

Town of Blowing Rock

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – September 7, 2004

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, September 7, 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 members Scott Hildebran and Barbara Beach.

Call to Order

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

Chamber Meeting Update

Chairperson Keele announced that he and Vice-Chair Tarbutton had met with Chamber of Commerce President Michael Button and Chamber Boardmember Tracy Brown to continue dialogue on future tourism operations. He advised that the meeting was very productive and confirmed the functional agreement approved by the Authority in July. At this time, it is believed that the Authority would employ two persons (a director and an assistant) and the Chamber would employ two persons (a director and an assistant).

Additional meetings are scheduled to continue the dialogue. Chairperson Keele thanked Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Chamber President Michael Button.

Approval of Minutes – August 3 and August 11, 2004

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the August 3, 2004 and August 11, 2004 meeting minutes. Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to approve the August 3, 2004 and August 11, 2004 meeting minutes. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report – Occupancy Tax Proceeds

Finance Director Beach reviewed the FY 2004-05 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through July 2004. She reminded the members that the collections are in arrears so that the August receipts are collected in September.

Authority members noted that the July revenue totals were above normal and hoped the trend would continue.

Committee Report – Tourism Data Survey & Ad Placement

Chairperson Keele requested an update from the Tourism Data Survey Committee. Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that the initial tourism visitor survey sampling held in August did not receive adequate responses. However, the committee will tweak collection efforts and will conduct the second survey during the September 11 - Art in the Park utilizing the local Girl Scout troop. A third survey is scheduled during Thanksgiving activities in late November. Mr. Tarbutton commented that the committee was still considering ways to improve survey completion.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton also briefed the Authority on the recent gift basket marketing effort. He advised that the merchants/hotels would continue to refine these marketing ventures in order to improve business participation and more importantly overnight stays.

Committee Report – Branding/Marketing/Web site

Member Drury stated that discussions have begun with Crown Communications on development of branding/marketing/web site design. Crown Communications initial focus has been on grant-funding and partnering opportunities. She then provided the Authority with a draft branding vision statement (**Attachment #1**), a proposed marketing timeline (**Attachment #2**), and possible elements for a tourism web site (**Attachment #3**). Member Drury advised that final brand concepts should be completed by later in the year.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton commented that the initial meetings have been productive.

Edgewood Cottage Report

Chairperson Keele advised that several Authority members had met with representatives of both the Blowing Rock Historical Society and BRAHM (Blowing Rock Art and History Museum). Both organizations presently have different ideas on whether to restore or remove the Edgewood Cottage on Main Street. Once these organizations reach a final decision on the issue, the TDA will continue discussions on the feasibility of a Visitor Center at that location.

The Authority agreed to continue to take time to explore all options on a visitors center location.

Master Signage Plan

Chairperson Keele stated that the Master Signage Plan process is still somewhat delayed until the branding efforts are completed later this year. He stated that the Southwood Corp. was continuing work on the situation analysis and wayfinding program.

Authority members suggested that staff request Southwood Corp. to provide costs and schedules for an accelerated program to implement sign conversion. Once the branding is complete, the TDA then could consider the feasibility of accelerating the project to include total signage construction and placement.

Other

Chairperson Keele shared with the TDA information he had received from State Senator Virginia Foxx regarding the school calendar issue and registration information concerning an upcoming NCACVB meeting.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton requested that the Authority consider a letter of support on behalf of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation effort to complete a Master Plan for the Cone Estate. The U.S. Park Service project (funded by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation) has fallen approximately a year behind schedule.

By consensus, the Authority agreed to have Chairperson Keele send a letter of support of the Cone Park Master Plan to Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Dan Brown.

Closed Session

Motion by Member Drury and seconded by Member Pickett to go into a closed session to discuss personnel issues. Motion unanimously approved. The Authority entered into closed session at 8:20 a.m.

Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Drury to adjourn the closed session and go back into open session. Motion unanimously approved. The Authority ended the closed session at 8:50 a.m. No formal action was taken.

Upcoming Meetings

Due to November 2nd being an Election Day, motion by Member Drury and seconded by Member Pickett to move the November 2, 2004 regular meeting date to Monday, November 1, 2004 at 8:00 a.m. Unanimously approved. It was the consensus of the Authority that at the October meeting (October 5, 2004, 8:00 a.m.) they would continue discussion on – Tourism Data Survey, Branding/Marketing/Web site and the Town Master Plan. Also, the Authority agreed to schedule a joint meeting with the Blowing Rock Town Council in November to provide an update and receive input on the TDA branding efforts prior to finalization.

Adjournment

Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

ATTACHMENTS

#1 Draft Branding Vision Statement

#2 Proposed Marketing Timeline

#3 Possible Elements for a Tourism Web Site