

# **Town of Blowing Rock**

## **Tourism Development Authority**

### **Minutes – August 11, 2004**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Wednesday, August 11, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. in a special meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Keith Tester, and Phil Pickett, and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Barbara Beach. Member Lynn Drury was absent.

#### **Call to Order**

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests. He advised that Member Drury had informed the Authority that she would not be in attendance this evening.

#### **Visitors Center Worksession**

Chairperson Keele informed those in attendance that the purpose of the meeting was for the Authority to continue discussion of a Visitors Center in Blowing Rock. He stated that the issue had been discussed in the July 11 and July 26, 2004 meetings of the Authority. However, due to various circumstances, the Authority wanted to have further dialogue on the issue. He advised that Member Tester had developed a discussion list of issues for the Authority to consider in evaluating a Visitors Center.

The Authority reviewed the list and made the following recommendations:

#### **ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

##### **Target Audience**

Who do we serve?

#1 - People who are coming to the village but need information upon arrival.

#2 - People who are passing through (on the highway) and are potential visitors.

#3 - People who are passing through (on the highway or in the village) and are candidates for a future visit.

#4 - People who are already in the village (seasonal homeowner)

##### **Primary Activities**

What will be the center's primary activities?

Visitor support

#1 - Greet visitors, answer questions, help plan the visit, etc./Greet potential visitors and encourage a visit

#2 - Distribute promotional materials

#3 - Provide restrooms/Provide parking/Provide refreshments

Staff support

#1 - Office/work space for TDA staff (Chamber of Commerce)/Production (promotional materials-Audio/Video access are important)

#2 - Board Room/Storage

### **Expected Level of Activity**

How much visitor activity do we expect in the center?

- Daily visitation rate

Seasonal breakdown

Short term / long term growth expectations

Week end vs weekday

- Average time of visitation

A few minutes, half hour, ...

Do we encourage or discourage extended visits?

- Convenience Area - courtesy telephones/computer access are important

- Chamber to find Main Street visitor numbers from old Town Hall location

### **Co-location**

It important to co-locate TDA staff activities with the visitor information center.

It is desirable to co-locate with Chamber of Commerce.

### **Use of Volunteers**

Use/encourage volunteer staffing for the center.

All staff should be "outgoing and people-persons". Customer service training will be vital.

### **Key Design Parameters**

Having dealt with the above issues, what do we see as key design features? (Should be prioritized and perhaps listed as "minimum" and "desired".)

- Floor space – 1,500 to 2,000 square feet
- Layout – welcoming, inviting, convenient
- one story vs two story - one story preferable
- Windows vs wall space - both are appealing
- High ceilings vs standard height - high ceilings preferable

- Restrooms (how many, where) - dependent on state codes (very important factor in visiting)
- Handicap access (how much, where) - dependent on state codes
- Large open space vs small dedicated rooms - open space (space can be divided as needed, glass)
- Parking (how much, type, how close, dedicated vs public) - dependent on town codes and short-term visitors needs

### **Location**

Now that we know what we are looking for, where do we put it?

- Bypass – near intersection with Sunset Drive
- Main Street – Cartwright Property & Town Property
- Open to all possibilities – Centralized in downtown preferable
- Will continue to evaluate all possible locations

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### **Restore, Build, Purchase or Rent**

Should we restore Edgewood cottage, build a new building, or, buy or rent an existing building?

Availability

Cost

Time constraints

Practicality

The TDA is open to all possibilities at this time.

### **Going Forward**

Where do we go from here?

After a some discussion, motion by Member Tester and seconded by Member Pickett for the TDA to co-locate with the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce on an interim basis until additional conversations can be held on a future location of a Visitors Center, that the TDA will continue to consider all location options, and work with all parties in improving to available parking. . Motion unanimously approved.

Chairperson Keele stated that he and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin would meet as soon as possible to negotiate a co-location arrangement.

Chairperson Keele thanked Member Tester for his work on this issue.

### **Joint Meeting with BRHAM, BRHS & Chamber of Commerce**

Chairperson Keele advised that Ginny Stevens had scheduled a joint meeting for various parties concerning the potential restoration of the Edgewood Cottage for September 10, 2004 at 11:00 a.m. at Town Hall. The TDA,

Blowing Rock Art and History Museum, the Blowing Rock Historical Society and the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce are all invited.

### **Database Software**

Based on the recent meeting with Crown Communications representatives, Vice-Chair Tarbutton discussed the importance of tourism database development and fulfillment tracking. He mentioned that two software database packages vendors were highly recommended and similar in costs.

After a brief discussion, motion by Member Tester and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to appropriate \$1,700 to acquire database software. Motion unanimously approved.

Chairperson Keele advised that he asked Crown Communications to develop a standard rate structure for web site development/web site maintenance for local businesses who want a business web site.

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

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Bernard Keele, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary