

Membership Committee Meeting Minutes Feb. 18 2016

Committee members present: Todd Setzer, Chuck Gibbons, Eric Hunt, Kimberly Causey-Gomez, Jon Greenlee, Robert Blair.

Committee members not present: John Sawyer, Matt Carson, Carol Fallon, Jackie Neal.

Staff present: Diana Greene, Cindy Gettig, Kori Hippe, Kema Faulk, Amanda Blomquist.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Council members and staff introduced themselves.

II. Review 2016 Committee Packets

Diana Greene gave the council an overview of their membership packets, which include a membership division overview that is detailed in the next agenda item. Also included were an overview of the Membership Committee, a list of the 2016 MBACC Board of Directors and their committee assignments, an MBACC organizational chart and Robert's Rules of Procedure.

Greene said this will serve as a resource should you be asked about the chamber, the various partnerships we have with other organizations and the functions of the division.

"We seek to grow the chamber's membership obviously by attracting and retaining members," Greene said.

Greene told the council the most important thing to remember when making decisions on the council is to remember "Promote, Protect, Improve."

"That is what we do," she said. "Promote, protect and improve. If what we're talking about doesn't fall into one of those categories than quite honestly it's probably not something we need to focus on or worry about."

Setzer said "One of the things I think stands out on the top of this organizational chart is at the very top is membership. It's vital to everything the chamber does."

III. Membership Overview

Council members were provided with the membership and sponsorship booklets. Cindy Gettig told the council about programs overseen by the division which include all networking events, Chamber Access, Chamber Academy, Youth Leadership Academy, ribbon cuttings, affinity programs (Recycle Grand Strand, Office Depot, BlueCross BlueShield, etc.), Events (Legislative Luncheon, Legislative Reception, Can-Am Days, Christmas Towne, Annual Meeting).

Gettig said all events have to pay for themselves and we strive to offer them at no cost to our members. She said we rely on sponsorships.

IV. **2016 Membership Goals Overview**

Gettig told the council the division's goals which include:

Renew 95% of total dues CVB & Membership combined. In 2015, membership alone had a 93 percent retention rate.

We are looking to attract 275 new members. Last year our goal was 250 and we came in a 254 so we have a bit of a challenge this year.

Setzer asked about the 7 percent that did not renew last year.

Gettig said we had 162 members that did not renew, of that 58 went out of business. The year before last it was 42. We've had some closings at Broadway at the Beach and some big ones that hit us. The number I look at more than anything else is the number that simply didn't renew. Didn't give us a reason. Those are the ones that we want to find out what happened. After the whole process is over, we do a survey and send it out to our non-renewed to find out why.

Amanda Blomquist said she looked at the survey yesterday and several said they did not have time to participate.

Plan and promote 40 networking events.

Plan and promote 55 Chamber Academy classes.

Maintain and exceeded sponsorship and affinity programs.

Maintain gsSCENE core membership of 200

Implement new Airport Visitor's Center – Diana Greene said we are in the final stages of this project. She said we are expanding the booth at the airport to be very visual. She said there will be a place for member brochures as well as a TV where we can put videos or welcome messages for big groups. The goal is to have this up within the first half of the year.

Improve GrandStrandRestaurants.com – Blomquist said she met with the web designer last week. We're hoping to get it ready by May ahead of the summer tourism crowd. She said GrandStrandRestaurants.com is a website all of our members are part of automatically. We are redesigning it basically starting from scratch adding photo and video content that we are creating, some is coming from the marketing folks. We're going to feature our member restaurants and events. It's another avenue to promote our restaurant members. The big key is that it's for locals and visitors alike to easily find restaurants. We're hoping to give our restaurants a reason to keep renewing and to get more restaurants on board.

Robert Blair said one of the things Charleston has done is get Guy Fieri to come and do his TV shows there.

Blomquist said she knows Paula Deen has been to town and the marketing folks have worked with her. Now she's got a restaurant so maybe she's our Guy Fieri? The Job Connections page will be turned into a standalone website because it has been overwhelmingly popular.

V. Member-to-Member Business Expo Follow-Up

Kema Faulk told the council about the Jan. 13 Member-to-Member Business Expo. She said there were more than 500 attendees and 9 sponsors. The theme was classic TV shows. Faulk said the event is typically held on a Thursday but was on a Wednesday this year. She said the difference in the day hurt attendance and numbers were down. There were 130 exhibitors, with 7 restaurants (up from 4 in 2015). The member's choice award was a staff member from Medieval Times, the exhibitor's choice was Gilligan's Island. Faulk said she is trying to lock in Jan. 12 for next year which would put the event back on a Thursday.

a. Input from Committee

Setzer asked about average attendance compared to last year.

Faulk said it was down this year.

Past years have upwards of 800 to 1,000.

Eric Hunt asked about the number of exhibitors. Faulk said there were more vendors this year. Last year had 110.

Setzer asked about feedback from exhibitors.

Faulk said we just sent out the survey, but just walking around the exhibitors noticed the foot traffic wasn't as high as they expected.

Hunt said overall it's a very affordable event to participate in.

The council was asked for theme ideas.

VI. Upcoming Membership Events

Faulk told the council about the Oyster Roast (Feb. 20)-Bobbie Ruswinckel and Faulk said they are selling tickets. Ruswinckel's come with comedy club tickets, Can-Am Days (March 14-18)-Ruswinckel said Second Cup asked about getting involved with that and also suggested Monarch Roofing which plans to join the chamber be contacted as it's owned by a French-American, Legislative Reception (April 13), Annual Meeting (April 26)- Setzer asked why the Annual Meeting is an evening event this year.

Gettig said primarily because there wasn't a day date available, but also because the evening hours allow us to celebrate the 2015 Chamber of the Year award which has not been celebrated with the entire membership since we won-, and Youth Leadership Academy (March 7).

Faulk encouraged the council members to consider hosting or sponsoring events including Business Before or After Hours and Behind the Scenes.

VII. Travel with the Chamber Affinity Program

Kori Hippe spoke about an affinity program that launched in 2015 and is expanding in 2016. In 2015, she said 21 people traveled to China and 7 to Cuba. She said it brings in non-dues revenue for the chamber.

Seven trips are planned in 2016 with different agencies including member Barbara McGhee with Cameo Travel Enrichment.

They are being promoted through the chamber newsletter, social media and brochures.

Setzer asked if it was mostly members or nonmembers. Hippe said nonmembers.

Blomquist said we had one person join as a personal member because it was cheaper for her to buy the membership plus the travel package.

Kim Gomez asked if Kori has worked with OLLI – the lifelong learning program at CCU.

VIII. Membership Survey

Greene showed the council the draft of the annual survey for 2016 and the results from the 2015 survey. She asked for input on questions that should be included. She said last year there were 569 responses and she would like more in 2016. This year's survey will be released on April 1 and will remain open for a month.

Greene said we take this survey and develop programs and events based on the responses.

The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.