

## **Town of Blowing Rock**

### **Tourism Development Authority**

#### **Minutes – August 3, 2004**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, August 3, 2004 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Keith Tester, Lynn Drury, and Phil Pickett, and Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran. Sharon Greene attended in absence of Ex Officio member Barbara Beach.

#### **Call to Order**

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

#### **Approval of Minutes – July 6, July 11, July 23, and July 26, 2004**

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the July 6, 2004, July 11, 2004, July 23, 2004 and July 26, 2004 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Tester and seconded by Member Pickett to approve the July 6, 2004, July 11, 2004, July 23, 2004 and July 26, 2004 meeting minutes. Unanimously approved.

#### **Financial Report – Occupancy Tax Proceeds**

Secretary Hildebran reviewed the FY 2004-05 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through June 2004. He reminded the members that the collections are in arrears so that the July receipts are collected in August.

Member Tester noted the collections for the first six months of the 2004 were slightly less than the collections in 2003, when considering the new 6% rate. Member Hildebran advised that staff would continue to monitor the collections. Mr. Hildebran also stated that once the new general ledger system is installed a monthly revenue/expense report would be available for Authority review.

#### **Crown Communications Agreement**

Member Tester recommended that due to some concerns about budgeted collections that the Authority consider lowering the amount appropriated to Crown Communications from not to exceed \$200,000 to not to exceed \$100,000. Chairperson Keele concurred and stated that due to the previous commitment by the Authority for short-term advertising that a reduction would seem appropriate.

Motion by Member Drury and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to modify the Crown Communications Agreement budget from a total not to exceed \$200,000 to a total not to exceed \$100,000. Unanimously approved.

#### **Chair Comments**

Chairperson Keele informed the Authority that a letter had been drafted to update local businesses on the TDA actions to date (**Attachment #1**).

Further, he advised that a Tourism Director recruitment letter had been sent to a list of potential applicants from the NC Tourism Conference.

#### **Committee Report – Tourism Data Survey & Ad Placement**

Chairperson Keele requested an update from the Tourism Data Survey Committee. Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that a draft Blowing Rock tourism market survey had been tested and a few modifications had been recommended. Mr. Tarbutton commented that the survey could be tweaked over time (4 seasons) and that the committee was still considering ways to improve survey completion.

### **Committee Report – Events/Tourism Related Activities Review**

Chairperson Keele requested an update from the Events/Tourism Related Activities Review Committee. Member Pickett advised that the committee had met with Winterfest representatives regarding their advertisement funding request. He stated that the committee had some reservations about the requested \$25,000.

Bill Leahy, Winterfest Representative, stated that the request was for a targeted ad campaign and that the festival would now include a Thursday event.

Member Drury asked whether the TDA short-term advertising campaign included any monies for Winterfest advertising. Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that not all of the winter campaign funds had been targeted.

Member Drury questioned how much money was left after the 2004 Winterfest activities. Earl Horne (Winterfest Representative) and Mr. Leahy advised that \$2,000 was retained for 2005 start-up costs and the remainder was donated to Winterfest charities. Mr. Horne stated the \$25,000 request was to push the advertising out to further markets.

After some discussion by audience members about Winterfest and its impact, motion of Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to increase the TDA short-term advertising campaign funding by \$5,000 to assist Winterfest in marketing their event. Motion unanimously approved.

### **Chamber/TDA Weeknight Lodging Campaign**

Chairperson Keele advised that Ed Burke, with Cliff Dwellers Inn, had provided the Authority with a handout on several issues of concern (**Attachment #2**), including a weeknight lodging campaign.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton stated that he along with Chamber of Commerce representatives had held a meeting with lodging establishments in order to create a campaign to increase weeknight overnight stays. He advised that an additional meeting would be held on Thursday, August 5, 2004 to received additional input on the campaign. Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin stated that 17 lodging establishments had been invited to the first meeting and that 10 establishments had attended the meeting.

### **Committee Report – Branding/Marketing/Web site**

Member Drury stated that Crown Communications would be in Blowing Rock on August 10, 2004 to begin their discussions with the Marketing Committee on developing a brand. She advised that she would contact each member with an agenda and schedule. Items to be discussed would include identifying outcomes, budget, review advertising and web options.

### **Edgewood Cottage Report**

Chairperson Keele advised that several Authority members had met with a Historical Society architect at the Edgewood Cottage. Mr. Keele stated that after the meeting some attendees had expressed concerns about the feasibility of the Cottage especially in regards to space and parking. He suggested that the Authority meet at the site with Contractor Terry Lentz and the architect to discuss options and that possibly the Town Council could

meet prior to their August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Chairperson Keele stated that the architect had mentioned that a basement could be added under the structure to provide additional space.

Member Tester suggested that the Authority take time to evaluate the situation with BRAHM (Blowing Rock Art and History Museum), who is designing their project adjacent to the Edgewood Cottage and develop a common plan.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton also advised that he would continue to gather information on the feasibility of utilizing the Cartwright property located on North Main Street for a Visitors Center.

### **Special Meeting**

After some discussion, it was the consensus of the Authority to hold a special meeting in the evening on Wednesday, August 11, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall to further discuss the design needs of a Visitors Center.

### **Master Signage Plan**

Chairperson Keele stated that the Master Signage Plan process is in somewhat of a holding pattern until the branding efforts are completed in the coming weeks. He stated that the Southwood Corp. was continuing work on the situation analysis and wayfinding program.

Member Drury advised that she would coordinate with Crown Communications to work closely with Southwood Corp. regarding the Master Signage Plan. Both companies are located in Charlotte.

### **Next Meeting**

It was the consensus of the Authority that at the September meeting (September 7, 2004, 8:00 a.m.) they would continue discussion on – Tourism Data Survey and Branding/Marketing/Web site. Other issues for the next regular meeting will include – a Visitor Center and the Town Master Sign Plan.

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

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Bernard Keele, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

# **ATTACHMENTS**

**#1 TDA Letter to Businesses**

**#2 Ed Burke – Cliff Dweller Inn Handout**