

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – April 5, 2011**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Wednesday, April 5, 2011 at 3:30 p.m. in a regular meeting held at Town Hall. Present were Vice-Chair Lynn Drury, Authority member Phil Pickett and Dean Bullis, Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran, and Executive Director Tracy Brown. TDA-Appointee Lianne Mattar was also in attendance.

Chairman Kent Tarbutton, Authority member Rob Dyer and Ex-officio member Nicole Norman were absent.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Lynn Drury called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. She advised that both Chairman Tarbutton and Member Dyer were out of town and unable to attend.

Approval of Minutes – February 28 Regular and February 28, 2011 Joint Meeting

Vice-Chair Drury entertained the approval of the February 28 Regular and February 28, 2011 Joint Meeting minutes. Motion by Bullis and seconded by Member Pickett to approve the February 28, 2011 Regular Meeting and February 28, 2011 Joint Meeting minutes as written. Unanimously approved.

Oath of Office

At this time, Town Clerk Sharon Greene performed the swearing in of Lianne Mattar to her term on the Tourism Development Authority. (Attachment #1)

Vice-Chair Drury, with her term expiring, stepped down from the dais and Member Mattar was seated. The Board thanked Ms. Drury for her public service.

Financial Report & Operations Report

Ex-Officio Member Hildebran advised due to the absence of several members the Financial Report and Operations Report would not be presented, but were both included in their packets for informational purposes. He requested that should any Board Member have any questions regarding the reports to follow-up with Executive Director Brown.

Blowing Rock Wine & Culinary Center Study

The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee, led by Cobb Milner and John Aldridge, appeared to present the results of their recently completed Blowing Rock Wine & Culinary Center Study.

Mr. Milner began the presentation by thanking the Authority for providing \$5000 in funding to aid in the \$50,000+ study. He stated an initial idea for a wine and culinary center was referred to the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee several years ago. As they began to research the concept, they determined that a

professional consultant was needed to aid in the study. Once a statewide Steering Committee was formed and funding secured, a consultant was selected.

Mr. Aldridge stated the vision of the Center –

“it is envisioned that the Center will be a not-for-profit, educational and experiential gateway to the North Carolina wine, beer, food and culinary industries, bringing together the interests and resources of the State of North Carolina, Appalachian State University, Johnson and Wales University, the North Carolina Community College System, the Town of Blowing Rock, and the economic development and tourism agencies of the North Carolina High Country”

He stated the Center would create additional tourism with more heads in beds, extending tourism into the shoulder seasons and be an employer.

The study revealed:

- The State of NC has experienced huge economic and job losses attributable to tobacco, textile and furniture industries.
- There is a huge growth potential in NC food and beverage industries.
- Project a building of 10,000 square foot, a cost of \$4-5 million (excluding land), an operating deficit of \$350,000, local direct impact of \$5,097,265 with indirect and induced effects of \$8,687,600 and 120 jobs.

The Committee researched all Wine & Culinary Centers in the U.S. and several Committee members visited Canadaigua in New York to gather additional data.

The Committee requested that the Appalachian State University Business School review the study and make additional comments.

The final conclusions are:

- Blowing Rock is a feasible location.
- Location should include “foot traffic”.
- A non-profit – industry governed
- 12,000 square foot, including restaurant (2,000 square foot), demonstration kitchen & conference capabilities (2,000 square foot), hands-on kitchen (1,400 square foot), reception, gifts, tasting room, and exhibition areas (4,500 square foot), administration space (1,000 square foot) and indoor/outdoor event space (1,500-2,500 square foot)
- Annual operating deficit of \$225,000
- Need a temporary 5-year point of sale surcharge – 2 cent/bottle on all wine sales in NC, 1 cent/glass on all wine sales in NC creating \$2,000,000 per year applied to operating deficit and then balance split 50%/50% to endowment and scholarship funds.
- Projected cost of facility \$6,500,000.
- Center would “showcase” NC wine, beer, and food products improving quality and awareness as well as provide state of the art educational opportunities.
- Initial funding will be explored from the industry and possible grant opportunities.
- Project timetable – 5 years.

The next steps are presentation of study to initial donors, key industry constituencies and key governmental constituencies. If all groups are supportive, the Steering Committee will move ahead and select a statewide fundraising committee.

At the conclusion of the report, the TDA thanked Mr. Aldridge and Mr. Milner for their efforts.

Member Bullis asked how many vineyards are located within 2 hours of Blowing Rock. Mr. Aldridge responded over half of the 107 vineyards in North Carolina.

Executive Director Brown asked if there was any pushback on a proposed Wine & Culinary in Blowing Rock. Mr. Aldridge responded that some wineries in the eastern portion of North Carolina have not endorsed the concept, but the Committee plans to continue dialogue with all parties.

Chamber Executive Director Charles Hardin informed those present that the proceeds of the Blue Ridge Wine Festival Art Sale go toward the Wine & Culinary project.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Bullis to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Kent Tarbutton, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachment #1 – Mattar Oath of Office