

**Tourism Development Authority**

**Minutes – April 4, 2006**

**The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, April 4, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernie Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Lynn Drury, Phil Pickett, Keith Tester and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce.**

**TDA Executive Director Shawn Miller was absent.**

**Call to Order**

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members and guests. He advised that Executive Director Miller and Assistant Director Lindsay Galvin were out of town attending the N.C. Governors Tourism Conference.

**Approval of Minutes – February 13, 20 and 27, 2006**

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the February 13, 20 and 27, 2006 (including the February 13 and 20, 2006 closed session) meeting minutes. Motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Drury to approve the February 13, 20 and 27, 2006 (including the February 13 and 20, 2006 closed session) meeting minutes, with the following correction: change the February 13, 2006 meeting minutes to reflect that Member Drury abstained on the Arts Center grant vote. Unanimously approved.

**Financial Report**

Chairperson Keele introduced Finance Officer Margaret Pierce to review the FY 2005-06 budget to date.

Finance Officer Margaret Pierce then reviewed the monthly financial statement and the FY 2005-06 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through February 2006. She stated that February revenues, totaling a gross of \$36,908.06, were up compared to February 2005. Ms. Pierce also advised that expenditures for the year were in line with projections.

## **Report - Visitor Center**

### *TV/Monitor & Visitor Computer*

Chairperson Keele advised that Member Tester had installed a TV/Monitor at the Visitor Center and that it was working well.

The Board requested that Executive Director Miller follow-up on the computer security software on the visitor computer.

## **Report - Advertising/Marketing/Web site**

Chairperson Keele requested an update on the status of various projects of the Advertising/Marketing/Web Site Committee.

### *Website*

Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised that the integration of the TDA and Chamber websites was continuing and that a launch date would occur in mid-April.

### *Video*

Member Drury stated that the new TDA tourism video (offered by the Village Inns and Chetola Resort) was now up and running on the Visitor Center TV/Monitor.

### *Advertising Plan/ WC&T Agency Update*

Member Drury advised that the TDA Advertising Schedule was included with the Executive Director Monthly Report and was well underway.

Member Drury then introduced Dave Tomsy, Director of Public Relations with Wilson, Coman & Taylor, for an update on ad agency activities. Mr. Tomsy advised that he had issued four (4) press releases to media contacts over the last quarter. The releases covered: winter – hiking, (2) on the Blue Ridge Wine Festival, and the selection of an Executive Director.

He stated that media activities included: *Charlotte Taste Magazine* - Valentine edition *Women's Day* - upcoming September edition, *Hemisphere Magazine* (United Airlines) – a blurb on Wine Festival and Art in the Park in current edition and *Tampa Bay Magazine* - upcoming July visit scheduled. Also, a *NY Times* travel writer has shown interest in an article on the arts in Blowing Rock.

He also advised that writers from Asheville and Charlotte would be visiting during the Blue Ridge Wine Festival and that more writers would be invited next year during the second annual wine festival – once any kinks with the inaugural event are worked out.

He concluded his report by stating that he was excited about the responses thus far.

Chairperson Keele thanked everyone for the work on these issues.

### **Report – Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce**

Chairperson Keele welcomed Chamber of Commerce President Pam Vines to provide an update on Chamber of Commerce activities.

Ms. Vines stated that the Trout Derby, held this past weekend, was a huge success and had visitors from as far away as Mississippi. She advised that the inaugural Blue Ridge Wine Festival would be held later this week and invited Authority members to attend as many events as possible. She mentioned that *Lake Norman Magazine* had a recent article on the wine festival.

Ms. Vines encouraged the Town to continue their efforts to incorporate the American Legion Building into the town facilities, as the building is a much needed community space.

Chairperson Keele thanked President Vines for her attendance.

### **Report - TDA Executive Director**

Chairman Keele stated the TDA Executive Director monthly report was available in their packet for review. **(Attachment #1)**

#### Other – FY 2006-07 Budget Process

Chairperson Keele stated that a proposed FY 2006-07 budget would be presented at the May Board meeting. He mentioned that Ex-officio Members Hildebran and Pierce, Executive Director Miller and Member Tester would be preparing the budget for Authority consideration. Formal budget adoption is scheduled for the June meeting.

#### Other – TDA/Council Joint Planning Meeting

Chairperson Keele reminded the Authority that the annual joint TDA/Council Tourism Planning Session was scheduled for Tuesday, April 11, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. Member Drury advised that she would be unable to attend.

#### Other – Computer Update

Chairperson Keele reported to the Authority that Executive Director Miller was in the process of purchasing a new computer for Assistant Director Galvin. He advised that the Authority had previously approved the request and appropriated funds. The Board expressed support for the purchase and suggested that the computer be configured and sized appropriately for its intended use.

#### Other – Watauga County Historical Book Request

Chairperson Keele advised that Ginny Stevens had requested an update on the \$15,000 funding request on behalf of the Watauga County Architectural Survey. It was the consensus that the request, due to other TDA funding obligations, did not rank at present as a high tourism priority of the Authority. However, the Authority stated Executive Director Miller had the issue under review and would follow-up on the item.

#### Other – Future Meeting Schedule

Chairperson Keele requested feedback from the Board, considering the retention of a new executive director, on a schedule for future board meetings. The Board tentatively agreed to begin bimonthly meetings beginning in July, subject to the consent of Executive Director Miller.

#### Other – Smith Travel Research

The Authority briefly reviewed data provided through Smith Travel Research and discussed the relevance of the information. Vice-Chair Tarbutton advised he would acquire additional clarification on the data and forward it to the Board.

## **Adjournment**

With no further business, motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Drury to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 8:55 a.m.

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Bernard Keele, Chairperson

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Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

## **Attachments**

**#1 - TDA Executive Director Monthly Report**