

**Town of Blowing Rock  
Tourism Development Authority  
Minutes – October 4, 2011**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, October 4, 2011 at 3:30 p.m. in a regular meeting held at Town Hall. Present were Chairperson Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Dean Bullis, Lianne Mattar and Phil Pickett, Ex-officio members Nicole Norman and Scott Hildebran. Executive Director Tracy Brown was also in attendance.

Vice-Chair Rob Dyer was out of town.

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of Minutes – July 5, 2011**

Chairperson Tarbutton entertained the approval of the July 5, 2011 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Bullis to approve the July 5, 2011 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimously approved.

**Financial Report**

Chairperson Tarbutton requested Ex-officio Member Norman to provide an update on the financial statement and occupancy tax collections. Ex-Officio Member Norman briefly reviewed the monthly financial statement stating that revenues and expenses were in line with projections for the period. She noted that one-time expenses such as workers comp and liability insurance were paid early in the fiscal year. Executive Director Brown also stated the TDA expected some reimbursement monies from the NC Department of Transportation due to relocation.

Finance Officer Norman then reviewed the FY 2011-12 Occupancy Tax collections for the fiscal year-to-date through August 2011. She stated that occupancy tax revenues for July and August were up approximately 1.07% (or \$2,205) compared to the same two-month period in 2009. For the month of August 2011, occupancy tax revenue was down 1.09% (or \$990) compared to August 2010. (**Attachment #1**)

TDA lodging members stated current year occupancy numbers were leveling off for their establishments from earlier in the year and staying consistent with 2010 numbers. Ex officio Member Hildebran reminded the Authority that the Green Park Inn is open while Maple Lodge and Cliff Dwellers have been closed, which affects the occupancy revenue.

Member Bullis and Member Pickett both stated that they had recently met the new manager of Cliff Dwellers and the bank would be operating the motel until the property is sold.

**Budget Amendment**

Ex-officio Member Norman then reviewed a proposed budget amendment which finalizes year-end FY 2010-11 revenue owed to the town. Occupancy tax revenue exceeded budget projections, leaving \$7,769 to be disbursed to the Town for tourism infrastructure (**Attachment #2**).

Upon motion of Member Pickett and second by Member Mattar, the Authority approved the budget amendment as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

With no further questions/comments, Chairman Tarbutton moved on to the Operations Activity Report.

### **Operations Activity Report**

Executive Director Brown briefly highlighted several items from the Operations Activity Report.

Mr. Brown discussed –

- The Visitor Center relocation to the Blowing Rock Art and History Museum (BRAHM) has gone well, still unpacking some items.
- The Town will be the beneficiary of some items that remained at the Visitor Center, including toilets, urinal, restroom partitions, refrigerator, hot water heater, HVAC unit, Furnace, water fountains, carpet, etc.
- Visitor Center quarterly indicators are somewhat difficult to compare to last year due to software issues in 2010, the recent Chamber of Commerce relocation, 2010 Heritage Days/Parkway 75<sup>th</sup> Event and downtime relating to the recent VC relocation to BRAHM.
- Grand opening of BRAHM resulted in over 800 visitors to the Visitor Center over the past weekend.
- The computer system is now operating via Cloud.
- Visitor Center providing fall color reports to Charlotte, Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, Greenville-Spartanburg, and Greensboro-Winston areas.
- Achieved 8225 Facebook friends.
- Upcoming co-ops/marketing – *Oprah Magazine*, *Better Homes and Garden*, *NC Travel Guide* and *Atlanta Magazine*. Sweepstakes in *Good Housekeeping* and *VisitNC.com*.
- Magellan Group marketing study for High Country Host was excellent. Received valuable data and will begin to implement in future marketing efforts.
- Committed \$15,000 to the cooperative marketing effort of the High Country Host and \$5,000 to the Blowing Rock Historical Society for façade research work on historic register designation project.

Chairperson Tarbutton commended Mr. Brown for their use of technology and social media in marketing and advised that they are leaders in this area throughout the High Country.

### **High Country Host**

Chair Tarbutton updated the Authority on the cooperative effort led by the High County Host for joint advertising/marketing. The group is made up of area TDA's and Chamber of Commerce's, attractions and private businesses. All combined, the groups leverage more than \$250,000 in cooperative buys that minimize duplication, meetings and time as well as provide greater exposure for the area. He advised the various subcommittees, such as – collateral, marketing, fulfillment, visitor center, call center, etc. are still meeting and working on future initiatives.

### **Downtown Retail Strategy - Update**

Ex-officio Member Hildebran reported that the Downtown Retail Strategy Steering Committee continues to meet bi-monthly to work on elements of the study. Recent results include:

- Downtown Streetscape Phase II complete in front of Town Hall and Memorial Park. Phase III near St. Mary's Church is scheduled to begin next spring.
- Blowing Rock Art & History Museum and related parking structure are now open, resulting in 65 new public parking spaces, public restrooms both on the parking structure as well in the new museum.
- Street resurfacing completed on Chestnut Drive, Wallingford Street, Park Avenue and the Maple Street Parking Lot.
- Downtown Parking Enforcement underway and will wind down as season ends. Courtesy ticket program is still utilized for first violation.

### **Planning Retreat**

It was the consensus of the Authority to schedule their Annual TDA Planning Retreat in the coming month. Members will be polled regarding a date and location.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Mattar to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Tarbutton adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

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Kent Tarbutton, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

### **Attachments**

**#1 - Occupancy Report**

**#2 – Budget Amendment**