

**Small Business Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Jan. 29, 2015**

**Committee Members Present:** Peter Gasca, Mary Henry, Yvette Jefferson, Susie McCaskill, Jamie Saunders, John Sawyer, Todd Setzer, Lee Zulanch, Bernita Platt.

**Committee Members Not Present:** Lynn Bastian, Ted Cligrow, John Rickard, O'Neil McCoy

**Staff Present:** Cindy Gettig, Kema Faulk, Amanda Blomquist

Todd Setzer called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review 2015 Committee Packets -  
Cindy Gettig guided council through the **committee packets** showing the last meeting's minutes, future meeting dates, council contact information, an overview of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, an overview of the membership division, an overview of the Small Business Council, a MBACC organizational chart, the 2015 Board of Directors and their committee assignments and the MBACC meeting and committee policy and procedure. Gettig told the council about the new online Chamber Access, saying staff discovered new members were often too busy to attend the new member orientation, so Shannon Furtick created an online guide.  
Gettig shared the membership division's goals for 2015.  
Setzer asked Gettig to elaborate on creation of arts council. She said Diana Greene is overseeing the council. She said it is looking to bring art-related businesses together. Yvette Jefferson said we are looking forward to that council and said it's good to get in a room with your peers and said she hopes it helps people know, "The arts are alive in Myrtle Beach."
- III. Member-to-Member Business Expo  
Kema Faulk told council about the **2015 Member-to-Member Expo**. She said there were 110 exhibitors and more than 450 attendees. The event generated about \$3,000 in revenue, she said, and asked for comments about the event and suggestions for next year's theme.  
Setzer asked how the number of exhibitors compared to last year. Kema said there were about five fewer than 2014.  
Mary Henry the way the food was spread out was a lot better this year.  
Jamie Saunders agreed. She said you could get food, walk, get more food and walk again.  
Peter Gasca asked why it isn't open to nonmembers and suggested it could be a way to encourage businesses to join. He said as a vendor he would want higher traffic.  
Henry said opening it to nonmembers could make it a free-for-all with people only wanting free stuff.  
Gettig said we try to encourage members to do business with members.  
Jefferson noted nonmembers can come as guests of members.

Gettig said the two membership sales staffers use the expo as a tool to encourage people to join.

Gasca suggested holding a second, similar event that would be open to the public.

#### IV. Membership Overview

Gettig shared membership demographic information. She said the top three categories are retail (19 percent), restaurants (14 percent) and services (11 percent.) Services include anything from a spa service to a plumbing company so that encompass a lot of our members.

She said 88 percent of our members are small businesses with 1-25 employees. "That's why you guys are here, because most of our businesses are small businesses."

Gasca asked if we keep statistics for how many of those businesses are new to the area.

Amanda Blomquist said we do keep track of the date they were established, but we don't have actual statistics to show how new they are with respect to opening in Myrtle Beach.

Gasca said that would be really interesting for promoting Myrtle Beach as a place to start a business.

Lee Zulanch asked to break down the 88 percent further, to see how many are one to two employees and measuring how well they are doing? "How many are new and just starting out. I'm trying to get my hands around what the motivation of small businesses is to join. I mean the larger ones join because it's the voice of the community and their budgets can handle it. It's a small fraction of a large company but it's also a small fraction of a company that's maybe 20 employees and more. I'm real curious how many are less than 10, the real small business where the owner operator would have a tough time being at a council function because he's the only one ringing the register."

Jefferson said that would be interesting to see.

Jamie Saunders said when someone first came to the restaurant she wasn't sure why she should join but her friend Stephanie encouraged her. She said after attending two events with Stephanie she joined. "I'm really happy that I did because I met so many people and I think my business is where it is because I joined the chamber and got to know everyone and got out in the community. I still meet people that don't know where Johnny D's is and we had a really great first year. For people that are hesitant there should be a list of people that can reach out. Like, I would call somebody that is hesitant and say this is why you should join. I had the same feeling of who am I giving my money to."

Gasca asked about creating a trial membership. Maybe a six month trial.

Saunders agreed.

