

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce Responds to Karon Mitchell Lawsuit with
The Truth**

- The legal action filed by Karon Mitchell against the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is a baseless, vindictive attack on the Chamber's staff, board of directors, marketing council and several member businesses, filled with unsubstantiated allegations. Ms. Mitchell is a disgruntled former member of the Chamber who refused to pay a late charge levied by the Chamber's Board of Directors and her membership was dropped. Subsequently, she failed in an attempt to create a competitor chamber of commerce. Make no mistake: the Chamber will vigorously defend itself against each false, incorrect and/or baseless allegation included in this action.
- The Chamber is a private organization and is not subject to state procurement laws.
- The Chamber meets or exceeds every requirement to manage the TDF and A-Tax funds set forth by state law. This is demonstrated to the City, County and State on an ongoing basis.
- The Chamber uses industry-standard business practices to manage its promotional programs, including the selection of partners and vendors. These practices include the use of Requests for Proposal (RFP's), Requests for Qualifications (RFQ's), competitive bidding, open hiring searches, purchasing analysis, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and the broad business acumen of experienced volunteer community leaders and highly-skilled staff who have been hired for their expertise.
- The Chamber meets or exceeds all requirements for transparency and accountability related to the TDF and A-Tax laws. These include quarterly publication of details related to the expenditure of public funds dating back to 2008, publication of its annual audit, publication of its annual tax return, open meetings, scheduled time for public input at every meeting, publication of its annual economic impact analysis, publication of its annual marketing plan and publication of its marketing council meeting minutes. The Chamber adheres to all applicable laws and guidelines.

- The Chamber represents 2,800+ members, employs 37 people and relies heavily upon community volunteer leadership and stellar partners. We regret that the motives and character of the Chamber Board of Directors, the Chamber leadership, the Chamber staff, and the Chamber membership is being attacked by a disgruntled former member. The Chamber's Board of Directors and staff maintain a commitment to transparency and accountability. We have and we will continue to follow applicable laws and guidelines. We use industry-standard business practices. We are good stewards of public and private funds. We are committed to promoting, protecting and improving the Grand Strand and its business community. And, we are prepared to vigorously defend the Chamber in a court of law, where the Chamber will prevail, because Ms. Mitchell's lawsuit is built upon misinformation, rumor, innuendo and baseless accusations.

The Businesses Falsely Attacked by Karon Mitchell In Her Lawsuit

Visibility & Conversions is a local business employing local residents. Through a competitive bidding/RFP process, this business was selected by the Board of Directors to manage the digital marketing accounts of the Chamber. The business is located at 11947 Grandhaven Drive, Suite North, Murrells Inlet, SC and has **never** operated out of a storage shed as Ms. Mitchell falsely states in her lawsuit. This business is owned by a former employee of the Chamber. However, at no time did this individual work as an employee of the Chamber and operate a business contracting with the Chamber.

Furthermore, Visibility & Conversions is the primary agency of record that manages our vast digital advertising and promotion campaigns. In this modern era of marketing, digital advertising is the largest investment used to promote our number one industry. While it is true that Visibility & Conversions receives very large amounts of marketing dollars for this effort, nearly all of these funds are paid to companies such as Google, Yahoo, Travel Zoo, Facebook, and other companies. The team at Visibility & Conversions is paid to manage these important investments.

Com-Connect is a local business employing local residents which was selected by the Chamber Board of Directors through a competitive bidding process to manage the Chamber/CVB's call center. Since the inception of this contract, this company has broadened its roles and responsibilities, performing a variety of other duties related to out-of-market advertising and promotion. This business is owned by a former employee of the Chamber. However, at no time did this individual work as an employee of the Chamber and operate a business contracting with the Chamber.

Miller Direct is a local business that was scrutinized through an extensive RFQ process. Miller Direct does not have a contract with the Chamber. Rather, Miller Direct proposes marketing programs and services, and the Chamber either accepts or rejects proposals. Furthermore, Miller Direct began working with the Chamber in 1996, and its owner, Jackie Miller, was never, at any time, an employee of the Chamber.

Visual Destinations is a local business owned and operated by a local resident which was selected by the Chamber Board of Directors through a competitive bidding process to manage the Visit Myrtle Beach website. This business is owned by a former employee of the Chamber. However, at no time did this individual work as an employee of the Chamber and operate a business contracting with the Chamber.

Brandon Agency is a full-service ad agency that provides marketing services on an as-needed basis for the Chamber. Brandon Agency was selected through a competitive bidding process to manage advertising promotion for Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday. Scott Brandon has not served on the Chamber board for more than 20 years.

Fuel Interactive LLC provides a broad-scope of advertising and promotion services for a wide array of local businesses. Fuel Interactive was selected through a competitive bidding process to manage digital advertising for Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday.

Right Analytics, LLC is a company that was formed by Jim Wright, who had previously served as the Chamber's Executive Vice President of Finance, but eventually resigned to locate to another state. After an extensive 14-month national search to fill its need for a business intelligence officer to head its research and analysis efforts, the Chamber contracted with Mr. Wright to perform these duties.

Battle Strategies is a local company owned and operated by a local resident who previously worked for the Chamber. She chose to leave her position at the chamber to start her own business and start a family. She proposed to continue her highly-effective work creating internet content and videos for Visit Myrtle Beach, and the Chamber chose to use her services on a contract basis. It's important to note that her compensation as a contractor is much less than she made as an employee.