

Tourism Development Authority

Minutes – June 5, 2007

The Town of Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority met on Tuesday, June 5, 2007 at 8:30 a.m. in a regular meeting. Present were Chairperson Bernie Keele, Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton, Authority members Phil Pickett, Keith Tester and Ex-officio members Scott Hildebran and Margaret Pierce. TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown was also present.

Member Lynn Drury was absent.

Call to Order

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

Approval of Minutes – May 1 & 16, 2007

Chairperson Keele entertained the approval of the May 1 & 16, 2007 meeting minutes. Motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Tester to approve the May 1 & 16, 2007. Unanimously approved.

FY 2007-08 TDA Budget – Public Hearing

Chairperson Keele stated that the TDA would be holding a public hearing on the proposed FY 2007-2008. Chairman Keele then opened the public hearing for comments from citizens stating that the proposed FY 2007-08 TDA budget totals \$748,065.

Hearing no comments, motion by Member Pickett and seconded by Member Tester to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Member Tester advised that the proposed Town of Blowing Rock FY 2007-08 Budget includes a 1% salary supplement toward the N.C. 401K Supplemental Retirement System for general employees. Due to the fact that the TDA personnel benefits model the Town, he suggested that the TDA replicate the allocation for the full-time TDA staff. It is the goal of the Town to increase this supplement 1% per year to reach a cap of 5% in 5 years.

Motion by Member Pickett, seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to approve the FY 2007-2008 TDA Budget as recommended and to authorize a 1% 401K supplement for full-time staff as suggested. Unanimously approved. **(Attachment #1)**

TDA Strategic Plan – 2007 Update

Chairperson Keele stated that the Authority had discussed an update to TDA Strategic Plan for several months and that Member Tester had made all the recommended changes to the document.

After a brief discussion, motion by Member Pickett, seconded by Vice-Chair Tarbutton to approve the 2007 TDA Strategic Plan. Unanimously approved. **(Attachment #2)**

Financial Report

Chairperson Keele introduced Finance Officer Margaret Pierce to review the FY 2006-07 budget to date.

Finance Officer Margaret Pierce then reviewed the monthly financial statement and the FY 2006-07 Occupancy Tax collections year-to-date through April 2007. She stated that April revenues, totaling a gross of \$37,166.79, were up compared to April 2006. Ms. Pierce also advised that revenue has been up for 23 out of the last 24 months and that expenditures for the year were in line with projections.

The Authority scheduled a year-end meeting to consider budget amendments for Wednesday, June 27, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.

Ms. Pierce briefly reviewed with the Authority the year-end 2006 reserved and unreserved fund balance and the projected 2007 year-end balances. She advised that she would provide a more detailed review at the special meeting later in the month.

Operations Activity Report

Chairperson Keele introduced Executive Director Brown and thanked him for his efforts in developing the new TDA Visitor Guide, the new TDA newsletter – “*The Tattler*”, and the new Visitor Center staff polo shirts.

The Authority briefly reviewed the Operations Activity Report on Visitor Center activities -web site usage, telephone and email requests, walk-in traffic, etc. (**Attachment #3**).

Executive Director Brown discussed –

- the upcoming marketing/advertising activities, as well as future articles in *Signature Magazine* (epicurean article) and *Southern Living Magazine*.
- the work by Dave Tomsy on an art in Blowing Rock article for future publication.
- the recent visit by a writer from *Blue Mountain Living Magazine*.
- the possibility of a TDA sponsored Secret Shopper program (shopper to visit approximately 50 establishments – including retail, hotels and restaurants) with the Chamber of Commerce providing a follow-up customer service training.

As a follow-up to a TDA request last month, Executive Director Brown distributed a breakdown of event-related TDA advertising funding during the current fiscal year for Authority review. (**Attachment #4**)

The Authority then briefly reviewed a draft proposal for potential project funding using unreserved fund balance, including the Secret Shopper program. (**Attachment #5**) The Authority agreed to discuss the items during their upcoming special meeting.

The Authority discussed the desire to have a Visitor Map for distribution as soon as possible. It was the consensus to have a visitor map completed by the June 27 special meeting.

Master Signage Plan Update

Ex-Officio Member Hildebran advised that the Town had begun the regulatory signage installation (40 signs) and should be complete in the near future. He also stated that the next phase of the Master Signage Plan would be to have information kiosks designed with the new mapping, which would replace the few remaining street business directory signs. He advised that hopefully the signs would be manufactured by mid-summer.

The Authority expressed their desire to have the kiosks in place as soon as possible.

In addition, Mr. Hildebran mentioned that the Town was considering regulation of newspaper racks in the central business area, which also would improve sidewalk appearance.

Chairman Keele thanked everyone for the work on behalf of the Authority.

Other

The Authority expressed concern about the cost of rental space and the resulting merchant shuffle in the central business area and the need for some proactive planning.

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 9:30 a.m.

Bernard Keele, Chairperson

Scott E. Hildebran, Secretary

Attachments

#1 – FY 2007-08 Annual Budget

#2 – 2007 TDA Strategic Plan

#3 – TDA Operations Activity Report

#4 – TDA Event-related TDA Advertising Funding

#5 – TDA Potential Project Funding

