

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – June 5, 2012**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, June 5, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. in a special meeting prior to the 3:30 p.m. regular meeting. The meeting was held at Town Hall. Present were Chairperson Kent Tarbutton, Vice-Chair Rob Dyer, Authority members Dean Bullis, Doug Matheson 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.

Work Session

The Authority spent this time reviewing the proposed budget and the possibility of adding new initiatives and programs. Items discussed included – a Shuttle/Trolley service (up to \$15,000), marketing funding for the newly proposed Music Moves Mountains event (\$5,000), as well as continued funding for ½ position salary for Events Coordinator Partnership with the Chamber (\$14,000).

Other Chamber events included in the FY 2012-13 Budget are the Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival (\$10,000) and WinterFest (\$10,000).

The Authority agreed to explore the Shuttle/Trolley service as least on a trial basis. Decisions on stops, times of operation and specific dates were also discussed. It was the consensus to pursue a relationship with Appalcart and to determine advertising possibilities.

The Authority also expressed interest in supporting the new Music Moves Mountains event.

At 3:30 p.m., Chair Tarbutton convened the regular meeting.

Approval of Minutes – May 1, 2012

Chairperson Tarbutton entertained the approval of the May 1, 2012 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Bullis and seconded by Vice-Chair Dyer to approve the May 1, 2012 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimously approved.

FY 2012-13 TDA Budget – Public Hearing

Chairperson Tarbutton stated that the TDA would now open the public hearing on the proposed FY 2012-2013 Budget, which totals \$687,480. This proposed budget is up slightly from the approved FY 2011-12 Budget of \$685,480.

He stated the proposed budget maintained what was originally presented at the May TDA meeting, but with possible funding of the initiatives and programs discussed earlier in the meeting. He reviewed the possible additions – 1) Shuttle/Trolley up to \$15,000, 2) Event Coordinator Partnership - \$14,000 and 3) Music Moves Mountains event - \$5,000.

At this time, Chair Tarbutton requested public comment.

Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin then reviewed the funding requested by the Chamber.

He reviewed with the Authority a new event called Music Moves Mountains. The event would be similar to the Symphony by the Lake. It would be held at the Blue Ridge Mountain Club located outside Blowing Rock. This year the event would feature beach music with the “Embers” and “Chairman of the Board”. The venue would accommodate up to 3,000 spectators and accommodate approximately 500 cars. The event would be held on Friday, September 14 at 5:30 p.m. Mr. Hardin stated that the Chamber had allocated \$5,000 in funding for the event and the request for the TDA to do the same.

The Authority discussed whether the County or Boone TDA had been approached for Music Moves Mountains funding due to the location of the event. Mr. Hardin stated that the Chamber would approach those TDA’s too. It was also mentioned that ASU played the Citadel that weekend and the event may attract South Carolina visitors. Mr. Hardin mentioned the food and alcohol vendors would be Chamber members and that they hoped the event would grow over time.

He briefly reviewed both the Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival and Winterfest marketing requests and the jointly funded event planner position.

The Authority then discussed the profit/loss of chamber events and the role of events profit in funding the event planner.

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

With no more comments, motion by Vice-Chair Dyer and seconded by member Bullis to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

After a some discussion, motion by Member Mattar, and seconded by Member Matheson to partner with the Chamber on event planner coordination services in FY 2012-13 (\$14,000), fund \$5,000 in marketing for the Music Moves Mountains and fund \$5,000 for a trial period of a Shuttle/Trolley service. (The \$5,000 funding would allow Shuttle/Trolley service for 5 weekend periods {Friday & Saturday} with service from Noon to 11 p.m.) Unanimously approved.

Mr. Brown was requested to work with Appalcart to develop a route and explore possible marketing opportunities on the vehicle.

In order to fund the newly approved initiatives/programs, the Authority was advised \$5,000 would need to be reduced from the Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival (\$10,000) and WinterFest (\$10,000) funding requests. After consultation with Mr. Hardin, it was the consensus to reduce their funding by \$2,500 each. As such, a motion by Member Matheson and seconded by Member Bullis, to fund \$7,500 for the Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival and \$7,500 for WinterFest for marketing. Unanimously approved.

Chairman Tarbutton advised that the Chamber should plan on absorbing the funding for the Event Coordinator position next year so that the TDA could primarily focus on marketing. Mr. Brown agreed stating that funds could focus on boosting marketing for the Trout Derby, Charity Horse Show and the Mayview Madness Road Race as well as other new events to increase overnight guests.

Chairperson Tarbutton then entertained any questions or comments regarding the proposed FY 2012-13 Budget. He thanked Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Executive Director Tracy Brown for their efforts.

With no further discussion, motion by Vice-Chair Dyer, seconded by Member Bullis to approve the FY 2012-2013 TDA Budget as amended. Unanimously approved. **(Attachment #1)**

Financial Report

Ex-Officio Member Norman briefly reviewed the monthly financial statement and the FY 2011-12 Occupancy Tax collections fiscal year-to-date through April 2012. She stated that occupancy tax revenues were down 0.52% (or \$3,060) compared to the same ten-month period of 2011. For the month of April 2012, occupancy tax revenues were up 9.24% (or \$2,795) from April 2011. **(Attachment #2)** The Authority expressed optimism that the projected FY 2011-12 occupancy tax revenue would be met.

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 that several line-items exceeded budget due to the Visitor Center relocation. Mr. Hildebran advised the NCDOT reimbursement of approximately \$4-5,000 for moving expenses related to their Visitor Center purchase should be received shortly.

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

Operations Activity Report

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

- The Visitor Center May indicators include – telephone inquiries 281 [-50%], email inquiries 270 [+35%], walk-in traffic 1597 [+42%], visitor guide distribution 1864 [+29%], web visits 73,618 [+28%], and had 10 days of weather related issues.

- The High Country Co-Op has produced a TV spot that will run in Charlotte, the Triad, the Triangle and Columbia, SC. The spot will run on cable.
- A draft of the media schedule has been developed and staff continues to negotiate rates and deals.
- The *Oprah* ad and the state co-op have generated plenty of leads and that's sending lots of visitor guides out the door through mass mail.
- Co-op ads are running with the state in *Outdoor Magazine* and *Garden and Gun Magazine*.
- The final changes to the Visitor Guide for this year are complete and are at the printers.
- The Shriners Ceremonial was great this past weekend, as hotels and restaurants were busy. They had a fantastic beach band called Atlantic Groove.

Chairperson Tarbutton thanked Mr. Brown for his update and stated the Shriners advised they felt "very welcome in Blowing Rock".

High Country Host

Chair Tarbutton updated the Authority on the activities of the High Country Host. He announced that Millie Barbee will be retiring soon as Executive Director, but would continue to provide some part-time service. As the role of the organization has changed to focus primarily on marketing, the vacated director position will be transformed into a marketing position.

Chair Tarbutton reminded the Authority of the upcoming High Country Host Annual Meeting to be held on June 20, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. at Chetola. The Host will provide a quick update of activities and elect new officers. Also, they will provide an update on the FY 2012-13 (\$200,000+) Marketing Plan. He invited Authority members to attend.

Downtown Retail Strategy - Update

Chair Tarbutton stated that the Downtown Retail Strategy Steering Committee received updates on current projects and Chamber events as well as discussed the upcoming town survey. The next Downtown Retail Strategy Steering Committee meeting will be held in July. Chair Tarbutton also stated that at that time the Committee would discuss their annual goals/accomplishments as to the Retail Study and elect officers.

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, Chairperson Tarbutton adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Kent Tarbutton, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 - FY 2012-13 TDA Budget

#2 – Financial & Occupancy Report