

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – July 2, 2013**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, July 2, 2013 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, Lianne Mattar and Doug Matheson, Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran and Executive Director Tracy Brown.

Ex-officio member Nicole Norman was absent due to a death in the family.

Call to Order

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

Approval of Minutes – June 4, 2013

Chair Tarbutton entertained the approval of the June 4, 2013 meeting minutes. Motion by Vice-Chair Dyer and second by Member Mattar to approve the June 4, 2013 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Ex-Officio Member Hildebran advised that FY 2012-13 ended on June 30 and though a few expenses are still outstanding, year-end revenue exceeded expenses. He then distributed a financial statement for FY 2013-14, which showed no activity with only two days represented.

Mr. Hildebran then briefly reviewed the FY 2012-13 Occupancy Tax collections fiscal year-to-date through May 2013. He stated that occupancy tax revenues were up approximately 5.58% (or \$35,420) compared to the same eleven-month period of FY 2011-12. For the month of May 2013, occupancy tax revenue was up 4.21% (or \$2,155) from May 2012. (**Attachment #1**)

Members mentioned that they believed that June occupancy tax numbers should show positive impact from the Shriners Ceremonial and BMW Club which both visited town during June. They also discussed the rainy weather that the town has experienced recently and its impact on visitation.

With no additional questions/comments, Chair Tarbutton moved to the Operations Activity Report.

Operations Activity Report

Executive Director Brown provided an update on Operations and Visitor Center activities for the Authority.

Highlights included for June:

- Walk-in Traffic 2,139

- Telephone Inquiries 256
- Email Inquiries 327
- Brochures Mailed 830
- Web Visits 32,076
- The new computer is up and running in the Visitor Center and operating smoothly.
- The Visitor Profile Study email collection is up and running. ECU will be collecting emails and sending surveys to respondents through December. The TDA should receive a full report in early spring.
- *Blue Ridge Country Magazine* readers voted Blowing Rock as Best Main Street, Best Arts Town, Best Arts Festival and Best for Shopping.
- The TDA hosted travel writer Amanda Myler from North Georgia during June and arranged visits to several attractions. She produced an article on Tweetsie Railroad.
- The US Airways advertorial is now in publication. Blowing Rock has a very strong presence in the 23 page piece.
- NC co-ops will run in both *Cooking Light* and *Outside* magazines this summer and fall.
- A preliminary media schedule for the 2013/2014 fiscal year was reviewed. (**Attachment #2**). Chair Tarbutton suggested that the TDA consider a more pronounced marketing effort with the Blue Ridge Parkway due to the impact on tourism. TDA Director Brown concurred and will consider several options.
- Discussed an article in *Examiner Magazine* regarding Grandfather Mountain.
- The TDA reviewed a co-op video from High Country Journeys that is running in the Charlotte, Raleigh and Triad TV markets on Time Warner Cable.

High Country Host Update

Chair Tarbutton discussed a new High Country Host initiative with local restaurants, whereby restaurants receive a 60-90 trial membership which includes discount cards to show the impact of the Host on diners.

Downtown Retail Strategy - Update

No meeting was held in June and the next meeting will be held on July 24, 2013.

Other

The TDA discussed the opening of several new restaurants located downtown and the possible impact on visitors – Blowing Rock Ale House & Brewery, Town Tavern, the future Mellow Mushroom (old Timberlake Gallery), the future Public House & Inn (old Crippens) and possible activity at the old Blowing Rock Grill.

The Authority discussed the need for retailers to maintain extended hours to enhance the visitor experience, especially during the peak season. Chair Tarbutton referred members to a recent news article regarding Maggie Valley and need for curb appeal and shopping.

He advised that the article made note that over 70% of shopping occurs after 6:00 p.m. Mr. Brown agreed to forward the article to the Authority for their review.

Member Bullis stated that his retail stores located downtown were experimenting with extended hours each month depending on events, etc. to take advantage of increased traffic on the streets.

Member Matheson mentioned that he is seeing more traffic on Main Street in early mornings on Saturday and Sunday.

The Authority agreed to continue to work with the Chamber, Retail Strategy Committee and retailers to encourage stores to stay open later.

Adjournment

Chairman Tarbutton and the Authority expressed thanks to Ex Officio Member Hildebran for his service as Secretary to the TDA since its inception and wished him well in his new position as Assistant City Manager in Morganton.

With no further business, Chair Tarbutton adjourned the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

Kent Tarbutton, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

- #1 – Occupancy Tax Report**
- #2 – Preliminary Media Schedule**