

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

April 24, 2018

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Maryann Azzato, Bill Bernier, Glenda Browning, Dana Fisher, Jerry Helms, Buddy Rudd, and Eddie Walters. **Absent:** Bonnie Cox, Melaney Robbins, and Whitney Sauls. **Also in Attendance:** Mitzi York, Executive Director

I. Call to Order:

Glenda Browning, Vice-Chair, called to order the TDA's regular monthly meeting at the Brunswick County TDA office at 712 Village Rd SW in Shallotte at 3:02 pm.

II. Public Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of March 27, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Buddy Rudd and seconded by Maryann Azzato to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2018 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial report for March 2018. Occupancy tax revenues received during March in the amount of \$29,151.18 were collected for January and other months. Revenues for March totaled \$30,635.95. Mitzi York pointed out that we had significant media expenses in March due to TV and other fund balance campaign media expenses. Other major expenses for the month included the agency fee and postage. Postage is higher than average due to the large number of leads acquired in March. Total expenditures for the month were \$103,367.07 plus \$161,705.77 in accruals. Our ending bank balance for March was \$761,748.57. Mitzi York also reviewed the occupancy tax report. She reported that we received additional December and January funds since the last Board meeting. At the last meeting, occupancy tax collections were up about 4.8% and now we are up 5.79%. We had a strong February despite the weather. Every month thus far has been over last year. Mitzi York advised that she discussed with the County the budget for occupancy tax collections for next fiscal year. We will budget \$1.5 million next year compared to the \$1.4 million this fiscal year. She advised that we are on track to exceed \$1.5 this year. Dana Fisher motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Maryann Azzato. The motion passed unanimously.

Mitzi York reported that the State's New York Media Mission starts tomorrow morning. She will fly out tonight in order to attend the events. There is an event in the morning with the editors of Meredith Media Publications. They expect 20-

25 editors to attend. The Thursday event has over 60 members of the media signed up to attend. Mitzi York also reported that we had quite a bit of PR in April. Much of the PR exposure was related to Southern Living's "South's Best" articles. Bald Head was featured in a "Hidden Gems" article in Chapel Hill magazine. Several area events were included in Atlanta Journal Constitution's online calendar of events. Our State magazine included the Lighthouse Run in their calendar. One of the Atlanta TV stations included several area events in their calendar. The Charlotte Observer included several events in their calendar. Where Traveler included the Silver Coast Winery in its article "Three Cheers for North Carolina's Wine Country". There was multiple exposure with Southern Living - print, online, and social. WRAL-TV included the NC Oyster Festival in its roundup of festivals. The earned media value was over \$200,000. The circulation/UVM was over 75 million and the earned editorial value over \$624,000. We know there will be upcoming exposure in Columbia Metropolitan Magazine and Our State magazine.

Mitzi York is working with the agency on the media plan for next fiscal year. She expects their recommendations by Friday. The budget presentation will be made at the May meeting with the vote planned for the June Board meeting. In the current year budget, we have \$26,000 that we want to reallocate. Travel Spike was not able to generate all the leads we contracted for so we will not be spending all the money we allocated for that campaign. We paused the Pandora campaign because while it was driving a lot of people to the site, the time on site was very short with few conversions. Also, there are some dollars left in search that need to be reallocated. We would like to reallocate the approximately \$26,000 and renew the commercials we were running in Columbus. We want to "piggy back" on the commercials the State will be running in Columbus. The State's primary markets are Atlanta, New York and Washington DC. Their secondary markets are Columbus, Nashville and a couple of other cities. The other thing we would like to do is supplement the wedding search campaign with \$500 in May and in June and add \$500 in May and June boost our Town search campaign. Maryann Azzato asked if plans were to just focus on May and June. Mitzi York responded that the fiscal year ends in June. We will review plans for next fiscal year during the budget presentation. There is presently \$1000 allocated per month for weddings for May and June. Dana Fisher motioned to accept the recommendation to reallocate funds for TV in Columbus and for wedding and town search campaigns. The motion was seconded by Billy Bernier and approved unanimously.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Reports for March. In March, we received 25,608 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 47,704 unique visitors to our website and 54,321 views of the partner pages and from there 15,429 visits to our partners' websites. Media media included the Alabama Media Group banners, Interfuse/Connect Golf campaign,

Interfuse/Connect Leisure, MMSI, NC Travel Guide, On-going SEM, Travel Spike Leisure, Pandora, NCC TV, Spectrum TV, Sherman's Travel, Southern Living, Golf Magazine, AAA Go, AAA World, Better Homes and Gardens, Budget Travel and VisitNC.com. Leads year-to-date total 95,011 compared to 87,977 for the same time period last year. The top states were Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and North Carolina.

Mitzi York reviewed the Google analytics reports for March. We had 47,704 unique visitors in March and 139,605 page views on the website. The bounce rate was 48.58%. Comparing that to March of last year, the number of users was up about 28.42%. The bounce rate was up about 7.8%. Google organic search was the number one source of traffic to the website followed by our cost per click program, direct traffic, Pandora, VisitNC and Interfuse/Connect. Mitzi York advised that Pandora ran for about 2 weeks before we paused the campaign. Mitzi York advised the Board that the Advance campaign did not perform well. Advance did optimize the campaign and allowed us additional buys but still did not perform as we would have liked. We will not be recommending Advance for next year. Our islands and towns page was the top page viewed followed by the home page. The top states were North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Charlotte was our top metro area followed by Wilmington, Raleigh, Atlanta and New York. Mitzi York pointed out that Charlotte traffic is up 70% and traffic from Columbus Ohio is up 106%. We believe that our TV campaign is responsible for the significant increase.

Comparing the first quarter of 2018 to first quarter of 2017, website traffic increased 19%. Vacation Guide requests increased 10%. We saw an increase in landing page traffic to Bald Head Island, Sunset Beach, and Holden Beach. There was a decrease in landing page traffic to Oak Island and Southport. Some reasons for the decrease could be due to Southport's new website and due to Curse of Oak Island search. That is part of the reason we recommended putting some more money in our town search. Social media traffic increased 16%. Some engagement metrics were down. We attribute that to the Pandora and Advance campaigns because they drove traffic to the site but had a high bounce rate. 57% of all traffic was from mobile devices compared to 45% last year.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VIII. New Business:

No new business

IX. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jerry Helms. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 pm.

NEXT MEETING: May 22, 2018 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.