

# **Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority**

**August 28, 2018**

**Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT**

**In Attendance:** Maryann Azzato, Glenda Browning, Dana Fisher, Jerry Helms, Melaney Robbins, Buddy Rudd, and Whitney Sauls. **Absent:** Bill Bernier, Bonnie Cox, and Eddie Walters. **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 3:00 pm.

**II. Public Comment:**

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

**III. Approval of July 24, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes:**

A motion was made by Whitney Sauls and seconded by Jerry Helms to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2018 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

**V. Executive Director's Report:**

Mitzi York advised that the income statement for June was a draft since the audit is not complete. She did not expect any major changes. April occupancy tax revenues totaled \$80,581.13. May and June revenues are reflected in the Accrual column and total \$430,506.10. The largest expenditures in June were for Media and Agency Fee. Expenditures for the month totaled \$24,900.15 plus accruals in the amount of \$53,951.01. The ending bank balance was \$471,402.43. Mitzi York reviewed the July financial statement. She pointed out that July shows no occupancy tax collections because funds received in July were for May and accrued to the prior year. Major expenditure in July were for Media and the Agency Fee. Expenses for the month were \$83,962.58 plus \$30,153.67 in accruals. The ending bank balance was \$440,119.81. Mitzi York also reviewed the occupancy tax report through June. Revenues for June were nearly 14% over last June bringing our year-end total 8.05% over last fiscal year. Jerry Helms if there was any way to translate the 8% growth to X number of nights or X number of people. Mitzi York advised that she did not see that as possible given the mix of types and sizes of accommodations. Whitney Sauls added the varied prices also makes that difficult. Whitney Sauls asked if we could identify revenues by type of accommodation. Mitzi York advised that it would be difficult given the information made available. Jerry Helms asked if the occupancy tax growth was based on increased visitors or increase in rates. Whitney Sauls advised it was probably a mix of both. Glenda Browning asked about the annual study by the State. Mitzi York advised that the study shows growth in spending by tourists. It does not break down number of visitors or growth in rates. Whitney Sauls advised

that there are products for the rental management industry that will give RevPAR and ADR but everyone would have to participate. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Buddy Rudd. The motion passed unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that last week she participated in the State's media mission in Raleigh. Pineapple PR will be doing follow-up with the media participants. We are working on our Fall Leisure media FAM scheduled for the end of September. Our media participants include the Lifestyle Editor and a photographer from World Bride Magazine, a freelance journalist from Washington DC that is a frequent contributor to The Georgetowner, a Charlotte based blogger and social media influencer, and a freelancer out of Washington DC that frequently writes for the Travel Channel and National Geographic. We have a writer with the Atlanta Journal Constitution scheduled but there is a chance she will have to drop out.

Mitzi York reviewed the PR media that ran in July. We had events featured online with the Atlanta Journal Constitution and Carolina Country and also in print with Our State Magazine. MSN included the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival in an online article "The Best Independence Day Celebration in Every State". Fodor's Travel included Southport in an online article "America's 25 Favorite Beach Towns". DC Refined included Holden Beach, Sunset Beach, and Bald Head Island in an online article "2018 Beach Guide: Here's Where to be Beaching in the Carolinas". The total circulation was 27,655,033. The earned media value was \$109,889.29 and earned editorial value was \$329,667.87. Southern Living's South's Best voting is underway. Ocean Isle Beach, Southport, and Bald Head Island are in the running for best beach town and Southport is in the running for best small town in North Carolina.

Mitzi York advised the Board that work will begin shortly on the 2019 Vacation guide and Golf guide. She also advised the Board that a committee composed of Bonnie Cox, Eddie Walters and Buddy Rudd heard presentations from companies to develop our new website. The process to develop a new website may take 6 to 8 months. Once a decision is made on the selection of the vendor, the Board will be notified. September 10 and 11, Mitzi York will be in Washington DC for the VisitNC media mission. Mitzi York also reported that she has filled the Marketing Specialist position that has been vacant for a while. The Marketing Assistant position is still open. The Marketing Specialist will also be trained to perform the Marketing Assistant duties.

## **VI. Marketing Committee Report**

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for July. Not a lot media ran in July. In July, we received 2,753 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 54,798 unique visitors to our website and 56,399 views of the partner pages and from there 14,382 visits to our partners' websites. Media

included Guest Quest, NC Travel Guide, SEM, and VisitNC. Leads received in July totaled 2,753 compared to 5,561 for July of last year. Last July, we received leads from more of the spring campaigns into July than we did this year. Mitzi York reminded the Board that at the last meeting the question of why did we have fewer leads in the current year than last fiscal year came up. The marketing report tracks leads on a fiscal year basis and the guides are printed on a calendar year basis. In the spring of 2017, we received 90,000 leads and we were concerned about having enough guides for the year. As a result, we moved some of the money in FY 17-18 from lead generation to awareness media. That accounts for the drop in the number of leads from FY 16-17 to FY 17-18. The top states for July were North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia.

Mitzi York reviewed the Google analytics reports for July. We had 54,798 new users in June and 160,371 page views on the website. That is a decrease of about 20% in new users from July of last year. We have been seeing a drop in our organic traffic over the last 3 or 4 months. Walker Marketing will be doing a SEO audit of the website to see if there are some things we can do to increase traffic even before we build a new website such as getting our security certificate for a secure site. Some of the reasons Walker has given us for the drop in traffic include the fact that there are more competing sites and there has been a drop in referral traffic from VisitNC since the launch of their new website. Jerry Helms asked if the agency is paid for our monthly SEO. Mitzi York confirmed that they do the cost per click program and provide quarterly reports on the website. The cost of SEO work is not spread out evenly each month but several projects are identified for the year. Since Walker took over the account we saw increases in traffic to the site until the last 3 or 4 months. Mitzi York has spoken to VisitNC about the drop in referral traffic to our site. Top landing pages in July were the islands and towns page, 4<sup>th</sup> of July page, and request a guide page. The top pages overall were the islands and towns page, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival, accommodations page, and Oak Island page. The top states were North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The top metro areas were Charlotte, Wilmington, Raleigh-Durham and Atlanta.

**VII. Old Business:**

Mitzi York advised the Board that Coastal Printing is now doing our bulk mailings. We have gotten our own bulk mail stamp so we can verify when mail is delivered to the Post Office.

**VII. New Business:**

No new business.

**IX. Adjourn:**

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Dana Fisher. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: September 25, 2018 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.**