

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – July 5, 2006

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Wednesday, July 5, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernie Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Phil Pickett and Keith Tester, and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce. TDA Executive Director Shawn Miller was also present.

Authority member Lynn Drury was out-of-town.

Call to Order

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the members.

Approval of Minutes – June 6 & 26, 2006

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the June 6 & 26, 2006 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to approve the June 6 & 26, 2006. 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 May 2006. She stated that May revenues, totaling a gross of \$51,122.12, were up compared to May 2005. Ms. Pierce also advised that revenue has been up for the past thirteen months and that expenditures for the year were in line with projections. She also advised that June collections would close out FY 2005-06.

Executive Director Report

Chairperson Keele requested Executive Director Miller to update the Authority on Visitor Center activities.

Executive Director Miller reviewed her Monthly TDA Report, including visitor inquiries. (**Attachment #1**) She advised that TDA website hits were up for the month of June.

Staffing

Executive Director Miller updated the Authority on staffing and advised that she was in the process of a hiring second part-time staff member. She also stated that the new full-time staff member, Jennifer Cramer, was doing a great job.

Visitor Guide

Executive Director Miller provided an update on the new Visitor Guide for visitor inquiries. The Authority discussed their desire to include AAA/Mobil type amenities' ratings for lodging and restaurants. The Authority also requested an opportunity to review a proof of the guide prior to publication.

Chairperson Keele suggested that an events insert be utilized in the guide to provide updated and timely event information.

Website

Executive Director Miller stated that the integration of the TDA and Chamber websites was continuing and that a tentative launch date would be July 10.

Visitor Center Office

Executive Director Miller advised that the construction of the additional TDA office (in the area formerly leased to the Chamber of Commerce across from the Visitor Center Desk) was complete, except for painting. She thanked the Authority for their work on this project. Also, she announced that the telephone system had been switched to Com-tech.

Advertising Plan/Marketing

Executive Director Miller briefly reviewed upcoming co-op advertisements that would be taking place and pending travel writer visits. She also mentioned the plan to incorporate “sudden impact” radio spots in the FY 2006-07 marketing campaign.

WC&T Agency Update

Executive Director Miller advised Dave Tomsy was developing a press release regarding the four headwaters that start in Blowing Rock.

Photography

Ms. Miller stated that Doug Holstein had begun the photography services project, and had taken photos during the July 4th weekend.

Community Events Committee

Executive Director Miller updated the TDA on the proposed Community Events Committee. She stated that their first meeting was scheduled for July 12.

Other

Ms. Miller then discussed the development of an event poster display area in the visitor center. She recommended the new office wall adjacent to the front desk area.

Executive Director Miller mentioned the visitor demand for “wireless” internet access. The Authority requested that Ms. Miller investigate the cost for allowing such access at the Visitor Center.

Finance Director Pierce informed the Authority of a potential outstanding invoice for a billboard utilized during 2006 Winterfest. The Chamber of Commerce was notified of the deadline for Authority payment, which has since passed. Based on no formal request for invoice payment and the fact the budget year deadline had passed, the Authority agreed that no action was required.

Other

Ex-officio member Hildebran briefly discussed a request received for the TDA use of a transportation shuttle during holidays and peak visitor weekends. Vice-Chair Tarbuton offered the TDA the use of the Chetola bus during a test-period – upon the condition that the Authority cover driver, fuel and insurance expenses. The Authority agreed to further investigate the concept and requested that the new Events Committee follow-up and make a recommendation on the issue.

Mr. Hildebran also advised the Appalachian State University Athletic Director Charles Cobb and Assistant Director Rick Beasley had suggested a meeting with Executive Director Miller to discuss enhancement of ASU football weekends in Blowing Rock. Both Mr. Hildebran and Ms. Miller agreed to follow-up on the matter.

FY 2006-07 TDA Meeting Schedule

Chairperson Keele offered the following FY 2006-07 TDA meeting schedule for Authority consideration – July, September 5, November 7, December (Retreat), January 2, April 3, May 1, and June 5 (Budget). All meetings, except the December (Retreat) meeting, would begin at 8:30 a.m.

The Authority agreed by consensus to approve the meeting schedule as proposed.

The Board tentatively agreed to schedule a TDA planning retreat for the first week of December in Waynesville, N.C.

Adjournment

With no further business, motion by Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 – TDA Executive Director Monthly Report TDA