

Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority

August 27, 2019

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Bill Bernier, Glenda Browning, Bonnie Cox, Susan Freeman, Jerry Helms, Melaney Robbins, Buddy Rudd, Whitney Sauls, and Sharon Wright. **Absent:** Dana Fisher. **Also in Attendance:** Mitzi York, Executive Director.

I. Call to Order:

Chairman 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 3:00 pm.

II. Introduction of new Board Members

Bonnie Cox introduced and welcomed new Board member Susan Freeman. The Oath of Office was administered to all Board members present by Shannon Jackson, Notary.

III. Public Comment:

No one from the public requested to speak.

IV. Approval of July 23, 2019 minutes

Buddy Rudd motioned to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2019 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Whitney Sauls and approved unanimously.

V. Executive Director's Report:

Mitzi York advised the Board that the financial statement for June is pre-audit. Staff has been working to get all the information requested by the auditors. The auditors will be on site this week. She highlighted that the occupancy taxes shown for June current month are April collections. The accrual amount includes the May and June funds which were received in July and August. Revenues for June totaled \$59,463.77 plus \$522,404.72 in accruals. June expenses included final billing for the TV campaign and spring lead generation programs such as Interfuse/Connect and Navigate Media. Mitzi York explained the negative amount in the current month for the agency fee reflect payments for Google that were moved to the media line where they were budgeted. The special projects line is higher than normal because of expenses related to the development of the new website. Expenses for June were \$62,637.66 plus \$131,202.31 in accruals. The bank balance at the end of June was \$451,377.47. Mitzi York reviewed the financial report for July and pointed out that the reason no occupancy taxes are reported was that occupancy taxes received in July were for the month of May and reported in the June financial statement. July revenues totaled \$360.51. She advised that the media expenses were primarily related to Google adwords. The major expense for the month was the agency fee. The public relations agency fee line includes two payments – one for July and one for August. The total expenses

for July were \$51,824.45 plus accruals in the amount of \$21,343.75. She reviewed the occupancy tax report and advised that additional funds were received for May since the last meeting. May is now 3.82% up over May of last year. June was up 6.56%. We ended the year up 4.99% over last fiscal year. Mitzi York added that there is a chance that additional June funds will come in. She pointed out that for the current fiscal year we budgeted \$1,650,000 for occupancy tax collections and we exceeded that amount in FY 2019-20. Glenda Browning motioned to accept the financial report. The motion was seconded by Jerry Helms and passed unanimously.

Mitzi York reported on publicity featuring the Brunswick Islands in July. First there are a few things that ran in June but were not included in the June report: Coastal Living, MSN and MSN UK included the Bird Island and the Kindred Spirit Mailbox in the online article "The Weirdest Beaches in America"; Family Handyman and MSN included the Brunswick Islands in the article "15 Best Summer Weekend Getaways You'll Want to Book This Second"; K104.7 included the NC 4th of July Festival in the online story "10 Red, White & Blue Road Trips in the Carolinas". In July, the Brunswick Islands was featured online and in print in the North West Georgia Living article "The Nostalgic Allure of the North Carolina's Brunswick Islands" as a result of our leisure FAM. Best Life included Southport in the online story "The Most Fun Things to Do in Every State this Summer". As a result of the golf FAM, Denver Life featured the Brunswick Islands in the article "Rest, Relax, Restore". Oak Island was featured in the online story "Oak Island is a laid back vacation spot" by The Charlotte Post. Holden Beach, Southport, Bald Head, and Oak Island were included in the online article "The Best Beach Towns in North Carolina" by Coastal Living. Several events were included in Our State, Carolina Living, The Charlotte Observer, and WTVD online calendar of events. MSN and MSN UK picked up the Coastal Living story "The Best Beach Towns in North Carolina". The Richmond Times featured Oak Island in the story "One Sweet Beach" online. Thrillist included Bald Head Island in the article "A Visitor's Guide to the Best Beaches in North Carolina". Honeymoon Always included Ocean Isle in the story "How to Plan Your North Carolina Romantic Getaway". The total circulation/unique viewership was 183,984,794. The earned media value was \$1,407,505.47 and the earned editorial value was \$4,222,516.41. Staff is working with the PR agency in lining up the fall FAM that will be held in October. Mitzi York reminded the Board that the October Board meeting was rescheduled from October 22 to October 29 to not conflict with the FAM. We have a writer from Foodism and Escapism in Canada scheduled to visit us in late September.

Mitzi York updated the Board on the status of the website. The CRM is up now and staff had its first online training session yesterday. The front end of the website will be available in October for training prior to its launch. Anything modified on the existing website will also need to be modified on the new website moving forward until launch. One of the challenges will be to get our partners to provide photos for the new website. The agency is writing copy now for the site. Mitzi York is selecting photos for the 126 pages that need header photos.

Additionally, staff has been working on items for the audit the last couple of weeks.

VI. Marketing Committee Report

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for July. In July, there was not a lot of media running. July media activity included Search, NC Travel Guide and VisitNC. We received 1,869 leads/request for guides including 430 downloads and views. There were 59,250 new visitors to our website and 57,949 views of the partner pages and from there 15,722 visits to our partners' websites. Top states for leads in July were North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The top source for leads in July was our website. Mitzi York pointed out in the Google Analytics that new users were up 8.12% in July over last July. The number of sessions was up 6.31% over last July. Pageviews was down from July of last year. The top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program, direct traffic, and VisitNC.com. Top keywords were North Carolina beaches and dynamic search ads. The top pages viewed were the home page, 4th of July page, Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry page, Holden Beach page, Oak Island page, and accommodations page. The home page, 4th of July page, Southport-Fort Ferry page, and Holden Beach were the top landing pages. Top states were North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, and Ohio. Top metro areas were Charlotte, Wilmington, Raleigh-Durham, Atlanta, and Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem and Washington DC.

VII. Old Business:

No old business.

VIII. New Business:

There was a brief discussion about the news that some school systems are starting back to school earlier than the School Start law provides. Concern was expressed about how that will impact summer visitation and what other school systems might do next year.

IX. Adjourn:

Buddy Rudd motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jerry Helms. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 pm.

NEXT MEETING: September 24, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.