



**RUTHERFORD COUNTY TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 31, 2012  
FACEBOOK DATA CENTER ~ FOREST CITY**

**Members Present:** Jeff Bradley, Dwayne Harris, Dan Hegeman, Denise Holland, Ann Washburn Hutchins, Sally Leshner, Bob Singer, Lisa Sullivan

**Members Absent:** Dawn Hemmelgarn, Adrienne Wallace

**Staff Present:** David Robinson, Jackie Wallace, Michelle Whitaker

**Others Present:** Cindy Cook (Awen), Hazel Haynes (County Clerk), Eddie Holland (Ex-Officio), Paula Roach (Ex-Officio), Dana White (Awen), Michelle Yelton (McConnell Group),

George Henry of Facebook welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the operations of the data center. Following this, the Board was given a tour of the facility.

#### **Call to Order**

Sally Leshner called the meeting called to order at 1:15 p.m.

#### **Agenda**

Michelle Whitaker asked that discussion regarding the Bechtler House be added to the agenda following the Executive Committee report. Lisa Sullivan made a motion to accept the agenda as amended. Seconded by Dan Hegeman. Motion carried.

#### **December 2011 Minutes**

Dan Hegeman made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by Lisa Sullivan. Motion carried.

#### **TDA Activity Reports**

*Michelle Whitaker, presenting*

Occupancy tax collections for the month of November were up 5.48%. Bob Singer made a motion to accept the Financial Reports as presented. Seconded by Ann Washburn Hutchins. Motion carried.

#### **Internal Customer Service Overview**

*David Robinson, presenting*

Robinson stated that one of his roles was to visit all stakeholders and discuss 10 things that the TDA is doing or going to do. Since October he has visited 172 different properties, with about 50 more to visit. Other responsibilities include the TDA newsletter, which is also available on the website and via constant contact. He is also organizing the first hospitality/guest relations class which will be available to anyone who would like help on improving guest relations. He is coordinating the planning of the first TDA Alliance Conference being held on Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at The Foundation at ICC, and he will be attending the Governor's Conference in March not only as a TDA representative, but also as a speaker as well.

## **Public Relations Overview**

*Michelle Yelton, Presenting*

Yelton stated that she handles publicity for the TDA by generating story ideas and pitching these stories regionally and nationally to papers, TV stations, bloggers, etc. and through press releases. Michelle also indicated that she tracks the press that comes in through impressions and from July '11 to January '12 we had 1.2 billion impressions. These impressions carry an ad value of 1.1 million dollars. Other responsibilities include organizing annual media tours; this year's is an outdoor summer adventure tour.

## **Awen Group, LLC – Marketing Overview**

*Cindy Cook & Dana White, presenting*

The Awen Group focuses on TDA destination strategy branding and promotions through event season and other programs, all in order to grow the market footprint for Rutherford County. We have a strategy that identifies the area that we target, and our strategy utilizes all forms of media; focusing on digital media. The most important goal is to deepen customer engagement.

## **Executive Committee Report**

*Sally Leshner, presenting*

The Executive Committee met with the Acting County Manager, Bill Eckler, and the Personnel Director, Judy Toney, for Michelle Whitaker's review.

## **Bechtler House Project**

*Michelle Whitaker, presenting*

This year is the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Town of Rutherfordton with events taking place throughout the year. In addition, UNC-TV is releasing its documentary on Betchler Gold. The TDA has helped in funding for this film. From a tourism standpoint, there is going to be an interest in Bechtler Gold and in the town of Rutherfordton's history, with no place to visit either. In addition, the Betchler home is available for rent and stands across the street where we were discussing an info center. Utilizing the TDA's Stakeholder Assistance Program, the Town of Rutherfordton could lease the Bechtler House.

Michelle Whitaker requested that the TDA allocate \$4,000 from this year's budget (Stakeholder Assistance line item) and \$8,000 from next year's budget (same line item) for the purpose of the Bechtler House. Ann Hutchins made motion to approve the request as presented. Seconded by Dan Hegeman. Motion carried.

## **Wayfinding Committee Report**

*Dan Hegeman, presenting*

The committee met with Mark Teague on January 18<sup>th</sup>, reviewed the wayfinding project plan and made the decision that due to the diversity of the wayfinding signage project, the committee will focus on each task individually. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, to discuss individual task descriptions and prioritize a wish list of what is needed. Cost and importance will be the key factors in this discussion.

## **2012-13 Budget**

*Michelle Whitaker, presenting*

The proposed 2012-13 budget was presented in the board packet. The board was asked to review the proposed budget and be prepared to discuss the budget in detail at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Bob Singer made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Dan Hegeman. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.