

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – July 5, 2005

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, July 5, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Lynn Drury and Phil Pickett and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce. TDA Interim Executive Director Lindsay Galvin was also present.

Member Keith Tester was absent.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests. He advised that Member Tester would not be present due to a prior engagement.

Approval of Minutes – June 7, 21, 30 and July 1, 2005

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the June 7, 21, 30 and July 1, 2005 meeting minutes (including the June 7, 21, 30 and July 1, 2005 close sessions). Motion by Member Drury and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to approve the June 7, 21, 30 and July 1, 2005 meeting minutes (including the June 7, 21, 30 and July 1, 2005 sessions). Unanimously approved.

Financial Report – Occupancy Tax Proceeds

Finance Officer Margaret Pierce then reviewed the FY 2004-05 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through May 2005. She stated that May revenues were up compared to May 2004. Ms. Pierce advised that due to a computer software error that the June financial statements were not available at this time.

She also mentioned that with the Board approved budget amendments last week and the occupancy tax revenue collected to date that the FY 04-05 Budget met target. Chairperson Keele stated that the June revenue numbers should be up as well.

Chair Keele and Vice-Chair Tarbutton expressed gratitude to the Board for their diligent work on the budget to bring the year-end totals into line.

Web Site/Advertisement Update

Chairman Keele stated the next item on the agenda was a Web Site/Advertisement Report. He stated that a Request for Proposals for web services was being drafted for distribution to local web vendors and that Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Member Drury were the TDA contacts for this item.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that Heidi Lusk had agreed to help temporarily with the maintenance of the web site until a new web vendor is selected.

Member Drury asked Interim Director Galvin about the training acquired under the old web services contract. Ms. Galvin responded that the in-house staff had received training for maintenance of events, business changes and a calendar of events.

Chairperson Keele stated that the RFP is due to be returned around mid-month and requested that Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Member Drury be prepared with a vendor recommendation by the August meeting.

Member Drury inquired about the status of the downloadable “fact sheet” for the web site. Ms. Galvin responded that Crown Communications had submitted a draft for review and that a copy would be forwarded to Member Drury for final review and comment prior to placing the fact sheet on-line.

Caroline Smith suggested that the TDA coordinate with *Our State* and *Southern Living* magazines with a calendar of events in order to make potential visitors aware of activities in Blowing Rock. The Authority requested that Interim Director Galvin follow-up on this matter.

Chairperson Keele also requested that Vice-Chair Tarbutton and Member Drury proceed with development of a 2005-06 Advertisement Schedule utilizing the 18-month event calendar. Ms. Drury mentioned that they would need to begin the creative design as well.

Chairman Keele stated the next item on the agenda was a Visitor Center Report. Interim Executive Director Galvin provided a TDA Executive Director Monthly Report for Board review (**Attachment #1**). Ms. Galvin also reviewed the daily and monthly Visitor Center traffic report with the Authority and advised that overall visitor numbers were up at the Center.

Vice-Chair Keele stated that based on an inventory by Ms. Galvin that the TDA had an adequate supply of fulfillment materials at this time. Ms. Galvin then discussed the creation of rack cards for lodging, restaurants and retail. Barbara Ball suggested that the TDA utilize a format similar to AAA that displays basic property information to the visitor (i.e., A.C., pet friendly, price range, etc.). All Authority members concurred with this recommendation. Chair Keele suggested reviewing a similar rack card from Cashiers, N.C.

Ex-officio Member Hildebran stated that the partitions for the women's restroom are scheduled for delivery and installation this week.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that Judy Donaghy, Executive Director of High Country Host, had agreed to assist the Authority with the operation of the Visitor Center during the interim period. He mentioned that a meeting with Ms. Donaghy would be held later in the week with Visitor Center staff.

Chair Keele reminded everyone that the Blowing Rock Historical Society had agreed to place visitor information at the Historical Museum in downtown Memorial Park and that at some point in the future the Authority should pursue the issue.

Master Signage Plan

Ex-officio Member Hildebran informed the Authority that the Visitor Center signage was installed on June 14th. He advised that the adopted TDA budget included funding for several bypass directional signs and downtown historic district boundary signs. He also stated that town staff would begin work with Southwood Corp. to finalize plans and costs for Town Council and TDA review and approval.

Report – Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce

Chairperson Keele welcomed Chamber of Commerce President Pam Vines to provide an update on Chamber of Commerce activities. She stated that the Chamber did not have anything new to report this month.

Chairperson Keele thanked Ms. Vines for her attendance and stated that the Authority would like to meet with her and a few of her Chamber Board members to discuss future events and how best to integrate the work of

both organizations. Ms. Vines responded that she would be happy to meet with the Authority. Both agreed to schedule a meeting in the next couple of weeks.

Other

Chairperson Keele informed those in attendance that the town hosted some travel writers this past week and that from all reports that they were very impressed with the town.

Barbara Ball complimented this past weekend's July 4th parade and stated that it was a huge success. She suggested that next year that they encourage more participation from children in the parade.

The Authority also complimented the Chamber of Commerce inaugural Gallery Stroll.

The Authority requested that Ms. Galvin meet with Blowing Rock Art and History Museum Director JoAnn Mitchell to coordinate the artwork in the Visitor Center as BRAHM is scheduled to assume the overall art coordination role.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Drury to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 - TDA Executive Director Monthly Report