

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

October 23, 2018

Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

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

I. Call to Order:

Glenda Browning, Vice-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 Comment:

No one requested to speak during the public comment period.

III. Approval of August 28, 2018 minutes and September 25, 2018 minutes

Maryann Azzato motioned to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2018 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Dana Fisher and approved unanimously. Whitney Sauls motioned to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2018 meeting, seconded by Maryann Azzato. The motion was approved unanimously.

IV. Recommendations for Spring Fund Balance Campaign

Mitzi York informed the Board that she received an email from Board of Commissioners Chairman Frank Williams asking if the TDA had any plans for hurricane recovery advertising similar to New Hanover County. Mitzi York advised him that she had been discussing with the ad agency additional spring marketing. The agency will be joining the meeting by phone to discuss the recommendations. Brittany Dagenhart and Elaine Cheedle joined the meeting via telephone. Some key items of the plan include:

- \$300,000 in additional spending
- Convey that NC's Brunswick Islands is open after Hurricane Florence to help ensure strong spring/summer visitation.
- Recommendation includes TV and YouTube video to supplement Core Media

Leisure & Golf

Plus SEM in TV markets to support searches driven by TV

Extend number of markets as affordable

- Incremental Wedding support via paid search

The market approach continues to focus TV in Charlotte and Columbus with the addition of Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The YouTube campaign will include focusing on our fully-produced videos but also current, quick video clips.

Whitney Sauls asked if we had seen growth in our YouTube traffic. Mitzi York advised that subscribers were up as well as engagement. Golf TV would start in

January and leisure in mid-February. Additional funding for wedding search is recommended as each month our wedding search budget gets maxed out. We have seen total clicks, CTR and conversions increase for wedding search as cost-per-click and cost-per-conversion decrease. We have also added additional funds for leisure and golf SEM currently underway. The recommend fund balance appropriation to cover the cost of the addition spring campaign is \$302,225 plus the cost developing the leisure drone video into a TV commercial. Mitzi York advised that she will prepare a resolution for the December Board meeting to appropriate the funds for the additional spring campaign.

V. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York advised the Board that the final June financial statement is included in the Board packet. She expects to have the audit at the next Board meeting. Also in the packet is a revised July statement. She pointed out that in the August financial report no occupancy tax is shown because funds received were for the prior year. Major expenses in August include media, agency fee, and postage. The ending bank balance in August was \$662,209.25. The September financial statement includes occupancy taxes collected for July. The major expense in September was the agency fee. Expenditures for the month totaled \$28,027.72 plus \$38,450.02 in accruals. The ending bank balance in September was \$1,023,615.78. Mitzi York pointed out that Hurricane Florence hit in September prior to occupancy taxes being due so August collections are incomplete. She is uncertain how the hurricane will impact the September collections. Mitzi York advised that she attended a VisitNC meeting recently in Jacksonville for destinations in southeast NC. The Crystal Coast representative said they thought their occupancy tax collections would be down 30% for the year as a result of the hurricane. 50% of their accommodations are offline. New Bern will be out of their offices for a year due to flooding. Wilmington will be kicking off a \$495,000 hurricane recovery advertising campaign. Other destinations were moving fall marketing money to the spring. VisitNC is trying to get an additional \$5 million for marketing. Melaney Robbins informed the Board that her offices flooded during the hurricane. Melaney Robbins motioned to approve the financial report, seconded by Maryann Azzato. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mitzi York advised the Board that she discussed with VisitNC the drop in referral traffic to our site. She was informed that we ranked 16th in referrals. Also, while overall traffic to their site is flat, their organic traffic is down which is where downstream traffic is generated. VisitNC said that organic traffic is down overall in the industry for the same reasons we have discussed in previous meetings. Whitney Sauls added that it is definitely more competitive out there.

The September PR report includes an article in Spark Magazine that was not included in our August report – “A Seaside Retreat: Summer’s the perfect time to soak it all in at Sunny Oak Island”. Trips to Discover did an online article on “5 Destinations from Nicholas Sparks Books in Coastal North Carolina” which

included Southport, Caswell Beach and Sunset Beach. Atlanta Journal Constitution included several of our events in their online calendar as did the Charlotte Observer. The total circulation was 37,549,768 with an earned media value of \$57,600 and earned editorial value of \$172,801. Mitzi York advised that we cancelled both the golf and leisure travel writers FAM. We may have to reschedule both of them back to back in the spring at the end of April. Mitzi York also added that the golf guide is almost finished. We are behind schedule in selling ads in the vacation guide because we wanted to give some time after the hurricane.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for September. In September, we received 12,337 leads/request for guides including downloads and views. There were 29,370 visitors to our website and 25,370 views of the partner pages and from there 4,778 visits to our partners' websites. Media included Better Homes and Gardens (added value), Guest Quest, NC Travel Guide, SEM, Interfuse/Connect Leisure, MMSI and VisitNC. YTD this fiscal year, we've received 31,005 leads compared to 33,175 for the same time period last year. The top states in September were Ohio, Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The top campaigns in September were our Interfuse Leisure and Golf campaigns.

Mitzi York reviewed the Google analytics report for September. We had 29,370 new users in September with 35,343 sessions. The number of new users is relatively flat from September of last year while page views are down and the bounce rate is up. This is due to the amount of traffic that came to our site for updated hurricane information and that then left the site. Mitzi York reported that the top sources of traffic to the site were Google organic, direct traffic, the cost per click program, Facebook, our eblasts, yahoo, and VisitNC. Top keywords were the dynamic search ads, Oak Island, and North Carolina beaches. The top page viewed was the travel map page which was where we put our hurricane update information. Other top pages were Oak Island, the home page, Holden Beach page, Sunset Beach page, Ocean Isle Beach page, and Calabash page. The travel map page was also the top landing page followed by the home page, Oak Island, Holden Beach and Sunset Beach pages. The top states were North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, and Georgia. Traffic from North Carolina was down compared to last year while states like Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania were up. Mitzi York added that she believed that was because people in North Carolina were more aware of what was happening with Hurricane Florence while folks from other states were coming to our page for updates.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VII. New Business:

No new business.

IX. Adjourn:

Maryann Azzato motioned to adjourn, seconded by Melaney Robbins. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

NEXT MEETING: December 4, 2018 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.