

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom  
Wednesday, March 9, 2022  
Minutes

**Present**

Alderman Sabrina Bengel  
Alderman Jeffery Odham  
Commissioner Brenda Wilson  
Commissioner Tom Mark  
Nancy Figiel  
Craig Warren, Ex-Officio  
Melissa Riggle, Executive  
Director

**Excused**

Chairman Dan Roberts  
Vice-Chairman Paresch Pankhavala  
Cindy King  
Gary Johnson

**Guest**

Judy Avery  
Brice Connors  
Matt Potts  
Tammy Rodriguez  
Tarshi McCoy  
Erin Knight  
Pam Holder  
Gary Curry  
Denise Gleason  
John Blackwell  
Cindy Patton

**I. CALL TO ORDER-ROLL CALL:**

Alderman Sabrina Bengel called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and thanked everyone for being there.

**II. ROLL CALL:** Tammy Rodriguez conducted roll call. (A quorum was present.)

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Alderman Sabrina Bengel asked for any questions in-regards to the minutes for the February Board Meeting. Alderman Jeffery Odham moved to accept all the minutes in the board packet. Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:** Craig Warren started with the Occupancy Tax Collection Report noting taxes collected in the month of February for hotel stays in January were \$134,346 compared to \$91,800 for the same time period last year. That represents an increase of \$42,546 which is 46.3% compared to last year's collections for that month. Second highest February! Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,288,049 compared to \$800,242 the previous year which represents an increase of \$420,807 or 4%. Of that total online travel companies made up roughly 21.7%. There was \$67 in penalties and \$3,364 in late receipts. Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for February 2022 were \$42,342 compared to \$28,349 last year, increase of 46.3%. Room tax is running ahead by 99.9% of 66.7% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for February was \$52,586 compared to \$62,042 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below the budget at 62.4% of 66.7%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$92,286. Looking at the balance sheet as of February 28, 2022, the cash balance is \$511,412.76. Adding in the net income through February of \$92,286.04 to the fund balance gives a total of \$553,371.22 Commissioner Brenda Wilson made a motion to approve the financials. Commissioner Tom Mark seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

- V. **STR Report:** Garry Curry shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 54.3% compared to 44.1% in 2021. ADR was 104.17% compared to 89.48% in 2021 and RevPAR was 56.58% compared to 39.42% last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 37.1% compared to 39.5% last year. ADR was 77.56% compared to 67.09% in 2021. RevPAR was 28.80% compared to 26.53% last year.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle updated the board on the visitor traffic. The visitor log for February 2022 that showed 347 walk-ins and 166 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends). There were 229 emails, 450 Southern Living Leads and 29 phone calls. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, New York, Virginia, Maryland, and Florida. We will be putting more strategic focus on Northern Virginia and D.C. with the addition of the new direct flight from AWS to Reagan. | Top interests that drive visitors here include walking tours, Tryon Palace, bear maps and calendar of events. | Airbnb/Vrbo: Continuing to be strong with 146 active rentals. **Large Groups and Events:** We have had 35 leads generated and 13 leads outstanding YTD. February had a total of over \$37,000 of contracted business. Included in the pack is a report showing convention center events and where they are staying, that we helped source. **Media Contributions:** NC Tripping (Christina Riley) has over 12,000 followers. | Adam The Woo, Viral YouTuber was in town on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and did a feature on Pepsi and New Bern's History. His video saw over 73,000 views. | Stays and Getaways (Julia) was here last spring and refreshed her content and reposted a spring and summer weekend to do list. | All of these together generated and delivered a \$6,000 value of earned media. A thank you to Judy for a February and Black History Month content on social media. She highlighted events, attractions, walking tours and even highlighted black business owners. News Link featured news of our new direct flight to Reagan Airport in D.C. | We hosted the Director of Sales, Guy Gaster, who is a film and production site scout for new locations. He will be back in the spring to do a professional shoot to update his database and portfolio on New Bern. **News from The State:** February 25-26 Melissa and Judy will be attended the Travel and Adventure Show in Washington DC and saw a great turnout and interest in New Bern.

