

Town of Blowing Rock

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes - March 2, 2004

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, March 2, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. in an organizational meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Authority members Keith Tester, Kent Tarbutton, Phil Pickett, Lynn Drury, and Ex-officio members Barbara Beach and Scott Hildebran. Others present included Town Council member Barbara Ball, Lowell Thomas, Sonny Howard, and Dennis Quinn.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests.

Introductions

All members of the Authority introduced themselves to each other.

Review of Notebook Material

At the request of Chairperson Keele, Secretary Hildebran reviewed the TDA notebook materials, which included - membership roster, local legislative act, tax levy resolution, TDA Ordinance and Bylaws, and the 2003-04 Occupancy Tax Budget.

Chairperson Keele corrected his contact telephone information.

Chairperson Keele asked what is the timetable for the TDA budget and the date for presentation to Town Council. Secretary Hildebran stated that, at minimum, we should have the Town portion of the budget ready by April 30. Mr. Hildebran advised that any change in the \$201,000 funding going to the Town would result in a possible property tax increase. Member Tester concurred that the Town should be "held harmless" from the occupancy tax change because the functions provided by the Town were things the TDA ought to be doing.

Discussion of Duties & Responsibilities

Chairperson Keele requested that Secretary Hildebran review the duties and responsibilities of the Tourism Development Authority. Secretary Hildebran presented the TDA ordinance and Bylaws and duties/responsibilities as outlined in those documents.

Mr. Hildebran advised that the Blowing Rock Comprehensive Plan was under consideration at this time by the Blowing Rock Town Council and would be a key guide on the tourism role of the TDA.

New Business

1. Adoption of Bylaws

Chairperson Keele requested a motion for the consideration of the Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority Bylaws. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Tarbutton to approve the TDA Bylaws as presented. Unanimously approved.

"Shown as Exhibit 1"

2. Election of Vice-Chair

Chairperson Keele entertained a motion for the election of a Vice-Chairperson for the Tourism Development Authority. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Drury to appoint Member Kent Tarbutton as Vice-Chairperson of the TDA. Motion unanimously approved.

3. Establishing Regular Meeting Date

After a brief discussion, Chairperson Keele recommended that the TDA meet monthly on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 8:00 a.m. in Town Hall.

Motion by Member Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to hold regular meetings on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 8:00 a.m. in Town Hall. (Due to previous commitments of several members and conflict with the 2004 Governor's Tourism Conference, the April TDA meeting will be held Thursday, April 8 at 8:00 a.m. in Town Hall.) Motion unanimously approved.

Chairperson Keele suggested a work session for the TDA members to discuss the goals of each member for the Authority and as an opportunity to get acquainted with each other. The work session meeting was scheduled for Monday, March 8, 2004 at Noon at Storie Street Grill.

Review of FY 2003-04 Budget

Secretary Hildebran reviewed the FY 2003-04 Occupancy Tax Budget, specifically outlining expenditures. He distributed a handout of audited occupancy tax receipts from FY 1996-97 through FY 2002-03 and of occupancy tax revenue/chamber of commerce allocations from FY 1999-00 through the present.

(Shown as Exhibit 2 & 3)

In addition, Mr. Hildebran reviewed potential expenditures of occupancy tax proceeds.

Chairperson Keele advised he had requested data from the NC Department of Revenue concerning sales tax derived from lodging, retail and restaurants. Member Tarbutton stated that the High Country Host might be a source of the information as well.

Mr. Lowell Thomas stated he may have some contacts for the information too and would pass along what he could find.

Other

Secretary Hildebran discussed the upcoming 2004 Governor's Conference on Tourism which will be held in Charlotte, NC on April 5-7. Members who are interested in attending the conference were requested to contact Mr. Hildebran to make arrangements.

Chairperson Keele advised of an upcoming meeting with newly appointed Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin and with Denise Anderson of the Merchant's Association. He discussed Blowing Rock tourism promotion and the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Merchant's Association. He then distributed a Visitor's Guide from the Johnson City, Tennessee area for review.

Member Tester mentioned a similar guide from Waynesville, North Carolina that he had recently seen. Mr. Tester discussed that this was an opportune time to meet with the Chamber and to have dialogue due to the

recent change in executive director as well as president. He suggested that we should review our promotion strategy with a focus on a resort town as opposed to a tourist town.

Member Tarbutton concurred and stated that the Chamber was looking at its future direction and may be a possible vehicle for TDA staff. Mr. Tarbutton also discussed the potential for information from AdvantageWest and the High Country Host. He has requested information from these two organizations and will forward once received.

Next Meeting

Issues for the next regular meeting will include - Blowing Rock Comprehensive Plan (Kevin Rothrock), Chamber of Commerce – Use of Tax Proceeds (Charles Hardin), Tourism Statistics, and any other items that may come up during the worksession.

Comments

Lowell Thomas advised he was attending the meeting as a representative of the Blowing Rock Property's Owners Association, along with Sonny Howard and Dennis Quinn. Mr. Thomas expressed the willingness of the BRPOA to assist and serve the TDA. He also shared his concern with the impact of tourism on the Town and the Town's infrastructure and that tourism should pay its way.

Chairperson Keele and Members Pickett, Tarbutton and Tester advised that they share the same concerns.

Adjourn

There being no further business - motion by Member Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary