr. Brown and the TDA Board on their 2007 accomplishments and all of their efforts in making Blowing Rock a resort destination.

## **Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss the joint meeting between Council and the TDA adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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Bernie Keele, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary