

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

December 4, 2018

Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

In Attendance: Billy Bernier, Glenda Browning, Bonnie Cox, Dana Fisher, Jerry Helms, Melaney Robbins, Whitney Sauls, and Eddie Walters. **Absent:** Maryann Azzato and Buddy Rudd. **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 October 23, 2018 minutes

Whitney Sauls motioned to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2018 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Glenda Browning and approved unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial statement for the month of October. The occupancy taxes reflected were collected for the month of August and were due to the County in September. With the hurricane in September, not all August funds were reported to County and, therefore, the funds shown are a lot less than expected for August. Revenues for October totaled \$76,991.04. The major expenses in October were media and the agency fee. Expenditures included \$45,259.27 plus \$43,699.78 in accruals. The ending bank balance in October was \$1,017,552.88.

Mitzi York pointed out that at the last meeting July and August were down. In November, we received a payment of \$335,403.79 that included additional July and August funds as well as September collections. July is still down but August is up over last year. September is flat. Year-to-date, we are 1.8% down from this point last year. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Melaney Robbins. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York reviewed some of the highlights from the Audit for the year ending June 30, 2018 prepared by Martin Starnes & Associates. She noted that the findings in the back of the audit are consistent with prior years' relating to segregation of duties due to our small staff. She advised the Board to let her know if they had any questions after they had a chance to review the audit.

Mitzi York presented the Resolution Establishing the 2019 Schedule of Meetings. The schedule follows the pattern of previous years – the fourth Tuesday of each month except for November and December. There is no November meeting included in the schedule and the December meeting is scheduled for December 3. Dana Fisher motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Glenda Browning. The motion passed unanimously.

Mitzi York presented the Resolution Amending the FY 2018-19 Budget. At the last Board meeting, Walker Marketing presented a plan for additional Spring marketing which included primarily TV but also funds for search and YouTube. The resolution would appropriate \$304,975 from Fund Balance to implement the recommend Spring Campaign. Glenda Browning motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Eddie Walters. The motion was approved unanimously. Mitzi York advised that she would provide the TV schedule when it is finalized.

Mitzi York advised that the golf guide should be delivered on Friday. Work is still underway on the vacation guide. Ad sales are slow and she expects to have maybe two pages fewer in ads in this year's guide. Mitzi York advised that we had some golf travel writers from Canada visit last week that were brought in by VisitNC. During October the Charlotte Observer, Atlanta Journal Constitution, Carolina Country and Trips to Discover included some of our Christmas events in their online calendars. We also received coverage on Bald Head Island in the off-season and Nicholas Sparks books set in the area. The total circulation was 35,520,102 with an earned media value of \$49,612.57 and earned editorial value of \$148,837.71. Mitzi York advised that we are still working on scheduling the leisure and golf FAMs we had to cancel as a result of Florence. The leisure FAM will probably be at the end of April and the golf FAM the second week in May.

Mitzi York advised the Board on the work of the Committee formed to review companies to build our new website. The Committee selected Simpleview, a company that specializes in destination websites and that has built over 200 destination websites. The other distinction of the company is that it would charge us \$33,000 and after that a monthly fee of \$1800 for licensing and hosting instead of a lump sum fee which would typically be around \$100,000. Additional modules beyond the base would be extra. We would need a module for our blog that would run \$125 per month. We also spoke with them about doing our SEO which would be a separate fee of \$1800 per month. There is a \$500 optional plan for monthly support. The \$500 is a discounted rate that would carry over if not used. Glenda Browning asked about the current SEO costs. Mitzi York advised that currently, we do not have a monthly fee for SEO it is more on a project basis. The monthly fee would include back-end work and analysis and recommendations. If new content is required we could supply it, or Walker could provide it or Simpleview could develop it. Whitney Sauls asked how long the \$1800 is for. Mitzi York advised that it would be for as long we used the website. Jerry Helms asked if we would own the website. Mitzi York advised that we

