

# **Town of Blowing Rock**

## **Tourism Development Authority**

### **Minutes – February 1, 2005**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, February 1, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Lynn Drury, Keith Tester and Phil Pickett, and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce. TDA Executive Director Susan Freshcorn was also present.

#### **Call to Order**

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests. He welcomed Susan Freshcorn, the new TDA Executive Director to the meeting.

#### **Approval of Minutes – January 10, 2005**

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the January 10, 2005 meeting minutes. Motion by Vice Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Drury to approve the January 10, 2005 meeting minutes. Unanimously approved.

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

Secretary Hildebran reviewed the FY 2004-05 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through December 2004 as well as the financial statements. Secretary Hildebran stated the FY 2004-05 revenues should hit the budget target if the next five months revenue reflect last year totals.

#### **Committee Report – Tourism Data Survey**

Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that he hoped to have some preliminary TDA survey information by the next meeting. He mentioned that surveys were scheduled at both 2005 Winterfest and at Appalachian Ski Mountain.

Chairperson Keele requested that the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce provide the TDA with the results of their Art in the Park survey information. Chamber Executive Director Charles Hardin responded that he would deliver copies to the TDA later in the meeting.

#### **Report – Web Site**

Chairperson Keele stated that the TDA web site should be up and running in the next week. Tim Minor, of Crown Communications, provided a demonstration overview of the new web site and requested feedback. Members discussed the layout of the site and provided various recommendations to be integrated.

Mr. Minor advised that letters were sent to all tourism related businesses in Blowing Rock requesting information for a web site listing as well as an opportunity for a link. A "thank you" e-mail will be sent to those merchants who responded to the initial request for information for the web site and a follow-up e-mail will be sent to those who have yet to respond. He informed the Authority that to date they had received a 45-50% response rate.

The Authority discussed the need for quality pictures for the web site. Mr. Minor also mentioned the need to develop a one-page Blowing Rock fact sheet, which tourists could print and carry with them on their travel. Mr. Minor stated [www.visitblowingrock.com](http://www.visitblowingrock.com) should go live in the near future.

### **Report – Visitors Center**

Chairperson Keele announced that demolition on the interior of Visitor Center would begin this week. He also mentioned that he would be meeting with Bob Timberlake and Sharon Kepley, head of design for Bob Timberlake, next week. Mr. Timberlake has agreed to provide design/layout assistance for the project.

Chairperson Keele stated that Terry Lentz Construction has agreed to donate construction services, and that plumbing and electrical services would be donated on the project as well. Also, an architect in Charlotte has agreed to provide their services.

Mr. Keele advised that exterior renovations require going through the Town conditional use process and that the TDA would likely be on the March Planning Board agenda.

### **Visitor Center Lease**

Secretary Hildebran distributed a draft lease for the Visitor Center that will be under consideration by the Town Council next week. **(Attachment #1)**

After a brief discussion, Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Drury to authorize Chairperson Keele to execute a lease with the town of Blowing Rock for the building at 7738 Valley Boulevard. Unanimously approved.

Chairperson Keele stated that the Town Attorney would also be drafting a sub-lease to allow the TDA to sublet a portion of the building to the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce.

### **Master Signage Plan**

Ex-officio Member Hildebran informed the Authority that Planning Director Kevin Rothrock would be coordinating the master signage efforts with Southwood Corp. Mr. Rothrock should have an update for the Authority in the next several weeks.

Mr. Hildebran departed at 9:00 a.m. due to another meeting.

### **Other – U.S. 321 Construction**

Members discussed the U.S. 321 construction improvements from Kirby Mountain Road to Blackberry Road and the potential impact on tourism. It was the consensus that the Chamber of Commerce and TDA Executive Director Freshcorn lead the effort to develop a construction mitigation plan, working with area attractions, hotels/motels, tourism businesses and the High Country Host.

Mr. Hardin then distributed a copy of the Art in the Park survey results for the Authority review **(Attachment # 2)**. Chairperson Keele requested that he present the findings at the next TDA meeting.

### **Other – Winterfest Update**

Members discussed 2005 Winterfest and effects of the weather on the event – less visitors from the south, dog sled team stuck in Tennessee, and shuttles not four-wheel drive. The Authority suggested an update be provided at the March TDA meeting.

### **Other – Retreat Feedback**

Chairperson Keele stated that a joint meeting would be scheduled soon with Town Council (per the TDA Charter) in order for information flow and open communications. Member Tester mentioned that Council was receptive of the TDA Annual Report at their Retreat and that Council is appreciative of the work done so far by the Authority.

### **Other – Upcoming Events**

Members discussed upcoming events, such as the Trout Derby – April and the Blowing Rock Arts Center construction groundbreaking – April. Member Tester advised that it is critical that the TDA begin a dialogue with the Arts Center to discuss tourism.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton mentioned that the Arts Center is in the process of hiring a director. Chair Keele suggested that Arts Center Chairman Chip Williamson be invited to a future TDA meeting to provide an update.

Chamber Executive Director Charles Hardin announced that the Events Committee hold regular meetings on Thursdays at 3:00 p.m. TDA Director Freshcorn agreed to attend future meetings of the committee.

Member Tester stated that it is important to develop additional events and provide tourism opportunities to increase overnight stays. He recommended an educational process where hotels/motels, shops, tourism venues & events, etc. – come together and coordinate events.

### **Next Meeting**

Topics to discussed at the March TDA meeting, include:

- Chamber of Commerce: Art in the Park Survey

Events List

Mitigation Plan

- Arts Center Chairman Chip Williamson: Report on Arts Center & TDA Role
- TDA Vice-Chair Tarbutton: Report on TDA Tourism Data Survey
- Winterfest Chair Carol Horne: Report on 2005 Winterfest & Future Dates
- Town Council/TDA Joint Meeting: Meeting Feedback
- Crown Communications: Master Signage & Ongoing Marketing

### **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 9:35 a.m.

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Bernard Keele, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

## **Attachments**

**#1 - Draft Visitor Center Lease**

**#2 - Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Art in the Park Survey Results**