

**TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
ANNUAL RETREAT – JANUARY 18, 2017**

The Tourism Development Authority (TDA) held their annual retreat on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 beginning at 9:00 a.m. The retreat was held at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock. Present were Chairman Dean Bullis, Members Rob Dyer, Doug Matheson, Lianne Mattar and Lorry Mulhern. Others present were Ex-officio members Scott Fogleman and Nicole Norman, TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown, Assistant Director Amanda Lugenbell, and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bullis called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Matheson made a motion to approve the October 4, 2016 minutes as written, seconded by Member Dyer. Unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT/BUDGET REVIEW

- **FY 2016 Audit Report**

Jason Carpenter from Combs, Tennant and Carpenter reviewed the fiscal year 2016 Audit. Mr. Carpenter advised the TDA received the highest level of audit opinion and the TDA had a positive change in fund balance in the amount of \$148,392. Mr. Carpenter further advised he felt that change was attributed to about \$100,000 additional occupancy tax collected in the prior year. Mr. Carpenter stated currently the unassigned fund balance is sitting at 47% of expenditures. Mr. Carpenter thanked the TDA Board for allowing Combs, Tennant and Carpenter to serve as their audit firm for FY 2016. **Attachment A**

- **FY 2017 Audit Contract**

The Board briefly discussed the audit contract. Member Mattar made a motion to accept the 2017 audit contract from Combs, Tennant and Carpenter in the amount of \$3,375, seconded by Member Mulhern. Unanimously approved. **Attachment B**

FY 2017 REVIEW & FUTURE PLANNING

- **Occupancy Tax Collections & Financial Statement Review**

Finance Officer Nicole Norman stated occupancy tax collections through November 2016 totaled \$77,816.81, up 18.44% from November 2015 collections. Ms. Norman advised fiscal year to date collections were up 14.63% or \$77,868 compared to the same period last year and collection rates are continuing to trend upward. She commented current year expenditures were at 58% and reviewed several expenditure items in more detail with the Board.

Ms. Norman presented a Budget Ordinance Amendment to the Board. Member Dyer made a motion to approve the amendment, seconded by Member Mulhern. Unanimously approved. **Attachment C**

- **Middle Fork Greenway Update**

Wendy Patoprsty Director of the Middle Fork Greenway gave a PowerPoint presentation updating the progress of the Middle Fork Greenway project. **Attachment D**

- **Update from Chamber of Commerce**

Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charles Hardin gave a PowerPoint presentation reviewing 2016 Chamber events. Mr. Hardin stated Winterfest 2016 had great attendance, WinterFest had sold out and the Polar Plunge had 122 participants. The Fashion Show and Chili Cook-off were not well attended per Mr. Hardin and the Chili Cook-off was said to need a complete revamp. Mr. Hardin reviewed a few new events that will be added to Winterfest 2017. Other events were discussed that had taken place in 2016 and some of the enhancements to those events in 2017. Mr. Hardin advised the board that the Chamber decided the Farmer's Market will be eliminated in 2017 due to low vendor and visitor attendance. **Attachment E**

- **Marketing Efforts**

Heidi Lusk of The Meridian Agency presented a PowerPoint presentation on marketing efforts that have been accomplished to date as well as going forward. Ms. Lusk highlighted the new look of the Website. **Attachment F**

- **Events Discussion**

The Board discussed the various events and what the TDA's market focus to promote the events should be going forward.

- **Infrastructure Support**

Executive Director Tracy Brown stated power had been installed at the two locations for the Electronic Kiosks. Mr. Brown advised one will be in front of the 1888 Museum on Main Street and the other will be at the back of the park near the parking deck. Mr. Brown further advised the Kiosks will be installed the first of February. Mr. Brown stated the Parking Deck Counter will be installed at the parking deck beside of the American Legion at the end of February.

- **Gateway**

Town Manager Scott Fogleman briefly updated the Board on the Sunset Drive Gateway project. At retreat Town Council met with Destination by Design and received some new options to consider for Sunset Drive. Mr. Fogleman explained Council asked Destination by Design to tweak some of the design elements and bring a new plan back to Council at the March meeting.

- **Middle Fork Greenway Support**

The Board discussed and decided to wait until the budget process to make a decision on donating further to the Middle Fork Greenway project.

- **Fund Balance**

The board briefly discussed fund balance, currently the fund balance is 47% of expenditures. Finance Director Norman advised the Board she had done some preliminary calling to other TDA's and the consensus is they don't have a specified amount for fund balance. Ms. Norman advised the Board could discuss and determine an amount to set as a fund balance goal.

- **VRBO & Airbnb**

The Board briefly discussed the process of VRBO and Airbnb rentals. Assistant Director Amanda Lugenbell advised she works frequently on keeping up to date on the VRBO and Airbnb rentals through Town and together with finance staff making sure occupancy tax is paid.

Other

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

TDA Chairman, Dean Bullis

Town Clerk, Hilari Hubner

Attachments

FY 2016 Audit Report – Attachment A

FY 2017 Audit Contract – Attachment B

Budget Amendment – Attachment C

Middle Fork Greenway Update – Attachment D

Update from Chamber of Commerce – Attachment E

Marketing Efforts – Attachment F