

Town of Blowing Rock
Tourism Development Authority
Minutes – November 18, 2004

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Thursday, November 18, 2004 at 8:00 a.m. in a special meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Keith Tester, and Phil Pickett, and Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran. Member Lynn Drury and Ex-officio member Margaret Pierce were absent.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the Authority members and the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce representatives that were in attendance.

He advised that Crown Communications would present their focus group branding results at the December 1, 2004 TDA meeting at 9:00 a.m. Further, Mr. Keele stated that an Executive Director of the Authority had been hired but a formal announcement would be made before year-end.

Chamber Discussion

Chairperson Keele welcomed Michael Button, President; Charles Hardin, Executive Director; and various board members of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, to continue discussion of future developments between the Chamber and TDA.

Chairperson Keele then outlined the consensus of a meeting held last week between the TDA and Chamber of Commerce regarding the functional relationship between both organizations.

Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce:

- Event Management and Promotion
- Data Collection
- Merchant, Retail Promotion – All concerns

Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority

- Operation of Visitors Center
- National, Local and other Image Advertising
- Provide ad support and funds for co-op ads for events
- Provide funds for start up events and ongoing event support where appropriate

Based on the dialogue of that meeting, the consensus was that each entity would most likely have two employees (4 total) with additional part-time staffing as needed, either paid or volunteer. The Chamber of Commerce would limit their accommodation category membership to only those establishments located within the Blowing Rock School District. For those accommodation establishments located outside the corporate limits of Blowing Rock (non-TDA accommodations) but within the Blowing Rock School District, membership would be allowed subject to a fee to be determined by the TDA. The Chamber of Commerce would open membership to all other non-accommodation business categories. The TDA would establish a fee for all non-Blowing Rock businesses to participate in TDA promotions.

Chairperson Keele requested comments from those in attendance.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was recommended that the organizations keep separate membership, with the TDA focusing on Blowing Rock entities and any other entity which the TDA believes will promote tourism in Blowing Rock and the Chamber of Commerce soliciting membership on an independent basis.

The makeup of the TDA web site and Chamber web site would require continuing discussion. Also, the layout of the Visitor Center would require further thought and dialogue, with the consensus that the priority display of literature being for in-town Blowing Rock entities. The TDA will discuss the merits, if any, of extending the occupancy tax district to additional areas with the Blowing Rock Town Council.

Chairperson Keele then reviewed the proposed lease arrangement should the Chamber of Commerce elect to co-locate with the TDA. Based on earlier discussion, the TDA would charge the Chamber a proposed flat lease rate of \$2000 per month for office space, including utilities, insurance, taxes, and maintenance, with a 3% annual increase. The Chamber would be responsible for associated telephone, copier, and postage costs. It was anticipated that a joint relocation could take place on or before May 1, 2005. As such, the Chamber of Commerce would need an extension of four (4) months on their current building lease. The TDA would continue to compensate the Chamber of Commerce during this four (4) month period at a rate of 10% of the occupancy tax collections up to the amount allocated during the same four (4) month period in 2004. After which, the TDA would fund the Chamber of Commerce on a contractual basis for services performed.

Next Meeting

It was the consensus of the TDA to meet with the Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, December 1, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. to continue the discussion with the Chamber on future operations and further define and clarify the roles for both entities which would serve the best tourism and economic development interests of Blowing Rock.

Adjourn

Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Tester to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary