

Town of Blowing Rock

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – January 10, 2005

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Monday, January 10, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Keith Tester and Phil Pickett, and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce. Member Lynn Drury was absent.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests. He advised members that the 2004 TDA Annual Report had been finalized for Town Council review and thanked the Authority for their efforts. Member Hildebran stated that the Authority had met 28 times during 2004.

Approval of Minutes – December 1 and 14, 2004

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the December 1 and December 14, 2004 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Tester and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to approve the December 1 and December 14 meeting minutes. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report – Occupancy Tax Proceeds

Finance Director Pierce reviewed the FY 2004-05 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through November 2004 as well as the financial statements. Secretary Hildebran reviewed a proposed budget amendment with the Authority to include items such as building rental and administrative salaries, etc. Motion by Member Tester and seconded by Member Pickett to approve the budget amendment as presented. Unanimously approved. **(Attachment #1)**

Member Tester stated that FY 2004-05 revenues should hit the budget target if the next six months revenue reflect last year totals.

Chairperson Keele requested an update of the Advertising Committee on the Winter Campaign budget. Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that based on the budgeted funds for the Winter Campaign (\$40,500) and the Winterfest Campaign (\$5,000), the current campaign balance is \$1,100 under budget.

Committee Reports – Tourism Data Survey & Ad Placement

Vice-Chair Tarbutton provided the Authority with copies of the recent High Country Host visitor survey **(Attachment #2)**. The results show – preferred radio stations are country and adult contemporary formats, visits are planned 7-14 days in advance, average stays are 1-5 days, and preferred publications include *AAA Go Magazine* and *Southern Living*.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton mentioned that in addition to the High Country Host survey, the Arts Council and Art in the Park have conducted recent tourism surveys. The TDA survey information for the 1st Quarter should be available in the next month. Mr. Tarbutton stated that all the survey data would be forwarded to Crown Communications and Susan Freshcorn to determine if we are: 1) attracting the visitor we want?, 2) advertising in the right place and having the intended results?, 3) providing the right mix of events and at the right times of the year?, and 4) complying with the Town Comprehensive Plan and the TDA Strategic Plan.

Member Tester stated that the information would be invaluable to determining if the TDA is meeting their mission. He suggested that TDA meet to evaluate the data further and discuss the role of the TDA in making things happen once all the basic tourism infrastructure is in place.

Caroline Abernathy stated the limits on short-term rentals and the lack of Sunday shopping had a negative effect on attracting higher end tourism. Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Member Tester both advised that it would take an educational process where all amenities – including hotels/motels, shops, tourism venues & events, etc. – have a shared vision of tourism in Blowing Rock.

Committee Report – Branding

Chairperson Keele advised that the TDA web site should be up and running in a few weeks. Crown Communications has distributed a welcome letter to area tourism businesses from new TDA Director Susan Freshcorn and requested updated web site information.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton stated the responses were due in the near future to Crown Communications.

Report – Visitors Center

Chairperson Keele announced that the Town had closed on Caruso property on U.S. 321 for a Visitor Center on Friday, January 7th. He stated that Sharon Kepley, head of design for Bob Timberlake, would be in town later in the day to provide the TDA with guidance on the design/layout of the Visitor Center. Chairperson Keele advised that Mr. Timberlake had been very interested in assisting the Authority in the Visitor Center project.

NC Local Government Retirement System

Chairperson Keele requested Authority consideration of a resolution to enroll TDA employees into the NC Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System.

Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to approve the resolution and authorize any related documents as required. Unanimously approved. (**Attachment #3**)

Other

Member Hildebran informed the Authority that the audit contract with Billy Combs, CPA, as approved in the July 2004 meeting, had been executed and forwarded to the Local Government Commission. The total costs for the audit will be \$3,500. Chairperson Keele reminded the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce to provide a copy of their FY 2004 audit/financial statement for TDA documentation of tourism expenditures.

Chairperson Keele suggested that the Chamber also prepare an informational sheet for prospective members on the benefits of a Chamber membership. He also advised that Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Member Tester stand ready to assist the Chamber with development of a strategic plan.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton requested that a copy of the Chamber informational sheet be provided to all TDA members in order to aid in disseminating this information to the public.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 8:45 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 – Budget Amendment

#2 – High Country Host Survey Results

#3 – NC Local Governmental Employee's Retirement System Resolution