

Town of Blowing Rock

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – July 1, 2008

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, July 1, 2008 at 8:30 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernie Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Phil Pickett, Keith Tester, Lynn Drury, and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Nicole Norman. Executive Director Tracy Brown was also present.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members.

Announcement

Ex-Officio Member Hildebran announced that Member Tester was awarded the Blowing Rock Rotary Club Citizen of the Year at their annual banquet last evening. The Authority expressed their congratulations to Mr. Tester for the achievement.

Approval of Minutes – June 3 and 27, 2008

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the June 3 and 27, 2008 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Drury to approve the June 3 and 27, 2008 meeting minutes with the corrections of the June 3 minutes replacing “\$120,000” with “\$90,000” and June 3 minutes replacing “9:00 p.m.” with “9:00 a.m.”. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Chairperson Keele introduced Ex-officio member Nicole Norman to review the FY 2007-08 budget to date.

Ms. Norman then reviewed the monthly financial statement and the FY 2007-08 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through May 2008 and stated that the collection report was identical to the one distributed at the June 27th meeting. She then shared a revised financial statement reflecting the recently approved budget amendment.

Ms. Norman also advised that the June occupancy tax collection report would be distributed via email once the totals are received in late July.

Operations Activity Report

The Authority briefly reviewed the Operations Activity Report on Visitor Center activities - web site usage, telephone and email requests, walk-in traffic, etc. (**Attachment #1**).

Executive Director Brown discussed –

- The Visitor Center experienced a water leak over the weekend and sustained some damage in the basement. Damages should be corrected by late in the week. An insurance claim has been filed.
- Visitor Center indicators as compared to June 2007 - telephone calls down, email hits down, walk in traffic down, and brochure mailings down are consistent with the overall tourism economy around the country and mainly due to gas prices and general economic conditions. Web hits were up.
- Marketing Focus in Raleigh/Durham (joint effort with Boone and Watauga County)
 - Direct Mail ad via News & Observer
 - 15 second/60 second TV ads appearing on Time Warner Cable
 - Radio spot to debut on Clear Channel stations very soon
 - Watauga County tourism website geared toward promotion operational today
- Blowing Rock received several awards from Blue Ridge Country Magazine

- Best Mountain Town - Gold
 - Best Little Town - Platinum
 - Best Arts Town - Gold
 - Best Antique Shopping - Platinum
 - Best Outlet Shopping - Platinum
 - Best Main Street - Silver
- Data Collection underway
 - HyettPalma Hotel Guest survey
 - Zip Code Analysis

Retail Strategy Study

Mr. Brown advised that the initial data collection had begun and would be time-consuming. He encouraged the TDA members to attend the upcoming Downtown Retail Study meetings in mid to late July.

Other

The Authority discussed customer satisfaction of visitors and how complaints and/or compliments were handled. Executive Director Brown advised that the Visitor Center staff followed-up with local establishments with the comments received. Member Tester expressed utilizing an outside consultant such as HyettPalma could provide greater independence and understanding in reviewing customer service information. Chairperson Keele stated that the abundance of owner-operated businesses in town provide a customer service benefit and in most cases provide quick resolution to complaints. Overall, the Authority agreed that visitor customer service in Blowing Rock was pretty good compared to other markets.

Master Signage Plan Update

Ex-Officio Member Hildebran advised that a roof had been installed on the new informational kiosk at Memorial Park and that a roof would be installed on the new informational kiosk at Maple Street in the next week. He advised that the Town had received positive comments on the new

kiosks. Mr. Hildebran stated the FY 2008-09 Budget included funding for additional information kiosks at the American Legion Parking Facility and the new Art & History Museum.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton asked about a possible kiosk location at Tanger Outlet. Mr. Hildebran responded that he and Executive Director Brown were working with Tanger representatives to include a map on an existing Tanger informational kiosk.

Member Pickett asked if additional newspaper racks were planned in the future and commented on their overall size. Mr. Hildebran responded that additional racks could be placed in the future, if warranted. He also stated that staff would investigate adding plantings adjacent to the racks to soften their appearance.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Tester and seconded by Member Drury to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Bernie Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 – Operations Activity Report