

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -
Board of Directors Meeting
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom
Wednesday, May 12, 2021
Minutes

Present

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts
City Manager Mark Stephens
Commissioner Tom Mark
Paresh Pankhavala
Alderman Sabrina Bengel
Craig Warren, Ex-Officio
Melissa Riggle, Executive
Director

Excused

Chairman Cindy King
Commissioner Danny Walsh
Gary Johnson
Nancy Figiel

Guest

Judy Avery
Pam Holder
Erin Knight
Brice Connors
Matt Potts
Tammy Rodriguez
Carrie Gallagher
Tarshi McCoy
Michelle Lynn
Zaneta Padilla
Melinda Mowry
James Hiner
John Blackwelder

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and thanked everyone for being there.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts asked for any questions in-regards to the minutes for the April Board Meeting. Sabrina Bengel moved to accept all the minutes in the board packet. Paresh Pankhavala seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT: Craig Warren started with the Occupancy Tax Collection Report noting taxes collected in the month of April for hotel stays in March were \$154,006 compared to \$108,739 for the same time period last year. That represents an increase of \$45,267 which is 41.63% compared to last year's collections for that month. Of that total online travel companies made up roughly 21%. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,125,712 compared to \$1,579,768 the previous year which represents a decrease of \$255,452 or 16.9%. No penalties collected. Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for April 2021 were \$48,550 compared to \$34,196 last year, increase of 41%. YTD income is \$430,680 compared to \$510,905 last year, decrease of 15.7%. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for April was \$56,567 compared to \$26,657 last year. Total expenditures YTD are 72.73% of the budgets through 83.3% of the year. Looking at the balance sheet as of April 30 the cash balance is \$438,495. Adding in the net income through April of -\$6,865 to the fund balance gives a total of \$487,045. Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts asked for a motion to move; Paresh Pankhavala motioned to approve; Mark Stephens seconded the motion.

IV. STR Report: Paresh Pankhavala shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 57.6 % compared to 65.4% in 2020. ADR was 89.41 compared to 99.88 in 2020 and RevPAR was 51.50 compared to 65.35 last year. In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 45.8 compared to 51.4 last year. ADR was 68.05 compared to 78.68 in 2020. RevPAR was 31.15 compared to 40.43 last year.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT: Melissa Riggle updated the board on the visitor log for April 2021 that showed 610 walk-ins and 74 calls at the main office and 292 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends). | Melissa shared a map that showed state of origins for requests as well as source of email inquiries noting that there were 382 in April. | Melissa Riggle reported that a new city-wide restaurant council has been created to meet with owners to offer support to help keep business in Craven County. | **Civil War Trails:** Tryon Palace has identified the first 3 signs to begin the content review. Tentative “unveiling” promotional opportunity with the state set for September. | ANEC spring conference was held last week (May 6, 2021). Melissa attended virtually, Tarshi McCoy was in attendance. Will be hosting AENC here in New Bern in 2022. | Meeting Planners International Conference (May 16 & 17) in Beaufort. | Travel & Adventure Virtual Show (May 12). | **Vacation Rental Update:** Melissa reported that booking demands are still going strong for vacation rentals and will continue to be a popular choice. | **Large Groups and Events:** Melissa gave an update on future large group events; Babe Ruth Tournament (June 25-30, 2021): 50 teams of 12-15 players, will be at Creekside Park. 500 room nights. | NC Tennis Association 70’s Invitational (April 19-21, 2022) Proposal: 150 participants, 100 room nights, location TBD. | US Tennis Association Adult League 65+ (May 13-15, 2022) Proposal: 450 anticipated participants, 300 room nights, location TBD. | Brightside Global Travel (July 2-4, 2022) Proposal: 25 attendees, 50 room nights (Doubletree to host). | **News from the State:** Melissa attended the governor’s conference; focusing on “Get Back to a Better Place”. Reinventing brand to create a message of diversity and inclusion. **Press/PR/Media:** We will be hosting a travel writer from Southern Living next week (May 20-22, 2021) for the first time. Advertorial and article will be featured in Southern Living and Cary Magazines. Itinerary to include Accommodations at The Aerie, Tryon Palace, Trolley, Street Café Dining, Small Batch, Boat Tour. | Convention South: Craven County to be featured in June’s issue of Convention South Event Planners Guide. | Fodor’s Travel: New Bern to be featured in the November Edition of Carolina & Georgia guide. List to include: The Aerie, Benjamin Ellis, Hanna House, Doubletree, Cypress Hall, and Persimmons. | Apple TV: New Bern is being considered for a new miniseries. Filming could begin as soon as August/September 2021. Site tour included: The Aerie, Jarvis 220, Meadows Inn, Tryon Palace, Gardens, Commission House, Hay House, Jones and NB Academy.

