

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023  
Minutes

**Present**

Chairman Dan Roberts  
Vice-Chairman Paresh  
Pankhavala  
Gary Johnson  
Sabrina Bengel  
Matthew Paul  
Nancy Figiel  
Bill Stafford  
Commissioner Brenda Wilson  
Craig Warren, Ex-Officio  
Melissa Riggle, Executive  
Director

**Excused**

Commissioner Tom Mark

**Guest**

Judy Avery  
Brice Connors  
Matt Potts  
Tammy Rodriguez  
Pam Holder  
Gary Curry  
Tarshi McCoy  
Melinda Mowery  
Tracy Stuckrath

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

Chairman Dan Roberts 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:**

Chairman Dan Roberts asked for any questions in-regards to the minutes for the January Board Meeting. Sabrina Bengel 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 January for hotel stays in December were \$155,562 compared to \$132,710 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 19% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,240,927 compared to \$1,153,703 the previous year which show a 7.5% increase. There was \$1,421 in penalties and \$11,927 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for January 2023 were \$49,040.96 compared to \$41,836.72 last year, showing 17.2% increase. Room tax is running ahead by 65.8% of 58.3% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for January was \$41,088.77 compared to \$44,531.89 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below with the budget at 53.1% of 58.3%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$100,105. Looking at the balance sheet as of January 31, 2023, the cash balance is \$611,684 Adding in the net income through January of \$50,461 to the fund balance gives a total of \$661,550. Matthew Paul made a motion to approve the financials. Sabrina Bengel seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

- V. **STR Report:** Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhavala shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 69.2% compared to 68.6% in 2021. ADR was 124.59% compared to 111.47% in 2021 and RevPAR was 86.26% compared to 76.52% last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 51.3% compared to 51.0% last year. ADR was 89.55% compared to 89.07% in 2021. RevPAR was 45.93% compared to 45.43% last year.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: Generated \$247k in group lead production, booked \$78k in group business. Melissa was a guest speaker at the Keller Williams sales meeting. Installed baby changing station in the restroom here and installed new brochure racks at the Havelock VIC location. We are welcoming a new part-time staff member this week; her name is Mary Ann Archie. | **Visitor stats for the month of January** we saw 203 walk-ins, 97 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 72 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 202 emails, 71 Southern Living Leads and 20 phone calls. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, New York, Virginia, South Carolina, and California. Top attractions continue to be, Walking Tours, Tryon Palace, Shopping, Dining, and. | Arts in April: upcoming promotion featuring events happening through the month of April (music, visual art, performance art). | AirDNA: 268 active rentals, showing a slight decrease in bookings | **Group Business:** We have over \$2.7 million in group proposals. Melissa and Judy attended the Washington DC Travel and Adventure Show with over 10,000 attendees. **From the state:** VNB has been invited to the New York City Media Mission in November 2023. We are 1 of 7 that have been invited.

**Marketing:** Brice Connors provided updates on changes made to the AccuWeather triggers. Tourism fact asset has been produced and is located on the TDA about us page. | Matt Potts gave an update on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 2,013,829 Total Clicks: 28,384 Total Cost: \$5,692. | Ellie: Weddings saw a 5% increase MOM Flights saw an increase of 3% MOM | There has been an increase of people opting out of data tracking, we have adopted the G4 Integration, which is an update to Google Analytics. | **Print:** NC Travel Guide: full-page ad, Main & Broad: advertorial in the NC Road-trip Inspiration section, Cary magazine advertorial, Wake Living: advertorial, Heart of NC Weddings: two-page spread, NOVA: full-page print ad **Digital:** | Phoenix Geofencing Campaign: During Melissa's trip to the Meade & Hunt Air Service Conference, we implemented ads to pop up around the conference location. | The Return Walking Tour has been completed, not only does it highlight Downtown New Bern, but it takes Nicholas Sparks fans into Havelock as well. | The new Arts in April logo has been completed and a dedicated page online for all the events to be listed.

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

Pam Holder: Summer camp is open for registration. The ECAHF Gala will be on Feb 24th | January Revenue: \$17,253.92 Statistics: Visitors 72, Event Gusts 795, Total Visitors 867 Telephone: 18, Email:5, Ellie: 5. | Website statistics: New Visitors 790, Total Visitors 815, Sessions 978, Page Views 1,680.

VIII. **NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Dan Roberts spoke about

- a. Nominating Committee Appointments: Commissioner Wilson, Sabrina Bengal and Chairman Dan Roberts will serve on the committee.
- b. Budget Committee Appointments: Vice-Chairman Paresh, Nancy Figiel, Matthew Paul, Melissa Riggle, and Craig Warren will serve on the committee.

- c. EWN – Meade and Hunt Air Service Conference Report – Melissa: met with various airlines. Delta is changing their business model and pulling out of smaller markets. Industrial wide, airlines are waiting to see how 2023 does before growing into new markets. A lot of great exposure with different airlines. There’s a world conference in Vegas that we’ve been invited to.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS:** Melissa Riggle: Employee Handbook: If there are no questions or concerns, the employee handbook will be adopted and put into action.

**X. MEMBER COMMENTS:** Gary Curry: Alex Cushman has left his practice and joining Heron Hospitality full time. The Harvey updates on the inside should be done around April, AC unites have been installed, fire suppression system has been installed. Commissioner Brenda Wilson: Havelock was given funding to use towards infrastructure, sewer and western expansion. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar updates, Baxter’s 1892 had their grand opening last weekend. Havelock has a new business that just opened Good Vibe Coffee and Wine Bar. Mayor Lewis will be hosting a community listening session on February 21 on economic development for Havelock. Nancy Fiegiel: History in Bloom brought in 22 floral designers and over 110 attendees. Sabrina Bengel: Baxter’s 1892 is upscale nightclub, could bring a different crowd to New Bern. Kuma Sushi is doing well. Talbot’s lot has been sold, and the money from the sale will go back into the MSD and hopefully be used towards the Pepsi Museum. More retail is needed in the downtown, more hotels as well. Chairman Dan Roberts: chamber construction is set to begin in five weeks.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Bill Stafford made a motion to adjourn. Sabrina Bengel seconded the motion at 10:22 am.