

# BANNER ELK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 – 3:30pm

Zoom

## MINUTES

Members Present: Mike Dunn, Shannon Maness, Tom McMurray and Lauren Foster

Members Absent: Les Broussard

Staff Present: Rick Owen, Nancy Owen

Chairman Dunn called the meeting to order at 3:30pm

Shannon Maness made a motion to approve the agenda as stated Lauren Foster seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Tom McMurray made a motion to approve the minutes of the Feb. 2020 meeting as submitted. Shannon Maness seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

Rick Owen gave a brief financial report and stated that we are 83% thru the Fiscal Year and have collected 118% of what we budgeted. There was a big drop in occupancy tax collections in March due to Covid-19. Even with Covid-19 we are only 1% behind total collections with months still to go. Chairman Dunn would like to see next years budget put together at 20% less than last year due to Covid-19 this way not taking any money out of the reserve.

### Funding Requests

Janet Speer representing Lees McRae Summer Theatre submitted a grant application for \$6000. It was noted that LMST has already cancelled for the summer due to Covid-19 but had also already invested monies in advertising and marketing materials Chairman Dunn would like to continue to support LMST as a show in good faith. Tom McMurray made a motion to grant \$3000 to help with advertising expenses already occurred. Shannon Maness seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

Wildcat Lake submitted a grant application for \$10,000 to help with capitol improvement projects for the lake. The lake will not be opening until July due to Covid-19. Tom McMurray made a motion to grant \$5000 for capitol projects with half paid on June 1, 2020 and the other half paid on Aug. 1, 2020. They can come back at the July meeting and ask for the other \$5000. Shannon Maness seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

The Book Exchange in the Historic Banner Elk School submitted a grant application for \$3410. Town Manager Rick Owen informed the board he is not sure the Book Exchange will open this year due to Covid-19. They have already cancelled several lecture series and events. This money will go towards helping them with utilities if they are unable to open. Shannon Maness made a motion to grant \$800 for utilities and can come back at July meeting if they open and ask for advertising money. Lauren Foster seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

## New Business

Craig Distl, from Distl PR, updated the board on Google Analytics from our website. Click thru rate was strong and then March the bottom fell out due to Covid-19. Everything is down, but not as bad as it could be. The beginning of March before Covid-19 we were ahead of where we were last March. April 2, 2020 saw our lowest number of visitors but since then visits have doubled. People are using a lot of the website looking at all the pages. VisitNC has hired a travel marketing firm to do surveys about traveling. The trend is to stay more local, more of a drive market, not airline market. This could be a good thing for us. VisitNC also is launching Count On Me NC, a program to make people feel safe about coming back into restaurants and lodging places. Craig and Nancy worked with Todd Bush to do a “virtual escape” video to remind people Banner Elk will be here when Covid-19 is over. It has been a big hit and received thousands of views and shares on social media. Craig created a YouTube page and we also joined the Blue Ridge Parkway Association. This will get us listing on their website.

With no further business, Tom McMurray made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lauren Foster seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Owen