Marketing: Brice Connors announced that you will see a change in our advertising actions to reflect a CTA (Call to Action) message. OTT/CTV streaming campaign: 148.5k impressions. Print ads: Cary Magazine, Our State, Southern Living, Ideal Living, AARP. Airport: needs to add New Bern to website and have a presence at the airport. Matt Potts gave updates on online stats; Ellie engagement rate is 15.2% with 49% of traffic redirected to Hotels/B&B’s. Retirement redirects are up 5%. April events saw a 4% increase month over month. Social Media: expanding to TikTok (already over a 100 followers) and LinkedIn (posts highlight Martin Marietta Park and Coastal Carolina Regional Airport’s growth). EWN has updated their site to include New Bern. Debut of mini documentary video series to highlight the local, small town businesses. (Cypress Hall & Jarvis 220). A spring photo shoot will take place on May 14, 2021, implementing diversity & inclusion efforts in casting interracial models.

VI. HAVELOCK TOURISM & EVENT CENTER DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Pam Holder said that events are starting to come back; Commissioners meeting and workshop, contractor meetings and training seminars. Facility has unlocked doors, no appointment needed. May has a several events scheduled other than City of Havelock Board of Commissioners meetings, including some graduation parties. Summer Engineering Camp (July 19-23, 2021) for 4-6 graders. April revenue was \$12,165 compared to \$0.0 the previous year. | Traffic to the website has increased over the previous months. 87 visitors and 200 event guests.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts gave an update on the revised Bylaws. Sabrina Bengel motioned to adopt the revised updates. Mark Stevens seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts requested that we appoint a budget officer and nominated Melissa Riggle. Sabrina Bengel motioned to approve Melissa Riggle as budget officer, and Mark Stevens seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Melissa Riggle requested a line-item transfer of \$43,000 from the salaries line to contractual (\$18,000), promotional (\$15,000), postal (\$5,000), legal (\$5,500). Sabrina Bengel motioned to adopt the revised updates. Mark Stevens seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Sabrina Bengel requested the board to approve (Chairman Cindy King and Melissa Riggle) signing a Letter of Support for Representative Tyson to highlight the difficulties that we, as a city, are having in staffing issues, scheduling hours, finding employees and how it is effecting our customer service. Commissioner Tom Mark motioned to approve the letter. Paresh Pankhavalala seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS: Farewell award to City Manager Mark Stephens

IX. MEMBER COMMENTS:

Thank you for your service City Manager Mark Stephens!

Inquiries and booking continue to come in strong, optimistic. Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts: Mid-day mingle at Captain Ratty's. Erin Knight: Base construction is bringing guests into hotel rooms and restaurants in Havelock. Annual Salute to Veterans will be in August. Havelock Chamber to celebrate 50th year. Plans for an Artisan Fair are in the works for March 2022.

X. ADJOURNMENT:

Vice-Chairman Dan Roberts acknowledged the motion to adjourn. City Manager Mark Stephens made the motion to adjourn, Sabrina Bengel seconded the motion at 10:31 am.