

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

January 22, 2019

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Billy Bernier, Glenda Browning, Bonnie Cox, Jerry Helms, Melaney Robbins, and Whitney Sauls. **Absent:** Maryann Azzato, Dana Fisher, Buddy Rudd and Eddie Walters. **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 3:04 pm.

II. Public Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of December 4, 2018 minutes

Whitney Sauls motioned to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2018 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Jerry Helms and approved unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial statement for the months of November and December. The occupancy taxes reflected in November were collected for multiple months since September was disrupted by the hurricane. Revenues for November totaled \$326,537.91. The major expenses in November were the agency fee and production/research which included the annual photo shoot. Expenditures included \$42,434.98 in actual expenses plus \$38,107.39 in accruals. The ending bank balance in November was \$1,252,030.54.

In December, the \$71,489.87 in occupancy taxes funds were primarily for the month of October. The major expenses in December were media, the agency fee, and printing of the golf guide. Expenditures included \$76,351.53 in actual expenses and \$45,488.41 in accruals. The ending bank balance was \$1,211,026.87.

Mitzi York pointed out that at the last meeting, August was up about 6% and September was relatively flat. Since then we've received additional August and September collections. August is now up 8.7% and September is up 2.15%. The November funds are incomplete because the County's report closed prior to Christmas. Mitzi York does not expect that November will remain down from last year. If November is excluded from the Board report, year-to-date we are up a little less than 1% instead of being down a little less than 1%. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Melaney Robbins. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that the vacation guide is complete and that delivery is expected tomorrow. The golf TV commercial started running this month. The leisure TV commercial will start running next month. The leisure commercial will run in Charlotte, Columbus and target markets in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. For the November Public Relations report, Southport was featured in "Take a Road Trip" in the Carolina Living e-newsletter. We had some Christmas events listed in the Charlotte Observer online and Carolina Country online. The website Black Southern Belle included the Brunswick Islands in a round-up "Holiday Travel Fun: 10 Ways to Celebrate Christmas". The total circulation was 9,525,366. The earned media value was \$6,559.08 and the editorial value was \$19,677.24. The December PR report includes a previously unreported item – the Silver Coast Winery is featured in the 2018-19 edition of Where Guestbook Charlotte. The Kindred Spirit Mailbox was included in The Travel 100 website article "Kindred Spirit Mailbox: Tell Your Secrets to the Mailbox in the Sand". The Southport Provision Company was included in The Daily Meal as the best seafood shack in North Carolina. The story was also picked up by Charlotte Patch "Here's the Best Food & Drink in North Carolina for 2019". The total circulation was 3,228,433. The media value \$34,958.02 and the editorial value \$104,874.06.

Mitzi York advised that at the last Board meeting she was asked about the platform Simpleview would use for the new website. They provided the following information: "The Simpleview CMS is built on open source staples, such as Redhat Enterprise Linux using Node.JS as the server-side programming language, MongoDB as the database, and Nginx as the web server. We have also extensively utilized the Angular.js SPA framework in building our Member/Partner Extranet."

They also confirmed that the \$500 monthly maintenance fee is for 5 hours and that if we do not use 5 hours of service it would roll over into the next month. The hours can be used for maintenance or additional programming. Mitzi York has had three conference calls with Simpleview and they will be soon exporting data from the existing site. The goal is to launch the new website in September or October.

Staff is working on the FAM trips with the leisure FAM to be held the end of April and the golf FAM in early May. We will probably have the same golf writers that were originally scheduled for the fall but we will probably have at least some different writers on the leisure FAM. The plan is to continue to host the FAMs in the spring in the future.

Mitzi York advised the Board that she has signed up to participate in the VisitNC Canada Media Mission next month. There will only be 4 partners giving us a greater chance for exposure. Tourism Day is planned for February 12 in Raleigh. We will have a booth at the legislative reception.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for December. In December, we received 1,746 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 14,138 new visitors to our website and 16,793 views of the partner pages and from there 3,288 visits to our partners' websites. There was not a lot of media running in December. Year-to-date, we have received 38,188 leads compared to 38,018 in December last fiscal year. Top states for leads were North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In December we had 14,138 new users and 33,698 page views. The bounce rate was 56% which is higher than typical which may be because a lot of the traffic was event related. New users was up 20.38% over the previous December. The top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program and direct traffic. Traffic from VisitNC is still about 50% down from last year. VisitNC has said that traffic is down industry wide for much the same reasons we have discussed – competing websites such as TripAdvisor and bookings sites as well as what Google is doing. Top keywords were North Carolina beaches and dynamic search ads. There were also a lot of wedding related keywords on the list. The top pages viewed were the home page, wedding page, accommodations, and events. The home page, wedding page and Christmas Flotilla were the top landing pages. Top states were North Carolina, Illinois, Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Top cities were Wilmington, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, Chicago, and Atlanta.

We did plan to conduct a conversion study survey in December. Initial response was slow so we it was rescheduled to January. The presentation will be scheduled for the February Board meeting. Jack Yager has indicated that preliminarily the conversion rate and daily spend are very similar to previous surveys. Mitzi York has a meeting next week with the ad agency to begin planning for next fiscal year. She asked that if Board members had anything particular for her to discuss with them for next year's planning to let her know.

There were brief discussions of what the state is doing for marketing post hurricane and the possible impact of the bridge closing in Oak Island.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VII. New Business:

Mitzi York advised the Board that the Governor's Conference is March 31 to April 2 in Wilmington. She asked if any Board members are interested in attending to let her know.

IX. Adjourn:

Billy Bernier motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jerry Helms. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 pm.

NEXT MEETING: February 26, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.