

**Membership Committee Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2016**

Committee members present: Kim Gomez, John Sawyer, Bobbei Ruswinckel, Jackie Neal, Todd Setzer, John Greenlee, Eric Hunt.

Committee members not present: Matt Carson, Robert Blair, Chuck Gibbons.

Staff present: Cindy Gettig, Amanda Blomquist, Shannon Furtick.

Others present: Jason Greene, Meagan Nowacoski.

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Meeting Minutes Review

John Sawyer moved to approve the minutes, second by John Greenlee. The minutes were approved.

III. Grand Strand Technology Council Project

Jason Greene and Meagan Nowacoski of Grand Strand Technology Council told the council about a new website project they are working on.

Greene said the last 15 months have been spent redefining the council. Their mission is to promote the Grand Strand as a place for technology sector growth, support local businesses and enhance education.

Greene said the computer science, manufacturing, aerospace and automotive are among the top sectors.

The Grand Strand Tech Council owns whynotthebeach.com which is a site designed to sell the live and work piece to tech companies going into business or relocating the business. The site is undergoing a renovation with a relaunch expected early in 2017. It will include maps of the business districts and services offered like fiber or natural gas, stories of people who have relocated and grown businesses on the Grand Strand, and links to additional resources.

Nowacoski asked the council for input on the site.

Setzer asked if this kind of website, or the similar tech councils exist elsewhere.

Greene said it varies. He's aware of one other similar company in Greenville but said it is sometimes done at the state level.

Bobbei Ruswinckel asked if they've considered holding a tech expo in Myrtle Beach.

Greene said they held a technology and aerospace expo that primarily had people from South Carolina.

The council gave suggestions for other organizations and committees Greene and Nowacoski could speak with for further input.

IV. **Renewals Update**

Shannon Furtick told the council renewals are at 91 percent of goal. 53 members renewed during a recent phoneathon. Another phoneathon with ambassadors is scheduled. As of the meeting, there are just over 200 members that have not renewed.

Amanda Blomquist asked if there is a reason for nonrenewal that Shannon has heard repeatedly this year since last year we heard so many that went out of business. She said there are a lot that are retiring, but she will know more after the nonrenewal survey later this year.

Ruswinckel said there seems to be false expectations of what their membership was with some new members who thought there would be automatic leads simply by being a member. She said from an ambassador point of view, they're really keen on letting them know they get as much out as they put in.

Gettig mentioned some members, typically big box stores, join to simply have a ribbon cutting then drop when it's time to renew.

Furtick said she learned recently that our chamber is one of few that does not charge for ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Sawyer asked if we could require an extended membership for ribbon-cutting ceremonies, requiring membership for two years if still in business.

V. **Membership Survey Follow-up**

Gettig told the council about ideas staff came up with following the membership survey. On the list are a business to business tour – creating some type of bus tour to various business districts, staffing and workforce issues, business referral reports – best practices for member communications, reframe chamber access – hold some classes before a Business After Hours, etc., annual non-profit business expo, thinkmyrtlebeach.com site changes, member appreciation day – a BBQ lunch in the chamber parking lot, annual meeting – continue with an evening event free to members, Chamber Academy – solicit qualified speakers.

Referral Reports – Ruswinckel asked if a PDF could be printed and mailed with renewals. Blomquist said no, because web based and interactive. Ruswinckel said people aren't logging in, so she suggested finding a way to share it where they don't have to login. Ruswinckel asked if the ambassadors could have the link.

VI. **Autism-friendly category**

Gettig explained that we would like to add a new category called Autism-friendly. This would be an additional category to the five each member is allowed to have. Kim Gomez moved to add an autism-friendly category, second by Ruswinckel. All approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.