

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

January 23, 2018

Meeting Minutes

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

I. Call to Order:

Bonnie Cox called to order the TDA's regular monthly meeting at the Brunswick County TDA office at 712 Village Rd SW in Shallotte at 3:25 pm.

II. Public Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of December 5, 2017 Board Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Billy Bernier and seconded by Maryann Azzato to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2017 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial reports for November and December. Occupancy tax revenues received during November in the amount of \$206,774.60 were collected for September and other months. Revenues for November totaled \$203,690.47. The largest expenditures for the month were the agency fees and media costs. The Public Relations agency fee is higher than typical due to costs associated with the Travel Writers FAM in September. Expenditures for the month totaled \$53,574.72 plus \$17,812.00 in accruals. Our ending bank balance for November was \$1,142,081.63. In December occupancy taxes amounted to \$41,723.84. Revenues for the month totaled \$56,068.46. The largest expense in December were media related. Specifically, \$27,550 for the NC Travel Guide. The next largest expenditure was the agency fee. Expenses for the month totaled \$55,587.76 plus accruals in the amount of \$33,985.13. The bank balance at the end of December was \$1,124,238.91. Mitzi York also reviewed the occupancy tax report. October was up 10.54% over October of the prior year. The report shows November down 25% but the report from the County was cut off at December 22. There were towns whose revenues were not included in the report and should be in next month's report. Whitney Sauls pointed out that last year October was also up 10% over the previous year. Currently we are up over last year 3.46%. Mitzi York advised that if we removed November's incomplete number from the report, we would be up 4.5%. Melaney Robbins motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Maryann Azzato. The motion passed unanimously.

Mitzi York provided the Board with copies of the new Vacation and Golf Guides. We performed the list hygiene for our email database. We had more than 207,000 people on our email list prior to the list hygiene. 62,000 people did not open or respond to the list hygiene email plus we had around 4000 questionable email addresses so that brought our list size down to about 140,000 people.

Mitzi York reported that during December, Southport Winterfest was included in Our State Magazine's roundup of weekend events and online calendar; Holden Beach and Oak Island were included in Trip Hobo's online article "Best Beaches in North Carolina for Some Fun-time By the Sea"; and Winterfest was featured in Atlanta Journal-Constitution Southeast event calendar section. The total circulation/UVM was 1,347,103 for an earned editorial value of \$39,135. Mitzi York sent to the Board prior to the meeting, links to the online and print article in TOWN Magazine. The article is a result of the September FAM trip. The email also included a link to an article on Red Tricycle on what to see and do in the Brunswick Islands. The website Red Tricycle has since published as an article "12 Best Beach Vacations You Want to Take NOW" including the Brunswick Islands. The Red Tricycle website has 1.6 million unique visitors a month.

Mitzi York advised the Board that the NC Governor's Conference now known as the 365 Conference will be in Winston-Salem March 4-6. She asked that if anyone would like to attend as a representative of the TDA to let her know. Mitzi York advised the Board that Whitney Sauls shared with her an education campaign by the Vacation Rental Managers on booking direct. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the TDA may want to share the information with partners and on social media. Mitzi York notified the Board of changes made by VisitNC.com regarding listings on their website. We have been asked to review all our listings. VisitNC will remove all chain dining listings from their website. They have asked us to limit our restaurant listings to signature restaurants with a strong visitor appeal. That does not mean we will not have to remove them from our website.

There was a brief discussion about the new Google "Things to Do" content in search. As a result, Mitzi York recommended that we go back to putting some money in search for our town names. The agency would add the town names back to our keywords. By consensus it was agreed to go forward with that recommendation.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Reports for November and December. In November, we received 1,171 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 17,961 unique visitors to our website and 20,229 views to the partner pages and from there 4,183 visits to our partners' websites. We did not have a lot media running in either November or December. Leads year-to-date

total 37,412 compared to 37,226 for the same time period last year. The top states were North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Mitzi York reviewed the Google analytics reports for November. We had 17,961 unique visitors in November and 46,749 page views on the website. The bounce rate was 48.43%. Comparing that to November of last year, the number of users was up 23% and page views were up 16%. Google organic search was the number one source of traffic to the website followed by direct traffic, our cost per click program, and VisitNC. Our events page was the top page viewed followed by the Islands and Towns page. The top states were North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina. Wilmington (local traffic) was our top metro area followed by Charlotte and Raleigh.

In December, we received 606 leads and 12,919 unique visitors. Leads YTD in December were 38,018 compared to 38,387 in the prior year. There were 16,942 partner referrals and from our website 3,429 leads to partner websites. Top states were North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Florida and Ohio. The number of unique visitors to the website was down 20% over last year. In December 2016 we had some media that ran that we did not run this past December. This is the first month we've had in a long time that we've seen a drop in traffic over the prior year. Top sources of traffic were Google organic, cost per click, direct, and VisitNC. The top keyword was North Carolina beaches. Our events were the most visited pages on the website. North Carolina was the top state and Wilmington the top metro area followed by Charlotte.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VIII. New Business:

No new business.

IX. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Whitney Sauls. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 pm.

NEXT MEETING: February 27, 2018 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.