

Beech Mountain Tourism Development Authority
February 29, 2012 9:30am, Regular Meeting

Town Hall Council Chambers

MINUTES

- I. Call to Order - Meeting called to order at 9:31am. All members were present
- II. Adoption of Agenda – Calder asked if anyone had any additions. There were none, and all approved the agenda.
- III. Consideration of Minutes- January 25, 2012 - Regular Meeting – Amy let the board know that she had made one change after sending the minutes out, Boomer had 4 installments for the website, not 3. Fred Barth made a motion to approve, and Gil Adams seconded.
- IV. Financial Report –
 - Occupancy Tax/Budget to Date – Calder wanted to make note that while the budget revenues are down \$20,000 year to date from last year, we are up \$7,000 year to date when compared to 2009-2010 fiscal year. We will have to look closely at the budget this year when making marketing decisions.
 - Invoice/Reimbursement Approvals – Patty Gil had a design invoice for e-blasts done for the \$99 special and the Retro-80's weekend totaling 436.50, Lazy Day invoice for \$550 for 3 e-blasts in Charlotte, Big Boom Design invoice for website installment 4 totaling \$500, Facebook Ads Reimbursement for Calder Smoot who paid for Retro-80's and \$99 special ads during January and February totaling \$398.96.
 - Candi Catoe made a motion to approve all of the invoices. Gil Adams seconded.
 - Office Supply Accounts, Credit Card – now that the TDA has taken over the Chamber office expenses, we have set up a staples account for that, in which they can invoice. Amy needs to know what kind of approval she needs to purchase these office supplies (paper, pens, storage, etc). The board felt that until she reaches the budgeted amount, she does not need to get any approval to use those funds.
 - Also, the Chamber of Commerce had a credit card to use for purchasing supplies and other things that come up at any given time (media goody bags, toilet paper from Dollar General, even facebook ads require a credit card). Amy would like for the TDA to look at getting a card with a \$500 or \$1000 limit to avoid having to reimburse individuals for TDA goods. The board approves that Amy speak with Nancy about how the departments in the town have credit cards set up.
- V. Chamber Report - John Troxler

- Visitor Center – 482 visitors in February, up from January. Still down from last February (2011) from over 600.
- The Chamber received Kiwanis grant for \$350 for kites for the Kite Festival. This year, the dog show will also occur that weekend as well. It will occur up at the new Bark Park. There will also be a street dance that Labor Day weekend.
- Last meeting we were looking at a contract with the Chamber for the time John has been working, they will be having a meeting tomorrow March 1 at 9am, in which they will look at drafting this contract. They will have that at the next TDA meeting for approval.
- Pig Roast Fireworks – John doesn't feel that it is necessarily the chamber's responsibility to provide the town fireworks, but he wants to keep it going because it is a vital activity during that time. The town council had agreed to pay last year, and not this year. He presented proposals to them at the last meeting, and they made no action. They were looking for a partnership. So, John would like to make a proposal that the Chamber would provide 1500, the TDA 1500, and the Town would pay 2000-2500, with the ownership going to the Town and the Fire Department. He feels that it is important for our Guests and Residents. This will be Saturday June 30th. Candi would like to see us start offering packages, added value vs. trying to discount.
 - Candi asked if we could make a motion to approve it in the next budget. Calder is very worried about the budget. Calder thinks the most that they could afford would be \$750 or \$1000. Gil Adams thinks that the fireworks should be under the Town budget. Fred thinks that we have to have the fireworks one way or another, Candi said that we would give it our best shot. Fred makes a motion to budget \$1000 for the fireworks, Judy Decker approved, but we still need to try to lobby the town to pay for the full amount.

VI. Marketing Report

- Banner Ad Contract
 - Amy presented a contract that she drafted and explained where banner ads would appear. There will be no ads on the homepage, but all of the other pages will have them. Only lodging businesses will appear on lodging pages, and only restaurants will appear on restaurant pages, but on the other pages, they will appear randomly.
 - Cindy Keller asked if the club would be able to advertise, everyone agreed.
 - Amy asked if we needed to approve the contract, but the board has already approved to sell banner ads for \$400, and told Amy to move forward after ensuring the contract is legal.
 - We had never resolved if there would be a cut-off for businesses under a certain level of occupancy tax contribution (3 or 5 grand). Amy isn't sure that they can legally find this out, and asked Calder to go with her to the tax office to ask who pays less than \$3,000 in occupancy tax.