**Marketing:** Brice Connors highlighted that the African American History and Black History Month Parade web pages broke into the top 25 for the month. | Matt Potts gave an update on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 1,626,002 Total Clicks: 22,382 Total Costs: \$6,274.82. | Web traffic is up more than 300% YOY in Washington DC| Ellie: Engagement rate: Self-guided tours saw an 88% increase YOY, Accommodations increased by 10%, and things to do increased by 3.2% | Print ad placements include Southern Living National: A quarterly Try On New Bern ad placed for March. Southern Living Reginal: Half-page Try On New Bern ad highlighting outdoors placed in February issue and resulting in outdoor activities web page being in top 10 most visited. Our State: full-page ad to run throughout March highlighting family fun and Bear Town Bears resulted in the Bear Town Bears page being in the top 25 most visited. Heart of NC Weddings: More than 850 web page views were recorded in February based on the full-page ad| Digital: AccuWeather display ad triggers had to be adjusted due to warmer weather in the DC area which has led to 267,108 impressions. | Walking Tours: Revolutionary War and Walk to Remember redesign has been completed. Thanks to Tammy for discovering that Nicholas Sparks released a new book called "The Return" that is based in New Bern and is generating a lot of discussion on social media. We will be seeing how we can incorporate the new book into the existing tour, or possibly creating a new one.

**VII. HAVELOCK TOURISM & EVENT CENTER DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Pam Holder: ECAHF Gala was held on February 25. The Havelock Chamber is sponsoring an Artisan Affair on March 19. Registration for the ECAHF Elementary School Summer Camp is open for grades 4-6. Camp dates are July 25-29 | February Revenue: \$15,287.41 | Statistics: Visitors 117, Event Guests 830, Total Visitors 947, Telephone: 21, Email: 19, Elie: 3. | Website statistics: New Visitors 977, Total Visitors 951, Sessions 1,150, Page Views 1,772.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:** No new business.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS:** Melissa Riggle: First meeting with EWN was good. Suggested that they rebrand New Bern as part of the Inner Banks as opposed to the Outer Banks. New Bern and Outer Banks is two separate trips so they should be marketed separately. | Havelock Visitor Center update: Proposed updates to brochure racks and better signage. Reposition Havelock on our website to include visitor center location, things to do, the aviation museum, and featuring outdoor assets. Budget will decrease from \$25,000 to \$10,000 and the \$15,000 will be reinvested into marketing.

**X. MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Nancy Figiel: Twin Rivers Quilt exhibit is on display until the end of March, Outlander tour March 16, Winterfeast will be March 26. Starting in April there will be a behind the scenes look at costumes for kids. May 21 Underground Railroad Symposium, | Commissioner Tom Mark: The Northwest Marina in Fairfield Harbor was just purchased which will hopefully bring hotel rooms and restaurant. Airport needs to expand runway over Williams Road to allow larger planes to fly in. | Mike Gleason: The Jarvis is book with weddings all the way into January 2023. | Cindy Patton: Double Tree to start work on the second hotel, it will be a tapestry brand. Hope for it to be open the end of 2022 or the beginning of 2023. | Gary Curry: group bookings are up. Also getting calls from other hotels in surrounding areas about Kessler coming to New Bern, drawing a lot of attention. | Alderman Jeffery Odham: Carolina East Hospital ranked in the top 1.6% of hospitals across the nation. #101 out of 6,090. | Erin Knight: Thank you for highlighting Havelock. Artisan Market will highlight local artists and businesses. | Commissioner Brenda Wilson: Carolina Pines Golf Course is for sale. | Tammy Rodriguez: Calendar of events updates. Street Café's begin in April, every Friday night. | Alderman Sabrina Bangel: Pepsi bringing museum to New Bern, still waiting on official release date. Pepsi NITRO release party March 26. Social Districts: residents are starting to hear the buzz and have tons of questions. The Volt Center is working on creating a certificate job training program for cooks, preps and front-end hospitality. Supply shortages have delayed shipping of kitchen setup. Melissa Riggle: Havelock Holiday Inn was recognized on Travel Myth 2022 as being a top hotel for 10 different features of their hotel.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Alderman Sabrina Bangel asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderman Jeffery Odham made the motion to adjourn, Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded the motion at 10:27 am.