

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

April 23, 2019

Meeting Minutes

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

I. Call to Order:

Bonnie Cox, Chairman, called to order the TDA's regular monthly meeting at the Brunswick County TDA office at 712 Village Rd SW in Shallotte at 3:00 pm.

II. Public Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of March 26, 2019 minutes

Maryann Azzato motioned to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2019 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Eddie Walters and approved unanimously.

V. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial statement for the month of March. Revenues for March totaled \$32,708.17. The largest expenditure of the month was media due in large part because of the TV campaign. Other major expenses in March were the agency fee and postage. Expenditures for the month included \$74,149.01 in actual expenses plus \$108,739.79 in accruals. The ending bank balance in March was \$831,746.47.

Mitzi York pointed out in the occupancy tax report that year-to-date we are 3.85% up over this time last year. February is up 17.3% over last year plus we received additional funds for January. January is now up 40.32% over last January. At the NCTIA meeting during the NC 365 Conference, Onslow County and Wilmington both said they were seeing significant increases in December and January due to displaced residents. Dana Fisher motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Maryann Azzato. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that the Travel Writers FAM starts tomorrow and that the writers will stay until Saturday. We could not reschedule everybody that was supposed to participate in the FAM last fall. Participants include a blogger and social media influencer out of Charlotte. This will be the first time we've included a social media influencer. It will be a test. Other participants include a contributor with The Tennessean out of Nashville; a writer for The Georgetown and New York Social Diary; the editor of Northwest Georgia Living; and the host of travel radio show out of North Georgia. The Golf Writers FAM will start May 5.

During the month of March, we had some events in the Atlanta Journal Constitution online calendar as well as the Charlotte Observer and South Magazine. There was an article in the Toronto Sun as a result of the Golf FAM we hosted in November through VisitNC. The article appeared in print and online in the Toronto Sun but it also appeared in 70 other publications in Canada online. Also in March, Family Vacation Critic included Bald Head Island in 10 Secret East Coast Beach Vacations Round-up and Coastal Living included Southport in 10 Best Places to Live on the Coast in 2019 Round-up. The total circulation was 54,181,021 with an earned media value of \$300,628 and an editorial value of \$901,000.

Mitzi York advised the Board that she is working on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year with Walker Marketing/GlennDevins and Pineapple PR. We will bring recommendations to the Board at the May Board meeting. Mitzi York advised that work is moving along on the new website with Simpleview. She thinks that the website will launch in October. She advised that one item of discussion was adding pages for the islands and towns to assist with SEO. The recommendation was to do that only for the major towns. Mitzi York feels that we should do that for all the towns. Several Board members agreed. Some recommendations from Simpleview deviate from current policy like adding shopping listings. We do not currently do that because there are so many retail businesses and they often go out of business. We may not implement all of Simpleview's wireframe recommendations. Simpleview offers a service where they will sell ads to our partners and share revenues. Mitzi York discussed the service with Wilmington and Rowan County. Pricing is based on number of pages and visits to the website. Rowan County advised that it was the larger partners that participated not the smaller ones and that it did not generate a lot of money. There was a brief discussion about Rowan County's pricing. Eddie Walters asked how much would the TDA receive. Mitzi York advised that she has not had any detailed discussions with Simpleview. In the past the Board has not had interest in advertising and she wanted to gauge the Board's interest. The consensus of the Board was to not pursue it at this time. Mitzi York reported that we have a German writer visiting with us next week through VisitNC and we are looking at another writer visiting the county in June from InStyle.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for March. In March, we received 36,072 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 46,454 new visitors to our website and 40,173 views of the partner pages and from there 10,488 visits to our partners' websites. She reviewed the list of media that ran in March. Year-to-date, we have received 96,598 leads compared to 95,011 in March last fiscal year. Top states for leads were New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New Jersey. The top campaign in March was the Interfuse Leisure lead generation campaign. In March, we had 46,454 new users and 136,097 page views. The number of new users and page views was down about 2.5% from the previous March. The top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program, direct traffic, TravelSpike display and Our State email. The Our State email had the highest number of goal

completions. Top keywords have been very consistent with North Carolina beaches and dynamic search ads at the top. The top pages viewed were the home page, accommodations, Oak Island page, Islands and Towns page and Holden Beach page. The home page, Islands and Towns page and Request a Guide page were the top landing pages. Top states were North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Illinois. Top metro areas were Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, Wilmington, Chicago, Atlanta, and Washington DC. There has been a big jump in Chicago traffic in recent months but we have not been able to determine why. Mitzi York advised the Board on marketing efforts in the Atlanta market. Because of the high cost of paid media in Atlanta most of our efforts have been through PR. Between 2016 and the end of last year, traffic from new users in Atlanta to our website has increased 75%. Mitzi York advised that we are looking at more options like the Our State eblast through other similar publications with email programs. Mitzi York reported that we now have an account with LSI. There are around 6 Brunswick County participants now mostly in the Bald Head Island/Oak Island area. We can pull data to see what the occupancy rate is, how far out people are booking, etc.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VIII. New Business:

Maryann Azzato informed the Board of the upcoming BBQ Cook-off on BBQ Road event at Silver Coast Winery.

IX. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Eddie Walters. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 pm.

NEXT MEETING: May 28, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.