

**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Tourism Development Authority**  
**Minutes – October 26, 2006**

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Thursday, October 26, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. in a continuation of the October 23 meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernard Keele, Vice-chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Lynn Drury, Phil Pickett and Keith Tester, and Ex-officio member Margaret Pierce.

Also present were Chamber of Commerce Executive Board members Pam Vines, Bill Hall and Barbara Wright.

Ex-officio member Scott Hildebran was absent due to surgery.

**Call to Order**

Chairperson Keele called the meeting to order and welcomed the Authority members and Chamber Board members present. He announced that Chamber Vice-President Bill Hall had contacted him to request time to make a presentation to the TDA Board. Chairperson Keele stated the presentation was limited to 15 minutes due to other Board business previously planned.

Mr. Hall asked to read a letter from Chamber President Pam Vines (**Attachment #1**) to the TDA Board. After reading the letter, Mr. Hall stated that the Chamber agreed with Beth Carden's statements on the focus the Chamber should have on economic development in the future, but that they have not had the resources in the past to do so.

Chairperson Keele requested comments or questions from the TDA members regarding the letter.

Vice-Chair Tarbutton stated he feels that two separate directors can be detrimental at times with both organizations in running the Visitor Center.

Mr. Hall acknowledged his agreement with Vice-Chair Tarbutton's comments and stated that the Chamber really wants to operate the Visitor Center and that the TDA may not need a director and could outsource many of their other responsibilities. Mr. Hall stated that the Chamber wants a cooperative effort for the future. Both organizations should do what they do best.

Member Drury expressed concern regarding the Chamber's personnel resources to meet their needs, especially with the added responsibility of the Visitor Center operations.

Mr. Hall responded that the removal of Town funding two years ago made the Chamber scramble in regards to funding and financing staffing. If the TDA and Chamber could agree on events to benefit the "heads in beds" goal funded by the occupancy tax dollars, then the Chamber could do other things with their resources. He again stated that the Chamber wants a cooperative future.

Member Tester commented that the verbiage in the letter on the "sudden reversal" concerned him. He reviewed the efforts by the TDA to reach a consensus with the Chamber on having one director for both organizations and that the oversight of the Visitor Center operations by the Chamber was part of the whole picture, so by the Chamber determining that they were not in support of one director at this time, the decision had to be reviewed. Member Tester reminded the group of Ms. Carden's statement that the organizations should have separate identities but linked. Each group needs to evaluate what that means for them in the future.

Mr. Hall's response was that the Chamber Executive Director was a known quantity for them and any change puts them at risk; that the two director model is best for the Chamber for the time being.

Ms. Vines stated that she felt the Chamber had made a good faith effort to extend a hand with the \$500 offer to manage the Visitor Center and that letting the Chamber Executive Director supervise the employees saved confusion.

Member Tester commented that he sees two issues for the TDA: 1. the Director position-how to fill it, whether to fill it, and what the role would be; 2. the Visitor Center-who should oversee the day to day running, Chamber or TDA.

Mr. Hall apologized for any miscommunication that may have happened Monday between Chairperson Keele and President Vines.

Vice-Chair Tarbuton said both directors and organizations have similar goals and that a high percentage of both budgets are spent for directors. Trust is a key issue on both sides due to differing opinions between the groups on the Chamber's outside memberships. He feels the Visitor Center needs to represent Blowing Rock and that the Chamber has a responsibility to represent all their members equally and that this is in conflict as long as the Chamber membership is predominantly outside the Town.

Mr. Hall wanted both groups to work together to develop priorities for how to address membership and that there were two levels currently. He expressed willingness to work on the details in the future.

Chairperson Keele stated that the time allowed for the Chamber presentation had expired.

### **Closed Session**

Upon motion of Vice-Chair Tarbutton and seconded by Member Pickett, the Authority convened at 2:25 p.m. in closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143.318.11 (a)(6) for discussion of personnel issues. Motion unanimously approved.

At the conclusion of the discussions, the closed session was adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

## **Adjournment**

With no further business, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Drury to recess the meeting until Wednesday, November 1, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. Motion unanimously approved. Chairperson Keele adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

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Bernard Keele, Chairperson

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Margaret Pierce, Finance Officer

## **Attachment**

**#1 - Chamber Letter dated October 26, 2006**