Gettig said she really loved the idea about calling people sitting on the fence. She responded to Zulanch and said the numbers can be broken down further regarding the number of employees, but she said the big box stores are actually hesitant to join unless they are looking to be more involved in the community. She said, "It's the smaller businesses that are more apt to join us because they need that exposure they need to get to those networking events and have all the resources that the chamber has for them."

Zulanch said he agreed with Gasca – said it may not be a bad idea of having a limited amount of services where they can go to an afterhours but they would have to pay an

admissions charge or pay more to be at the expo. He suggested a limited membership be available to anyone with a business license.

Gasca said that would create a database of people that could be reached out to.

Henry said there's a lot of communication that people don't know about, like an ad in the Horry County Business Journal.

Saunders the use of social media by the chamber could be improved. She said she doesn't see many posts in her Facebook newsfeed and suggested the MBACC could share member's posts.

Blomquist said social media improvements are in the works.

Henry also said the chamber stuff does not show up in her newsfeed.

Saunders said it would provide more exposure to nonmembers.

Jefferson said joining the chamber is a "small investment for everything – it took you 15 minutes to go through the benefits of the chamber and that was an overview that was just scratching the surface."

Saunders suggested an introductory year at a discounted price.

Gettig said there is a payment plan.

Gasca said he would be more interested in statistics of how many businesses are coming to the area, website hits, the number of people reached through Facebook posts. "That to me is valuable. Events and food is not. It would be good to have people rank 1-10 what they get most value out of."

Gettig said we are starting to track event attendance, to find out who is registering and if they actually attended. She said we can then pull reports to find members that are not participating in events or education sessions that staff or ambassadors should reach out to.

#### V. **Membership Survey**

Gettig said a new feature to the 2015 membership survey adds a comment box for not applicable, below average or poor. She said the survey is taken seriously and impacts staff decisions.

Saunders asked if it is anonymous. Gettig said it is.

From last year's survey, Gettig said 83 percent said the return on investment was excellent or above average. The overall performance was 93 percent excellent or above average.

Overall communications we were at 84 percent excellent or above average. "This is a category where we are working with our membership communications manager. If you receive our emails you are probably bombarded, but we want to make sure we are communicating the right things and making sure we are reaching the right members."

The chamber was ranked at 60 percent excellent or above average for the opportunity to be involved.

Gasca asked where the chamber fell off.

Gettig said anything less than 100 percent means we need to improve.

Bernita Platt asked if members that dropped are questioned why and what we could do better.

Getting said yes and said something we're really working on this year is the correct information. Getting said that is a huge priority this year because when it comes to renewal we find often the invoices aren't going to the right person and are bouncing around for weeks at a time.

Blomquist said something that was new this year was a renewal survey by our retention coordinator Shannon Furtick. She mailed a survey in December finding out why folks did not renew and those results are expected soon.

VI. **Committee Ideas for Projects:** Gettig said Diana Greene wanted the council to think of ideas for projects or issues the council and staff needed to address this year.

Setzer asked about past projects.

Gettig said one of the things that came out of this council was the West of the Waterway Council. Gettig asked Blomquist to update the council on the business directory.

Blomquist explained the directory's recent redesign. She said it previously was not SEO friendly, but is now fully SEO friendly. She said she is still in the process of inputting keywords for each category and each individual listing. Blomquist said the new directory is expected to generate more referrals for members.

Zulanch said he would love to see social media taken to the next level. He said it is an underutilized tool.

Henry said when Kimberly was here she did a lot. It's lost momentum in the last few years since she's been gone.

Saunders Facebook the more that you use the more that's seen. It's either use it or lose it. Henry said that's what's going on here. All you have to do is repost stuff.

Saunders said the chamber has to follow the members.

Blomquist said a lot of that is coming. We're starting with a social media monitoring program. It's a little overwhelming for us. It's two of us on top of our other duties and we don't have time to visit each member's pages. With the monitoring site it will be housed in one website. It is a priority for us.

Committee members agreed to email ideas to Todd Setzer and Amanda Blomquist for discussion at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.