

# **Brunswick County Tourism Development Authority**

**September 24, 2019**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**In Attendance:** Bill Bernier, Bonnie Cox, Dana Fisher, Jerry Helms, Whitney Sauls, and Sharon Wright. **Absent:** Glenda Browning, Susan Freeman, Melaney Robbins, and Buddy Rudd. **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 3:05 pm.

### **II. Public Comment:**

No one from the public requested to speak.

### **III. Approval of August 27, 2019 minutes**

Billy Bernier motioned to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2019 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Whitney Sauls and approved unanimously.

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

Mitzi York reviewed the financial statement for August. She pointed out that the reason no occupancy taxes are reported for the month is because occupancy taxes received in August were for the month of June and reported in the June financial statement. August revenues totaled \$454,27. The major expense for the month were media expenses and the agency fee. All other expenses were typical. The total expense for August was \$54,672.72 plus accruals in the amount of \$33,151.25. The bank balance at the end of August was \$405,062.66. Mitzi York reviewed the occupancy tax report and advised that July was down 3.49% from last year. She pointed that it is not uncommon to receive additional occupancy taxes a month or even two months afterwards. She expects to receive additional July funds but is uncertain as to how much. We did receive additional June funds in August. At the last meeting it was reported that we ended the fiscal year up 4.99% over previous fiscal year. After applying the additional June funds, last fiscal year was up 5.51%. Whitney Sauls reported that she was recently at a beach rental managers' conference and many people remarked that it has been a weird, inconsistent year. The reason why is uncertain. Bonnie Cox pointed that the schools that went back early were from around Charlotte, a key market for us. Jerry Helms motioned to accept the financial report. The motion was seconded by Sharon Wright and passed unanimously.

Mitzi York reported that most of the August PR was related to area events. We had events featured online with South Magazine, WCCB-TV Charlotte, ABC-11 Raleigh, and the Charlotte Observer. Coastal Living included Southport in the online article "The Prettiest Beach Town on Every State." Outside Magazine included the Brunswick Islands in the article "6 Under-The-Radar Beach Towns

That Aren't Touristy." The total circulation/unique viewership was 20,554,266. The earned media value was \$71,363.86 and the earned editorial value was \$214,091.58. Staff is working with the PR agency on the fall FAM that will be held in October. Four writers have been lined up and we are working on a 5<sup>th</sup>. Committed writers are the editor of Forsyth Woman, a contributing editor for National Geographic, and a photographer and the editor of Cary Magazine. We were scheduled to have a writer visit from Escapism Magazine out of Canada but due to staff changes the writer will visit in two weeks.

Mitzi York advised the Board work continues on the new website. Staff has had two training sessions and all the new content is due this Friday. We should have a website by early October to work on, with launch before Thanksgiving. Mitzi York advised that the audit has been completed and should be available at the next Board meeting. Mitzi York recommended that we appropriate additional funds from Fund Balance for additional spring marketing. She will present a plan to the Board at the October or December Board meeting.

#### **V. Marketing Committee Report**

Mitzi York reviewed the Marketing Report for August. August media activity included Search, NC Travel Guide, VisitNC, MMSI, Interfuse (Connect), Our State eblast, Charlotte Observer eblast, Raleigh News and Observer eblast, Morning Read eblast, and Link Golf eblast. We received 7538 leads/request for guides including 411 downloads and views. There were 42,305 new visitors to our website and 44,653 views of the partner pages and from there 11,304 visits to our partners' websites. Top states for leads in August were Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia. Total leads YTD at the end of August was 9,407 compared to 18,668 last fiscal year. The top source for leads in August was Interfuse. Mitzi York advised that some of the Interfuse leads will be fulfilled with a digital guide. Jerry Helms asked if the leads include cell phone numbers. He advised that they are trying a texting program and it might be something for the TDA to look at.

Mitzi York pointed out in the Google Analytics that new users were up 6.66% in August over last August. The number of sessions was up 5.30% over last August. Pageviews was down from August of last year. The top sources of traffic were Google organic followed by our cost-per-click program, direct traffic, and the Our State email. Top keywords were North Carolina beaches and dynamic search ads. Pet friendly and wedding search words were also in the top ten. The top pages viewed were the home page, Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry page, Holden Beach page, and accommodations page. The home page, Southport-Fort Ferry page, Capt. Nance's Seafood, and Holden Beach were the top landing pages. Top states were North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Top metro areas were Charlotte, Wilmington, Raleigh-Durham, Atlanta, and Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem and Washington DC. Mitzi York advised that WECT is doing another video and digital campaign for us. What we are primarily interested in is the video component rather than the digital component. The subject of the video is Calabash.

**VI. Old Business:**

There was a brief discussion about the fact that some school systems are starting back to school earlier than the School Start law allows. Mitzi York advised that NCTIA is monitoring the issue. She reminded the Board that a few years ago we targeted states with schools that started in September. We might want to look at doing that again this year.

**VII. New Business:**

Jerry Helms invited the Board to the grand opening of the new terminal building at the Cape Fear Regional Jetport September 25.

**VIII. Adjourn:**

Jerry Helms motioned to adjourn, seconded by Dana Fisher. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:46 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: October 29, 2019 at 3:00 pm at the TDA's offices in the Red Apple Building, 712 Village Rd SW Unit 105 in Shallotte.**