

## **Membership Committee Meeting Minutes November 15, 2015**

**Committee members present:** Blake Arp, Matt Carson, Kimberly Causey-Gomez, Brian Ferguson, Eric Hunt, O'Neil McCoy, Jackie Neal, Mark Ousley, Jennifer Dellinger.

**Committee members not present:** Charlie Belissary, Radha Herring, Bobbei Ruswinckel, Collier Schettig, Robert Stinnett, Brigitte Wilson.

**Staff present:** Diana Greene, Cindy Gettig, Shannon Furtick, Kori Hippe, Amanda Blomquist.

### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

O'Neil McCoy called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

### **II. Minutes Approval**

Eric Hunt moved to approve the minutes. Kim Causey-Gomez seconded. Minutes were approved.

### **III. Renewals Update**

Shannon told the council renewals were coming in slow this year. As of the meeting, she said renewal revenue was at \$751,220.95 with more than 2,200 members and a 93% retention rate. She said there are still 68 businesses that have not renewed that we hope to bring in.

She said 50 businesses closed permanently and hurt our numbers. The closed businesses accounted for more than \$20,000 in renewal revenue. She said some of the big ones were at Broadway at the Beach, but mom and pops also went out of business and we saw some people move out of the area. In 2014, she said there were only about 30 companies that went out of business.

O'Neil McCoy asked if it's standard for people to wait to the last minute. Shannon said yes. O'Neil McCoy asked if there's been any feedback on why people didn't renew. Shannon said some can't take advantage of the benefits, a lot of people said they had to cut back money wise. Cindy Gettig added that the bad weather in October affected the rate of renewal. She said in the past, we've been over our goal by the end of October. Our goal in 2014 was \$738,000 this year (2015) it's \$757,000. She said we've looked at the numbers and not found a pattern or reason to show specific businesses or types of businesses that wait to renew. She said to be down to 67 at this point is really good and that we only need about \$5,700 to hit our revenue goal.

### **IV. Diversity Council**

Diana told the council a Diversity Council will be started at the chamber. The council will cover everything from multicultural to women as well as veterans. It's a chamber plus community council, much like our Arts Networking Council. (NB Arts Networking Council changed their name to Supporting the Arts Council in Jan 2016). The goal is to get groups talking, find out different things we can do and appropriate outreach. We will start in the coming year working toward the goals for that group. For us on the business side we're looking for ways to uplift businesses, connect them to resources they might not know exist. Diana said Kori does a great job with this for us in many many ways. She asked the council if

they had suggestions for topics that should be covered, initiatives that we should look at or if there are community members that should be involved.

Kim Causey-Gomez asked to take a look at the list. Diana said she can share it. Matt Carson asked if there's a size limit. Diana Greene asked Amanda Blomquist how many are invited on the arts council list. Amanda Blomquist said about 20, but they are encouraged to invite others they know so more people get invited. Diana Greene said of those about 12 attend. Diana Greene said the Diversity Council will be very open in the first few meetings as they try to find their working committee.

Jackie Neal said she likes that veterans' issues would be included.

V. **Grand Strand Restaurants**

Amanda Blomquist showed the council [GrandStrandRestuarants.com](http://GrandStrandRestuarants.com) and explained that Sam Sneads called wondering why they weren't a part of the website. Amanda Blomquist said they are, but they're not part of the "featured restaurants" which are supposed to be CVB advertisers.

She explained that the site will be redesigned next year and asked the council for input on what they would want to see.

Mark Ousley asked what the requirement was to be on the website. The only requirement is to be an active member of the chamber.

O'Neil McCoy asked if there's a tie in to the HGTC culinary program. Amanda said not yet, but there will be and that the VMB folks have laid a great groundwork with HGTC.

Brian Ferguson asked about a rating system. Suggested adding information about official star ratings.

Matt Carson asked about adding a where the locals eat section or a local's favorite this month. Diana Greene suggested asking Waccamaw Publishers for help on the local's list.

Mark Ousley asked if it's possible to connect to Trip Advisor.

He Also asked if the number of restaurants we have is based on surcharge by employee.

Diana Greene said we collect dues and pass those to three organizations to pay for a joint partnership. And Cindy Gettig Cindy said restaurants are charged based on volume, not employees. Diana said for some restaurants that is easier than it is for others.

Brian Ferguson asked how that [volume information] is provided to us. Diana Greene said its an honor system.

Diana Green said the thought process with this is that it will be a great sales tool for our team.

Jennifer Delinger asked how the website would be promoted. Amanda said it's already promoted and averages 76,000 hits a year, but we want to give them a reason to stay on the site and come back another day.

Brian Ferguson said the content looks good and the planned content sounds good, but agreed the site needs updating.

VI. **Small Business Saturday**

Kori Hippe talked about small business Saturday. "Shop small, shop local, shop our members." She said receipts will be collected through Dec. 18 with a gift card drawing on Dec. 21.

VII. **LegalShield Affinity Program**

Kori Hippe told the committee about a new affinity program with LegalShield that will be

rolling out in 2016. LegalShield offers identity theft protection and prepaid legal services. McCoy said it's a hot topic and sounds like a good affinity program to have.

**VIII. Senior Discounts, sidewalk sale promotions and City of North Myrtle Beach Projects**

Diana Greene told the council that we help the City of Myrtle Beach promote their sidewalk sales and created a senior discounts site. She said the hardest part of this is getting businesses to let us know if they are participating in any of these deals. Diana Greene asked the city if we could get an email list to reach out to the businesses, but they don't have any such lists. She said we did start receiving a business license information that has very basic information. In the new year we will be talking about how far we want to go in trying to collect this information to reach these businesses.

Eric Hunt said Horry County also has a similar lack of information.

Cindy Gettig told the council we are working to cohost a Business After Hours at the Winter Wonderland at the North Myrtle Beach Sports Complex, but said she wasn't sure if it would come together.

**The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.**