

**Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Budget Work Session Minutes – April 28, 2015**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in a budget work session held at Town Hall. Present were Authority Chairman Kent Tarbutton, Vice Chairman Rob Dyer and members Dean Bullis, and Doug Matheson, Ex-officio members Scott Fogleman and Nicole Norman, and Executive Director Tracy Brown.

Member Lianne Mattar was unable to attend the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kent Tarbutton called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

FY 2016 RECOMMENDED BUDGET REVIEW

Revenue

The Authority began by hearing an overview of occupancy tax revenue by Ex-officio member Fogleman. Mr. Fogleman stated the recommended occupancy tax revenue budget was determined based on projecting a 3% increase in FY 2015 collections over FY 2014 actual collections for the remaining months of the year, then factoring in a 3% increase over what is expected for FY 2015 actual collections. This methodology is considered conservative since actual FY 2015 collections are trending near 6.5% up compared to FY 2014. Mr. Fogleman explained it was prudent budgeting practice to be conservative in revenue projections to avoid having to make expenditure cuts midyear.

Operating Expenses

Executive Director Brown then provided a review of recommended expenditures for the FY 2016 budget, beginning with a recommended 3% full-time salary increase and recommendation to keep part-time pay flat. It was noted as well that the recommended budget also included a 401K contribution of 4% for full time employees vs the current contribution of 2%, aligning with the contribution being recommended for Town employees.

Mr. Brown indicated there was an increase in both Dues and Subscriptions and Employee Development and Travel due to his plans to join the South East Tourism Society and obtain certification as a Travel Marketing Professional.

An increase in Materials/Supplies was also noted to fund the purchase of video equipment including a video recorder, microphone, video editing equipment and software.

Advertising/Marketing was increased as more funding was available to allocate in this area and more marketing opportunities are expected in the coming year. Website and Creative expenses are associated with maintaining the various sites the Authority is responsible for. Postage is also expected to increase.

Mr. Brown also noted there was Marketing Study funding included in the FY 2016 recommended budget at an amount of \$5,000. Studies such as this are recommended to be completed on a regular basis.

There is a new budget line item added for Information Kiosk Maintenance that needs to take place each year to refresh kiosk content and keep it up to date and maintained.

Infrastructure Support

Ex-officio Member Fogleman began by reviewing the regular Town support included in the Infrastructure section such as Memorial Park Maintenance Support, Special Event Support and Town Sidewalk Maintenance. A new area of funding mentioned included Town Gateway Support recommended at \$175,195. Mr. Fogleman stated total estimated cost to construct the currently modeled gateways totaled \$150,000 for the South entrance, \$190,000 for the North entrance and \$517,000 for the Sunset Dr. entrance not including any associated right of way costs. It was discussed that various options would be reviewed, but that the current drawings developed by ASU was a good starting point for discussion. Middle Fork Greenway support for FY 2016 was also discussed, with board consensus to allocate \$25,000 towards the Greenway and adjust Town Gateway Support to \$150,000.

Other

The Board also discussed a shuttle service and it was their consensus to conduct a trial period for approximately three months on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during the months of June, July and August. Executive Director Brown agreed to contact the shuttle vendor to further discuss this approach.

Town information kiosks were discussed further with the Board agreeing for executive Director Brown to explore grant funding towards an upgraded or electronic kiosk. The NC High Country Host and NC Department of Transportation were mentioned as potential grant resources.

The Board then discussed and agreed they would like to contribute further to the Middle Fork Greenway in future budget years.

Executive Director Brown also indicated to the Board that they would be seeing future annual requests from the Friends of the Blue Ridge organization for Authority support towards vista clearing along the Blue Ridge Parkway. He explained they were not seeking funding at this time, but it was expected in the future that they may be seeking \$25,000 or so towards this effort.

Town Gateways was then further discussed with the timeline of approximately two years out being stated. The Authority expressed their interest in continuing to review the details of the project plans as they develop and their belief in the gateways serving as a major marketing feature for the community welcoming and drawing visitors to Blowing Rock.

The Authority briefly discussed the calendar stating they would like to see a printable version be made available online. **(Attachment #1- FY 2016 Recommended Budget)**

NON BUDGETARY GOALS

The Authority then discussed some non budgetary goals including welcoming new development, elevating Blowing Rock's presence and placement on trip advisor and continuing support of the Chamber of Commerce's Event Planner position. A fall festival was then discussed as well as the possibilities surrounding the September Bicycling event and its ability to possibly expand.

The group was then briefed on the House Bill currently in place forcing third party travel agencies to begin remitting occupancy tax on the sales they make to local governments.

FY 2016 AUDIT CONTRACT

Ex-officio member Nicole Norman then reviewed an Audit contract for audit services with Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, PC to complete the FY 2016 audit services. Ms. Norman advised the board that the firm would be holding the contract price from last year of \$7,500. Motion to approve the FY 2016 Audit Contract with Combs, Tennant and Carpenter, PC by Member Dyer, second by Member Matheson. **(Attachment #3- FY 2016 Audit Contract)**

CLOSED SESSION

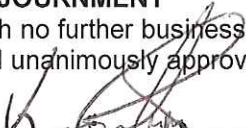
Motion by Member Matheson, second by Member Dyer to entered into closed session for personnel review, unanimously approve

At 4:45 p.m., the Authority entered into closed session.

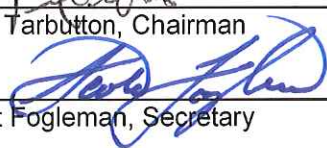
The Authority entered open session at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, a motion to close the meeting was made by Member Matheson and seconded by Member Bullis and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.



Kent Tarbutton, Chairman



Scott Fogleman, Secretary

Attachment #1 - FY 2016 Recommended Budget
Attachment #2 - FY 2016 Audit Contract