

Tourism Development Authority  
**Special Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 20, 2015**  
**1117 East King Street**  
**Edenton, NC 27932**

Present: Diane Pariseau, Katrina Barnes, Adele Jones, Theresa Thesier, Frank Jones, Keith Nixon, Susan Beckwith, John Dowd and Ben Speller

Ex-Officio Members present were Nancy Nicholls, Anne-Marie Knighton, Kevin Howard, Willie Mack Carawan and Susanne Stallings.

Jessica Ebeling and Bob Hopkins were also present.

Chairman Nixon called the meeting to order.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Ms. Thesier moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Barnes seconded the motion. Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**Public Comment**

Chairman Nixon opened the floor to public comment. There was none.

**Consent Agenda**

Mr. Speller moved to approve the minutes of August 18, 2015 as presented. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (9-0).

**Financial Report**

Finance Officer Willie Carawan provided the financial report. He provided a revenue and expense report for FY 2015. He provided a current fiscal year and prior year Golden Leaf Summary noting the final distribution from Golden Leaf has been received.

Chairman Nixon asked about the status of Occupancy Tax collections.

Mr. Carawan stated that compared to last fiscal year this year's collections are currently above average.

**Golden Leaf**

Ms. Nicholls reported that the closeout of Golden Leaf has been done. She stated that she has to keep all documentation on file for five (5) years.

Chairman Nixon recommended that staff send a note of thanks to former TDA member Jerry Climer for his work in helping the TDA receive the Golden Leaf funds.

**[Airbnb/ Visitedenton.com](#)**

Nancy reported that the TDA is now collecting occupancy tax payments from an Airbnb in the County. She noted the property is called the Hardison House and it is located on West Queen Street. She stated that because this house is now paying occupancy tax it has been listed under “where to stay” on the visit Edenton website.

Chairman Nixon noted the TDA has previously discussed these types of properties because he was aware of properties available for rent online and being advertised as rentals, however the properties were not paying occupancy tax. He stated that he felt if the business was paying occupancy tax, the TDA should allow it to be advertised on the TDA website.

Ms. Pariseau stated that she would prefer the properties to be listed under a different category and not as a Bed and Breakfast. She stated that she would recommend listing the property as a vacation rental and discussed how bed and breakfast establishments are subject to several state and local inspections and this is not a requirement for vacation rentals.

Ms. Beckwith stated her concern with listing the vacation rentals on the TDA website. She stated the Airbnb has been advertising these properties for some time and not paying occupancy tax. She explained how the properties are not subject to meet certain health and safety requirements as that of a Bed and Breakfast and these vacation rentals have not been contributing occupancy tax. She stated that a Bed and Breakfast has to pay liability insurance among other fines which increases the operating cost and makes it difficult to compete with the vacation rentals that have little to no overhead cost. She stated her concern with setting a precedence by advertising vacation rentals. She stated her concern is the fact that the vacation rentals do not meet health and safety standards.

Ms. Ebeling asked how the vacation rentals at the Outerbanks are regulated.

Mr. Dowd stated he could understand the concerns that Ms. Beckwith has.

Ms. Theiser shared information from the state she previously lived in that was able to regulate and shut down vacation rentals based on zoning regulations.

Ms. Knighton stated she has discussed this with the Town of Edenton Attorney and was advised the Town could not use zoning to regulate the vacation rentals.

Chairman Nixon stated that he would recommend that the Town and County look into taxing the equipment (or furniture) in the vacation rentals as income producing property.

Ms. Barnes stated she did not feel vacation rentals should be listed with accommodations and lodging, she stated she felt there was too much liability on the TDA.

Chairman Nixon stated his concern was a counter suit from a vacation rental property owner for not being allowed to advertise on the TDA website when they are paying occupancy tax.

Ms. Barnes discussed the inspections process for accommodations.

Ms. Nicholls noted the Hardison House owners did request to be listed on the website.

Mr. Carawan stated it is difficult to separate a vacation rental who is paying occupancy tax.

Chairman Nixon stated he felt the TDA should seek the advice of legal counsel on how to handle vacation rentals and what are the legal obligations of the TDA.=

Mr. Howard suggested the TDA differentiate the type of accommodation and separate it from the others on the website.

Ms. Nicholls stated she would check to see if the TDA association has legal counsel and check with the School of Government on the matter.

Mr. Carawan suggested the Town or County attorney look into the matter also.

Ms. Nicholls stated she would see if other town or counties have a vacation rental policy for advertisement.

Ms. Barnes moved to separate the Hardison House listing on the website from the Bed and Breakfast category and move it to a new category "Vacation Rental". Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (9-0).

### **Balancing Nature and Commerce**

Ms. Nicholls noted she is working with this group and provided an agenda of the last meeting. She provided information. She stated this program is being modeled after the Pennsylvania Wilds Initiative. She provided two YouTube links for the Board members to view at their leisure.

### **Wayfinding Signage**

Ms. Knighton reported that 10 of the signs have been installed and there are a couple more left. She noted that the sign at Town Hall is in need of correction. She stated that all the signage will be installed before the candlelight tour.

### **Commission Building Update**

Ms. Knighton stated the Council has reviewed two proposals. She stated a report is on the Town of Edenton website. She stated the Council is considering leasing the building. She stated one of the two parties has indicated they do not wish to lease the building and the second party will get back with the Council with an answer if leasing will fit their business plan. She noted there is committee working to identify a location for the Sunfish, Kayak and Paddleboard rentals.

### **Media Committee Report**

Ms. Barnes reported that the committee has working on several co-op ads and working on a billboard co-op. She noted the top visitors in order were Raleigh, Charlotte, Washington DC, Norfolk and Richmond.

### **Directors Report**

Ms. Nicholls provided the directors report a copy is in the meeting file labeled October 20, 2015.

**Timely and Important Matters**

There were none.

**Adjourn**

Being no further business, Mr. Dowd moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Barnes seconded the motion. Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (9-0).