- US Airways Ad – We had the opportunity through the High Country Marketing Partnership to purchase a page in the Arts, Culture, and Entertainment spread coming up in April. Beech Mountain will be mentioned because of the partnership, but hopefully the next time an opportunity like this comes along we will have money in reserves.
- Retro-80's Weekend – Amy attended all of the events for the weekend, and felt that participation was high and all of the music venues had good sales that weekend. Fred Barth got nothing, but he was booked. Candi had 3 rentals and Calder also had 3.
- Summer Advertising – Outside Magazine, EmeraldOutback.com, New Billboard
 - Craig had asked Amy to remind the board that it is now time to move forward with Summer Advertising. Our co-op ad in Outside magazine will be in the April issue, and we would like to focus on the new emeraldoutback.com website.
 - Also, it is time to get a new vinyl billboard printed because the old one is so faded. Amy would like to see a billboard that markets that Beech Mountain was/is home to 2011-2012 USAC Gravity Nationals with photos of outdoor activities. Fred wondered why we couldn't use the old design. Amy thought it did not represent what we are currently trying to market, such as an old guy playing tennis. However, in the summer we have a lot of people that are not that young out playing tennis. Amy feels that you could have pictures of younger people and still attract older visitors. Pictures of families on the Ski Resort don't deter older skiers from going out. However, a picture of an old person on the slopes could deter a younger person from thinking that they fit in there. Regardless, Calder asked if everyone would send Amy his or her thoughts on design. The board gave Amy permission to get two bids from Patty and the Ski Resort's designer, and to move forward with one and get some proofs for the next TDA meeting.
- Website – Analytics and Loading Issues
 - Amy briefly recapped the slow loading times that have been plaguing the beechmntn.com site. The bounce rate is up 8% since January, and it can be attributed to people not thinking that the website is actually going to load. Craig Distl has spent a lot of time in the past couple of weeks trying to fix the problem, but to no avail. Boomer and Saul have met, but the last attempt to move the site to Saul's server failed. Boomer feels like it is the connection between Saul and Boomer's server that is failing, mainly because that is the only difference between our website and his other websites (that are all working). Since the attempt at putting the entire page back on Saul's server did not work, the other option would be to remove the entire site off of Saul's server. Boomer also recommended that we purchase the domain name from the Chamber so that we don't have to get permission to use it in the future.

- The slow load time has led to a significant decrease in traffic time on the site, and a decision has to be made.
- Calder suggested that we give Saul and Boomer one more week to fix this before moving it off of his server. Amy said that she would go down and speak with Saul if necessary.
- Calder Smoot made a motion to approve to purchase the domain name from the Chamber of Commerce, and move that domain name and website to a new server (godaddy.com) if this is not resolved this week. Judy Decker seconded. All were in favor.

VII. TDA Coordinator Report - Amy Morrison

- 2012 Rack Card – The new 2012 Calendar Rack Card has been printed and distributed to some businesses on Beech Mountain. If anyone would like to come pick some up for their business, come to the Visitor Center.
- Business Cards – motion to approve 1000 embossed cards from Appalachian Printing for an estimated \$60.00 – Calder Smoot motioned. Judy Decker seconded. All were in favor.
- Governor’s Conference – Amy will be attending governor’s conference March 11-13. She will hopefully come back with a lot of useful information. She will also have a reimbursement at the March TDA meeting for 225.00 for lodging.
- Marketing College – Sheri Moretz, of the Mast General Store, had recommended that Amy look into going to the Dählonega Marketing College administered through the Southeast Tourism Society. It is a 3-year program, you attend one week per year, and then get your Travel Marketing Professional Certification. The town has a program to pay for classes in return for staying a certain amount of time.
- Watauga TDA Bike Meeting – Amy, along with Talia, Fred Pfoal, Jes Scott, and Daniel Scagnelli all attended a Mountain Biking meeting sponsored by the Watauga TDA to bring together several major entities (Rocky Knob Park, Kerr Scott, Emerald Outback) to discuss marketing and infrastructure of the entire area. Amy is signed up on the marketing committee with this group, and will report back on issues such as data collection, events, and overall advertising.
- Brews N’ Views Beer Fest – Amy presented a 2012 Beer Festival budget, she conservatively increased revenues by \$1,000 (only 40 more tickets at the gate price of \$25) while decreasing expenditures by \$2100, bringing the loss to only \$1700 instead of \$5700. She did want to remind the board that there is the need to get a non-profit to run the beer fest permit, and due to ABC Commission rules, the permit last year had to be for all four days of beer sales. Calder asked Amy to double check and make sure we can’t get the permit for just four hours (beer fest time period). Amy would also like to meet with Talia with another board member to discuss this year’s logistics and sponsorship raising. There is the possibility of trying to pool sponsorships to get a headliner band, which would bring more people.

- Gnarnia Music Festival – Bowie, from the group that is trying to bring the music festival here in August, has spoken with Amy over the past several weeks about logistics, and recently met with Ryan Costin. They might want to come up for several days to go over logistics, so Amy may be asking for a comped room in the next coming weeks.
- Computer Reimbursement – Amy had to repair her computer recently, and instead of getting reimbursement, she felt like it might be better to get a monthly reimbursement for the use of her computer. She is worried that the high use from work will cause her to have to buy a new one in the near future. She proposed \$30 per month. Calder made a motion to approve, Candi Catoe seconded, and all were in favor.

VIII. Other

- Avery County Chamber Proposal – Last month, Sue visited to propose that the TDA contribute \$2500 to the Avery County marketing budget. The board felt that the budget did not allow for that large of an outlay. Judy Decker moved that the TDA approve to donate \$250 to the Avery Chamber, Gil Adams seconded.
- Babette McAuliffe – Carolina Mountain Life
 - They are now celebrating their 15th year, with tons of press coverage of Beech Mountain, each issue this year will be looking back at the past 15 years. The publication prints 25,000 copies, which are distributed in Avery, Watauga, Ashe, Morganton and Spruce Pine, as well as online. They also engage in blogging, facebook, and have a website with online readers for their magazine. Randy Johnson is writing a large piece on Biking in the next issue. Deadline to get into the spring issue is this Friday. Babette hopes that we are able to place some ads this year, and can do discounts for multiple issues and is always willing to work with us.
 - The board felt that they would probably do two issues, not the spring issue, when weather is not great, and there is not as much value.

IX. Adjournment – meeting adjourned at 11:55am by Chairperson Calder Smoot.

Calder Smoot, Chairperson