

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

March 26, 2019

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Maryann Azzato, Billy Bernier, Glenda Browning, Bonnie Cox, Jerry Helms, Melaney Robbins, Buddy Rudd, and Eddie Walters. **Absent:** Dana Fisher and Whitney Sauls. **Also in Attendance:** Mitzi York, Executive Director; Dana Compagnone, Vice President Client Service for GlynnDevins; Michelle Hubacher Vice President Walker Marketing; and Brittany Dagenhart, Account Manager Walker Marketing.

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. Update from Walker Marketing/GlynnDevins

Brittany Dagenhart advised the Board that she is back full time as the lead for the Brunswick Islands account. There are changes taking place with the Walker brand that Michelle Hubacher and Dana Compagnone will discuss. She reassured the Board that TDA would continue to get the level of service it has come to expect with the same team working on the account. Michelle Hubacher reminded the Board that she was a partner with Gary Walker and has remained with the firm as the Managing Director. It was a year ago that GlynnDevins acquired Walker Marketing. Walker brand is now phasing out but the team on the account will be the same. Dana Compagnone advised the Board that it should not feel any impact from the integration of Walker into GlynnDevins. GlynnDevins does offer some services that Walker Marketing did not. The TDA should only see small differences maybe in how an invoice or report is presented. However, if the TDA wants something presented differently just let Brittany know. It will be business as usual other than a broader amount of expertise available for Brittany and her team to tap into. Brittany Dagenhart added that budgeting and pricing will remain the same. Glenda Browning asked about services that GlennDevins is bringing that Walker did not have. Michelle Hubacher advised that they now have research capabilities and very deep technology capabilities. Dana Compagnone advised the Board that the TDA is always free to contact her directly.

IV. Approval of February 26, 2019 minutes

Maryann Azzato motioned to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2019 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Glenda Browning and approved unanimously.

V. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York reviewed the financial statement for the month of February. Revenues for February totaled \$51,661.90. The major expenses in February were the agency fee, media, and postage. The postage expense cover a couple of months' worth of bulk mail postage. Mitzi York advised that there will also be significant postage expenses in the March report as a lot of the lead generation programs started running in February. Expenditures included \$58,559.46 in actual expenses plus \$84,393.22 in accruals. The ending bank balance in February was \$959,542.68.

Mitzi York pointed out in the occupancy tax report that January is up almost 30% over last year. Year-to-date, we are 3.19% up over this time last year. Mitzi York advised that she has spoken to the County Finance Office and the occupancy tax revenue number they have recommended for next fiscal year is \$1.65 million. Jerry Helms motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Buddy Rudd. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that VisitNC's International Reps will be visiting the county prior to the 365 Conference in Wilmington. Bonnie Cox is providing accommodations. This will be their first visit to Brunswick County. A first hand visit will make them more likely to promote Brunswick County. In the month of February, in The Active Times the Kindred Spirit Mailbox and Sunset Beach was included in the article "The Best Date Spots" in every state. Readers Digest included the Sunset Inn and the Brunswick Islands in a story on the most romantic hotels in every state. Several local events were included in the Charlotte Observer online and Atlanta Journal Constitution online. 365 Atlanta Traveler, WTVD Raleigh, and South Magazine also included area events online. The total circulation was 15,952,364 with an earned media value of \$155,046.16 and an editorial value of \$465,138.48. Mitzi York advised the Board that an article appeared in the Toronto Sun recently as a result of the Golf FAM from November. The article was picked up by dozens of additional Canadian newspapers online. One of the other writers from that FAM asked for photos as she is working on an article for Golf Magazine.

Staff is working on the leisure FAM to be held the end of April and the golf FAM in early May. Mitzi York is also working with Pineapple PR on developing new golf content for the website, blogs, and email. Pineapple will be here in April to do a golf immersion visit. Funds from the Special Projects line will be used to cover the cost of the additional project. There will be funds available since we will not have to pay the entire cost of the website this fiscal year. Additionally, we have used the Special Projects/Remnant Space line to advertise with Morning Read (golf) and to sponsor an eblast with Our State Magazine. At the 365 Conference, the state will unveil its co-op programs for the coming year. Mitzi York asked for authorization to sign up for programs at the conference since some opportunities will have limits on participation. Glenda Browning so moved. The motion was seconded by Buddy Rudd and passed unanimously.

Jerry Helms asked since Walker is now part of a larger firm if there would be greater purchasing power that we could tap into. Mitzi York responded that the largest part of GlennDevins business is senior living and assisted living. She is not sure that there would be greater purchasing power that we could utilize. Glenda Browning asked if GlennDevins had a PR department. Mitzi York advised that Walker Marketing has had a PR department but she has been reluctant to switch because it takes a while to become well versed on a destination we have had great success in recent years with our existing PR agency.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for February. In February, we received 17,032 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 29,991 new visitors to our website and 28,957 views of the partner pages and from there 7,220 visits to our partners' websites. Year-to-date, we have received 60,526 leads compared to 69,403 in February last fiscal year. Top states for leads were Ohio, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New York. In February, we had 29,991 new users and 88,652 page views. The bounce rate was 52.6%. New users was down about 12% over the previous February. The top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program and direct traffic. Top keywords were North Carolina beaches and dynamic search ads. There were also several wedding related keywords on the list again. Brittany Dagenhart added that having additional dollars for wedding search has allowed us to better optimize wedding search for better quality traffic and increased engagement. The top pages viewed were the home page, accommodations, Holden Beach and Oak Island. The home page, wedding page and Holden Beach were the top landing pages. The golf page also did well in February. Top states were North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York. Brittany Dagenhart is to look at where the Chicago traffic is coming from. Top cities were Charlotte, Wilmington, Raleigh-Durham, New York, and Washington DC. Mitzi York added that the state is running TV in Nashville instead of Columbus so we have used the \$60,000 set aside to run in Nashville. \$500 will also be used to supplement search in Nashville. Our State will do their beach feature in their June issue. There will be an article on Holden Beach. Walker Marketing has recommended buying an ad in that issue and is looking at newsletter opportunities. Glenda Browning motioned to proceed with advertising with Our State in June. The motion was seconded by Eddie Walters and passed unanimously. Mitzi York also advised the Board that she would like to look for other opportunities to test media with our Special Projects budget. Mitzi York advised the Board that she has had meetings with WECT about their new Cape Fear Weekend program. She is still considering the program which includes video production.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VIII. New Business:

No new business.

IX. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Eddie Walters. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 pm.

NEXT MEETING: April 23, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.