would not own the website. Simpleview views the website as a service not a one-time product. One benefit is that if Google made changes that required updates to all their clients' websites then we would get the benefit of that without costs. Eddie Walters advised that his company pays a comparable amount monthly for SEO. Mitzi York advised that the Committee interviewed three companies. One other advantage with Simpleview is that it is a preferred partner with Google. Whitney Sauls asked how many hours are included in the \$500 fee. Mitzi York responded that she believes it is five. With the other companies interviewed, one would build the CRM and the other would contract out the CRM so monthly fees for the CRM is not unusual. Eddie Walters added that paying monthly may facilitate improvements to the site. Whitney Sauls expressed concern about the cost of the website over five years. Mitzi York advised that we would pay SEO and maintenance costs regardless of which company was selected. Jerry Helms remarked that over 5 years the cost would be \$141,000. Jerry Helms added that he liked the synergy of selecting a specialist in the industry but sometimes there is benefit to selecting a company outside of the industry. Bonnie Cox added that the committee did consider the options. Whitney Sauls asked if Mitzi York had spoken to other Simpleview clients. She confirmed that she did speak to other clients and that they all indicated that they felt it was the best decision. Eddie Walters remarked that Microsoft 365 is the same model. He liked the model of paying a subscription to stay current. Whitney Sauls expressed concern about not owning the website but noted that a recurring monthly fee is becoming more common. Mitzi York added that we would work with Walker to assist with the design to stay consistent with the brand and to assist with the transfer of the CRM. Our contract costs with Walker would be reduced for the website maintenance and part of the quarterly report. Jerry Helms advised that he had a bad experience with an industry leader in building a website. They had to fit the company's mold. After a year they left the company. Mitzi York reaffirmed that the SEO is separate and the \$500 monthly maintenance is optional as well. The \$500 would carry over. Simpleview agreed to let us out of the SEO contract if we were not happy with their work. The average time to build a website is six months though Mitzi York would not want to go live in the summer. We would plan to launch in September. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the Committee's recommendation, seconded by Glenda Browning. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that she met with the new owners of Brunswick Plantation. They made a couple of requests for consideration. They asked if they could have sponsored posts in our social media. Mitzi York advised that she did not feel we had enough golf fans to offer sponsored posts for our partners. Another request was to send an eblast out to our list. Mitzi York spoke to Walker about the request. One concern is if someone unsubscribed, they would be unsubscribing to our list. An option Walker suggested was rather than a dedicated eblast at a cost of \$3000 or so, charge the partner to have a spot in our regular eblast. We publish two golf eblasts at the beginning of the year and then two in the fall. Glenda Browning added that the option would have to be offered to all

partners. Whitney Sauls remarked that the sponsored eblasts would be complicated. It would be more beneficial to provide the emails to the partners. One option is to have sponsored blog posts. Mitzi York added that we have difficulty selling ads and getting partners to update their free golf guide listings. Our audience isn't used to seeing sponsored content and Mitzi York isn't sure the return is there for the partners for the cost. By consensus, the Board decided not to pursue sponsored content in TDA social media and eblasts. There was a brief conversation regarding golf marketing with partner financial participation.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Reports for October and November. In October, we received 4,128 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 22,624 visitors to our website and 24,993 views of the partner pages and from there 5,001 visits to our partners' websites. There was not a lot of media running in October or November. Year-to-date, we received 35,133 leads compared to October last fiscal year. In October we had 22,624 new users which is 12.71% down from October last year. In November, we had 17,569 new users which is up 8.24% over the previous November. In October the top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program. Top keywords were dynamic search ads and North Carolina beaches. Event pages were at the top of landing pages and total pages viewed. Top states were North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Top cities were Wilmington, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, and Atlanta. In November, the top sources of traffic to the site were Google organic, cost-per-click, direct traffic, and weather.com. Top keywords were the dynamic search ads, North Carolina beaches, Oak Island, and three wedding related keywords. The top page landing pages were the home page, wedding page and some of our event pages. The top states were North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia. Top cities were similar to October, Wilmington, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, and Atlanta.

VII. Old Business:

Mitzi York advised the Board that Jennifer Walsh left the TDA November 7 and we are contracting with her to do some of the fulfillment and other duties remotely.

VII. New Business:

No new business.

IX. Adjourn:

Jerry Helms motioned to adjourn, seconded by Eddie Walters. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING: January 22, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.