

# **Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority**

**June 26, 2018**

## **Meeting Minutes**

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

### **I. Call to Order:**

Bonnie Cox, 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 Hearing on FY 2018-19 Budget**

Glenda Browning motioned to open the public hearing, seconded by Buddy Rudd. The motion was approved unanimously. Bonnie Cox recognized Gary Walker from Walker Marketing. Gary Walker thanked the Board for allowing Walker Marketing to work with the TDA. Gary Walker offered to answer any questions the Board may have on the budget. Bonnie thanked Gary Walker and said the Board enjoys working with Walker Marketing. Gary Walker also advised the Board that his company has been purchased but that he is still running the company. He met with Mitzi York and Bonnie Cox along with a representative of the new owner this spring. The agency will keep the Walker Marketing brand and operate independently. No one additional requested to speak during the public hearing. Glenda Browning motioned to close the public hearing, seconded by Melaney Robbins. The motion passed unanimously.

### **III. Public Comment:**

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

### **IV. Approval of May 22, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes:**

A motion was made by Dana Fisher and seconded by Glenda Browning to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2018 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

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

**FY 2018-19 Budget Adoption.** Mitzi York reviewed the Budget Ordinance and proposed management budget for FY 2018-19. She pointed out that funds for the new website and CRM are allocated in the special projects line. The media line is less than the original adopted budget for the current fiscal year. Other changes include small increases in the fulfillment line and public relations line. Glenda Browning motioned to approve the budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Buddy Rudd and passed unanimously.

Mitzi York reviewed the financial report for May 2018. Occupancy tax revenues collected totaled \$41,681.60. Major expenses for the month were media and the agency fee. Mitzi York pointed out changes to the management budget. The Marketing line was reduced and the Agency Fee line fee increased accordingly to cover some additional projects, sales taxes, and some costs originally budgeted in the publication lines. The bottom line total remains the same. Mitzi York pointed out that we received about \$9000 in additional occupancy tax funds for March. March is now about 38% over last year. She anticipates that we will receive additional funds for April. Year-to-date occupancy tax collections are up 6.44% over last year. Eddie Walters motioned to accept the financial report, seconded by Glenda Browning. The motion passed unanimously.

Since the last Board meeting, Mitzi York attended NCTIA's Tourism Day reception in Raleigh. She spoke with Senator Rabon who assured her he would not support any school start change bills. The group heard similar sentiments from other legislators as well as assurances that any changes to occupancy laws were unlikely.

Mitzi York advised that there was an MSN online article in April "30 Small Beach Towns that Should be on Your Radar" that included Bald Head Island that was not previously reported. May PR included the Columbia Metropolitan article on Southport; inclusion of Southport First Gallery Walk in Our State online; inclusion of several local events in Access Atlanta online, Carolina Country online, and Charlotte Observer online. Fodor's Travel included the Sunset Beach Swing Bridge Museum in an article "14 Strange Things that are in the Weirdest Museums of Small Town America". Bald Head Island and Oak Island were included in a US News & World Report online article "Best Beaches in North Carolina". AAA Go Carolina included the NC 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival in its print article "Festival Fun". As a result of the last fall FAM, Pathfinder's magazine featured the Brunswick Islands in the story "Brunswick Islands, NC: Perfect Escape". The earned media value over \$744,000. The earned editorial value was over \$2 million. The total circulation was 234 million.

Mitzi York advised the Board that staff did an inventory count at our fulfillment vendor and found approximately 16,000 more guides than anticipated. The vendor said there was a mailing of 10,000 in April that has not gone out. We were however billed for it. We have requested the Post Office paperwork for all the bulk mailings for the year. There are still 6,000 guides in question. The vendor has requested a fee increase. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed that guides should be mailed to the outstanding 10,000 leads. It was also agreed that Mitzi York should pursue looking for a new vendor. Glenda Browning motioned to have the 10,000 guides mailed and for Mitzi York to determine which vendors are large enough to do what we need on a timely manner with the proper documentation and use her own judgement from there and bring back the results

at the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Melaney Robbins and passed unanimously.

The islands video project is close to being finished. Mitzi York distributed some modified questions taken from our brand survey to the Board for their input. Mitzi York advised the Board that she has received almost 200 resumes for Jenny's position and the other open position. Mitzi York reported that she has spoken to the company that built the Wilmington CVB's website. The company has built over 200 destination websites – the front end and CRM. Their model includes paying roughly \$47,000 upfront then \$1800 monthly fee plus \$500 maintenance. Other fees include \$1800 for SEO and fee for special modules. She asked the Board for input on timing for setting up presentation from website vendors. Bonnie Cox suggested that she proceed to setting up the presentations. Glenda Browning suggested that Mitzi York might also want to contact Wilmington Design. Eddie Walters added that he likes the idea of working with someone who specializes in this industry. Melaney Robbins also suggested contacting InterCoastal Net Design.

#### **VI. Marketing Committee Report**

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Reports for May. In May, we received 5,033 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 41,703 unique visitors to our website and 47,257 views of the partner pages and from there 12,574 visits to our partners' websites. Media included the Guest Quest, Leisure TV Columbus, Ohio, NC Travel Guide, SEM, VisitNC. Leads year-to-date total 119,449 compared to 127,313 for the same time period last year. The top states were North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Mitzi York reviewed the Google analytics reports for May. We had 41,703 unique visitors in May and 134,320 page views on the website. The bounce rate was 45.11%. Comparing that to May of last year, the number of new users was down about 12%. Possible reasons for the decrease include we had some banner advertising that ran last May that did not run this year and there was less traffic to our restaurant pages this May compared to last year. Google organic search was the number one source of traffic to the website followed by our cost per click program, direct traffic, Facebook, our email program, Bing organic, and VisitNC. Our islands and towns page was the top page viewed followed by the accommodations page. The top states were North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia. Charlotte was our top metro area followed by Wilmington, Raleigh, Atlanta and Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem.

#### **VII. Old Business:**

No old business.

#### **VII. New Business:**

There was a brief discussion on the progress of the Oak Island beach renourishment project.

**IX. Adjourn:**

Eddie Walters motioned to adjourn, seconded by Glenda Browning. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: July 24, 2018 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.**