

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – June 7, 2011**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, June 7, 2011 at 3:30 p.m. in a regular meeting held at Town Hall. Present were Chairperson Kent Tarbutton, Vice-Chair Rob Dyer, Authority members Dean Bullis, Phil Pickett and Lianne Mattar, Ex-officio members Nicole Norman and Scott Hildebran, and Executive Director Tracy Brown.

Call to Order

Chairperson Kent Tarbutton called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes – May 3 & 19, 2011

Chairperson Tarbutton entertained the approval of the May 3 & 19, 2011 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Bullis to approve the May 3 & 19, 2011 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimously approved.

FY 2011-12 TDA Budget – Public Hearing

Chairperson Tarbutton stated that the TDA would now open the public hearing on the proposed FY 2011-2012 Budget, which totals \$685,480. This proposed budget is up slightly from the approved FY 2010-11 Budget of \$683,125.

After hearing no public comments, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Vice-Chair Dyer to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Chairperson Tarbutton then entertained questions or comments regarding the proposed FY 2011-12 Budget. He stated the budget had not changed since their meeting last month and that the Authority thanked Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Executive Director Tracy Brown for their efforts.

With no further discussion, motion by Member Dyer, seconded by Member Pickett to approve the FY 2011-2012 TDA Budget as recommended. Unanimously approved. **(Attachment #1)**

Financial Report

Ex-Officio Member Norman briefly reviewed the monthly financial statement and the FY 2010-11 Occupancy Tax collections fiscal year-to-date through April 2011. She stated that occupancy tax revenues were up approximately 14.90% (or \$76,105) compared to the same ten-month period of 2010. For the month of April 2011, occupancy tax revenue was slightly lower (or \$110.00) from April 2010, with one entity not reporting. **(Attachment #2)**

Ms. Norman then reviewed in detail the Revenue and Expenditures for the year and advised they were in line with projections. She once again reminded the Authority of two

budget-related items from earlier in the fiscal year that would more than likely be covered by growth in occupancy revenues – Special Event funding inadvertently omitted out of the FY 2010-11 Budget and the funding for ½ the costs of an Event Planner in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce.

The Board agreed to schedule a year-end meeting to handle the close-out budget amendment. Staff will call to establish a meeting time prior to June 30.

With no further questions/comments, Chairperson Tarbutton stated with Chamber Executive Director Charles Hardin in the audience he would deviate from the printed agenda in order to receive a financial report on Chamber events.

Presentation – Chamber Events Update

Chairperson Tarbutton called upon Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin for an update on Chamber events.

Mr. Hardin advised that the Chamber of Commerce had taken on a larger role for event planning, including Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival, Symphony at Chetola, Art in the Park, Concert in the Park, Blowing Rock Farmers Market, and Blowing Rock Winterfest. He stated that as a result of the events and in order to grow the events, the Chamber and TDA in FY 2010-11 established a jointly funded event planner position.

Mr. Hardin then distributed financial statements for both the Blue Ridge Wine Festival and for the Blowing Rock Winterfest events. (**Attachment #3**)

He briefly reviewed both event statements. Winterfest 2011 netted approximately \$4,400 after expenses, while the 2011 Blue Ridge Wine Festival broke even. The Wine Festival suffered from inclement weather. In addition, Mr. Hardin reminded the Authority that other non-profit groups also raised monies due to these events – American Red Cross, Watauga Humane Society, Mountain Alliance, Blowing Rock Fire-Rescue Auxiliary, and the Hayes Center. Donations were made to the Blowing Rock Boy Scouts, Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation, Blowing Rock Historical Society, Blowing Rock School and Wine to Water.

After some discussion, Chairperson Tarbutton thanked the Chamber for their presentation.

Operations Activity Report

Executive Director Brown briefly reviewed his bi-weekly update on the Operations and Visitor Center activities.

- The Chamber has moved to their new offices at the Robbins House on Park Avenue. The move went well and all has returned to normal for the most part at the Visitor Center. The folks coming into the Visitor Center now are strictly here for visitor information rather than membership business for the Chamber.

- The TDA has hosted travel writers over the last several weeks which should produce several articles or stories on Blowing Rock and the region. Also the TDA helped host WBIR TV 10 out of Knoxville at the last minute and had a great response from the effort.
- The TDA is currently hosting Charlene Mixa, a writer from Marco Polo Publications, who works for *Travel Roads*. The TDA has secured her story ideas and put her in touch with attractions all over the High Country.
- Media planning for 2011/2012 is nearly complete and an information sheet will be produced for businesses within the next couple of weeks.
- Shopping/walking map has been updated and is at the printer. The TDA worked with Planning and Zoning to update the kiosk maps as well. Those should be updated shortly.
- The Visitor Guide is being updated as well and the edits are almost finished. The piece should be going to the printer in the next week.
- Development of a Blowing Rock tourism website is underway that can be utilized by mobile smartphones, providing quick links to shopping, dining, attractions and lodging.
- Mr. Brown informed the Board, that he had hired a new part time person to replace the vacancy created by the departure of Marcia Vaughan with the recent Chamber of Commerce relocation. Jessica Lance, originally from High Point, was hired. Jessica now lives in Blowing Rock and is soon to graduate from ASU.
- Mr. Brown stated that the NC Audubon really enjoyed their recent visit to Blowing Rock and organizers say that it was the best attended annual event ever for the group. They really appreciated Blowing Rock being prepared for the group and understanding what they needed when they got to town. The Visitor Center prepared an informational piece on birding that was shared with businesses before the groups came to Blowing Rock.
- Cliff Dwellers Motel is under foreclosure.
- Jan Karon event was successful.
- Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show begins next weekend.
- Gas Watch mentioned Blowing Rock in their gas price update.

Mr. Brown then presented the High Country cooperative marketing plan, in which the TDA participates with Boone and Watauga County.

- Upcoming Print Ad Placement includes – *Budget Travel, Good Housekeeping, Atlanta Magazine, Air Tran Go Magazine, Garden and Gun Magazine, VisitNC.com, Charlotte Living Magazine, Wake Living Magazine, etc.*
- Digital Billboards – Charlotte and Greensboro
- Vinyl Billboard – I-40 and I-77

Mr. Brown will forward a weblink to the Board for their further exploration of the co-op plan.

Chairperson Tarbutton thanked Mr. Brown for his update.

Downtown Retail Strategy - Update

Ex-officio Member Hildebran stated that the Downtown Retail Strategy Steering Committee had agreed in April to meet every other month. As such, no meeting was held in May resulting in no update.

Other

Ex-officio Member Hildebran reminded the Authority that a short special meeting would be needed prior to fiscal year-end in order to make a few minor budget adjustments discussed earlier in the meeting.

Staff will contact the Authority in the next week or so to schedule the time and date.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Bullis to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Tarbutton adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Kent Tarbutton, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

- #1 - FY 2011-12 TDA Budget**
- #2 – Financial & Occupancy Report**
- #3 – Chamber Events Financial Statement**