

## **BRBA Membership Meeting Minutes - August 28, 2014**

Meeting was called to order by President Cindy Trimble at 6:05 pm

- Last months minutes were approved
- Dena explained that she had just recently received banking information therefore her Treasurers report was a basic overview with a more detailed report will be given next month. Monies have not changed since last treasurer's report.

### **Introduction of new board**

**President:**

Cindy Trimble

**Vice President:**

Cesar Martinez

**Treasurer:**

Dena Martin

**Secretary:**

Pam Fink

**Member At Large:**

Cilla Cipolla

**Member At Large:**

Brenda Battaglia

**Member At Large:**

Cory Bryant

**Member At Large:**

Ryan Sullivan

**Past President:**

Lynda Thompson

Reminder, membership dues are now due on the anniversary of your joining. No longer will everyone pay in Dec.

## **Chamber Tourism Committee meeting recap**

Currently there are 11 major events over the course of the year in Blue Ridge. There was discussion as to what kind of events could be added to fill the empty times. Suggestions included:

- Jazz Festival
- Beer and Wine Festival
- Mother's Day and Father's Day weekends

There was also discussion about the chamber hiring someone to be a liaison between all groups putting on events in Blue Ridge. There was conversation about hiring a professional company but most felt if they did hire someone it needed to be someone who was VERY familiar with Blue Ridge.

Next month they will have a strategic planning meeting to discuss how to spend the tourism dollars.

The chamber has been asked by both the city and county to disperse bed tax dollars based on the legal requirements of spending which is exclusively for promoting more tourism in Fannin county. If organizations like BRBA is planning a specific event that is designed to bring tourists to town we can request monies (in writing) and if the event meets the criteria AND there is money available the chamber would be happy to help.

The committee also discussed QR codes and an app to help get the word out about Blue Ridge events. At this point that does not seem practical but could be revised in the future.

### **Suggestion from the floor:**

Candace Youngberg suggested we start something like "First Friday" which has been very successful in other towns. Once a month, in her example the first Friday of each month, businesses stay open later than usual, say 8 or 9 pm and make an event out of it. BRBA could promote that, the businesses could (should) offer discounts, beverages, snacks etc to the shoppers. Some months have a "theme" night, i.e. team night where each store displays the flag of their favorite team, Mardi Gras, changing of the season etc. Candace and Dena will discuss and see if

there is enough merchant interest to make it feasible and bring their findings to the board.

## **Light Up Blue Ridge**

- Quinn is currently contacting possible entertainment
- She is contacting 3 Santa's regarding availability and their fees
- There has been discussion about asking the churches close to downtown to open their doors and invite the public, at specific times, to come listen to their choirs.
- They had to move forward with ordering the tree as the deadline for placing the order is here.
- Light Up is it's own 501(c)3 corporation. BRBA is "helping" Light Up up on this event. Any and all donations for the "Great" tree or any other expense goes directly to Light Up. Nothing is to filter through BRBA.
- Lynda and Jack have been working very hard, behind the scenes, asking and collecting donations for Light Up.
- Quinn is getting pricing for tents, chairs, heaters, tee shirts for the volunteers etc. More on that later.
- Suggestion was made to have a merchant "window decorating contest" to help get visitors "inside" the stores.
- Light Up is concerned with not only getting visitors to town but getting them inside the stores so any ideas or suggestions such as window decorating contest would be greatly appreciated.
- Having a Ginger Bread House building contest. Dena and Quinn will look for a suitable location.
- Quinn wants to have a published "Schedule of Events". All agreed that is important and will move forward with a plan.
- It was agreed the only street vendors allowed will be food vendors. Once a food vendor location is decided on they will know how many vendors they can have.
- Santa will arrive on the train at 11 am. As soon as Santa arrives the parade will start.
- It was suggested to ask Anne and Sara to help with the parade. Quinn will check with them.
- Santa pictures will be taken in the gazebo.
- This is an expensive event so all donations would be greatly appreciated.
- Dena suggested creating Blue Friday/Light Up rack cards. One side Blue Friday and the other side Light Up. Merchants could hand them out a few

before the event. Cabin rentals could have them in their check-in packages etc.

- Quinn will ask Jack what Light Up graphics, if any, that he can share with her.
- BRBA will loan “no parking after 4 pm” and “no parking” signs. It was suggested BRBA purchase more signs as we will need them in the future. BRBA will then loan as many signs as Light Up needs. The city also has signs that can be borrowed.

### **Blue Friday:**

The chamber reports that for the first time the number one reason for coming to Blue Ridge is “Shopping”. It is more important than ever that Blue Friday a successful, festive day. The Light Up committee is dedicated to making that happen.

One suggestion was to have “elves” wandering around helping direct people.

### **Public Bathrooms:**

Lynda has all the fixtures to replace the current fixtures. Waiting on the city to presser wash the bathrooms and then the new fixtures will be installed.

The Arts Association volunteered to paint a mural on the large wall between the bathrooms.

### **Holiday Decorations:**

Cindy suggested BRBA purchase bulk decorations, lights for Christmas, flags for the 4th and Memorial Day etc. BRBA would purchase in bulk and then the individual merchants would pay for the decorations used on their business. Lots to discuss before this idea could move forward.

### **City and 20/20**

Donna assigned each council member a part of the 20/20 suggestions. Small committees including a council member and a couple business owners are reviewing and asked to come back to the council with suggestions on how to best to implement some of 20/20’s proposals. It is to early to discuss the committees suggestions.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm