

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – February 28, 2011**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Monday, February 28, 2011 at 11:00 a.m. in a special meeting at Town Hall. Present were Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Dean Bullis, Phil Pickett, Rob Dyer and Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran. Executive Director Tracy Brown was also present. Vice-Chair Lynn Drury was out of state but participated via telephone.

Ex-officio member Nicole Norman was absent due to maternity leave.

Call to Order

Chairperson Kent Tarbutton called the meeting to order and welcomed the members.

Approval of Minutes – November 22, 2010 and February 21, 2011

Chairperson Tarbutton entertained the approval of the November 22, 2010 (including closed session) and February 21, 2011 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Dyer and seconded by Member Bullis to approve the November 22, 2010 (including closed session) and February 21, 2011 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimously approved.

Visitor Center

Chair Tarbutton began by updating the Authority regarding discussions with the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce in reference to a future location of the Visitor Center and/or TDA operations.

Mr. Tarbutton stated he was notified by the Chamber prior to the meeting that due to the location of proposed building space to be leased, the proposed price of the leased space, and the inability to sell retail products, the Chamber of Commerce decided not to lease space in the new Blowing Rock Art & History Museum.

He further stated the Chamber of Commerce had received a letter of intent from Steve Thomas to lease the Robbins House at 132 Park Avenue for their operations. The proposed terms were – (2) years with the option for a third year, and \$2,000 a month plus utilities, repairs, etc. The Chamber offered the TDA space in the building as well for ½ of the costs.

At this time, Member Dyer informed the Board that he has had ongoing discussions with Mr. Thomas about leasing the Robbins House. Also, Member Bullis informed the Board that he has had ongoing discussions about leasing the Gift Shop at the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum. Based on the fact that both members did not have any current contractual/financial relationship with any party and both disclosed this information, the Board deemed no recusal was necessary.

The Board then discussed the merits and drawbacks of both locations.

Robbins House positives: lower lease rate, joint location with Chamber, shared staffing, formally housed Chamber, available May 1, 2011

Robbins House drawbacks: ADA upgrade costs, limited parking, lack of restrooms, not visible from Main Street, traffic congestion from events (Farmers Market, etc.)

BRAHM positives: new facility and beautiful space, visitor traffic generator, ADA accessible, abundant parking and restrooms, curb appeal, synergy with BRAHM and Historical Society, possibility of shared staffing with BRAHM, room for the Chamber of Commerce co-location

BRAHM drawbacks: higher costs, possibility of Chamber of Commerce going in different location

The Authority also discussed the merits and drawbacks of having two visitor information locations downtown.

The Authority asked Executive Director Brown for his preference. Mr. Brown responded that he hoped the TDA and Chamber could stay in a joint location but the decision rested with the Board.

At this point, the Authority reviewed the draft lease for the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum space and suggested several revisions. (**Attachment #1**) Items for revisions included - clarifying the procedure for reservations of shared spaces, clarifying the process for rules and regulation revisions, increasing the lease term from (3) years and (1) year option to (3) years with two (1) year options, increasing termination of lease notice from 90 days to 6 months, providing additional latitude for alterations of space if leased premise is returned to original state upon departure, clarifying access to premises after hours, elimination of notice of default to lender provision due to no lender, and clarifications of interior signage.

With abundant parking, new public restrooms (in the museum and at the parking structure), state of the art facilities, and the potential collaborative opportunities among the TDA, BRAHM and the Chamber of Commerce, the Authority agreed that the BRAHM lease was their best location option. The Authority again discussed the potential for the Chamber of Commerce to reconsider co-location at BRAHM.

After much discussion, motion by Member Pickett, seconded by Member Dyer, to 1) request the Chamber of Commerce to reconsider the possibility of co-location at the BRAHM building and 2) authorize Chairman Tarbutton to execute a lease with the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum for TDA Visitor Center space subject to the lease revisions reviewed earlier in the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Chairman Tarbutton and Member Dyer agreed to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the decision and encourage their reconsideration of co-location at BRAHM. Also, Chairman Tarbutton and Ex-officio Member Hildebran agreed to meet with

BRAHM Executive Director Joann Mitchell to finalize the lease and to discuss the potential of the Chamber of Commerce co-location at BRAHM.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Bullis to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chair Tarbutton adjourned the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Kent Tarbutton, Chair

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 – Draft BRAHM-TDA Lease