

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom  
Wednesday, January 11, 2023  
Minutes

**Present**

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

**Excused**

Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhaval  
Commissioner Tom Mark  
Gary Johnson

**Guest**

Judy Avery  
Brice Connors  
Matt Potts  
Tammy Rodriguez  
Pam Holder  
Cailin Gibson  
Melinda Mowry  
Rowena  
Gary Curry  
Carol Becton

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

Chairman Dan Roberts called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:05 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 December Board Meeting. Sabrina Bengel moved to accept all the minutes in the board packet. Bill Stafford 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 December for hotel stays in November were \$175,967 compared to \$146,377 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 16.7% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,085,364 compared to \$1,020,993 the previous year which show a 6.3% increase. There was \$2,316 in penalties and \$8,766 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for December 2022 were \$55,473.45 compared to \$46,145.31 last year, showing 20.2% increase. Room tax is running ahead by 59.4% of 50% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for December was \$46,280 compared to \$79,878 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below with the budget at 47.7% of 50%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$91,450. Looking at the balance sheet as of December 31, 2022, the cash balance is \$596,928 Adding in the net income through December of \$91,450 to the fund balance gives a total of \$652,895 Sabrina Bengel made a motion to approve the financials. Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

V. **STR Report:** Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhavala shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 70.5% compared to 69.7% in 2021. ADR was 125.69% compared to 111.83% in 2021 and RevPAR was 88.64% compared to 78% last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 52.4% compared to 52.2% last year. ADR was 89.77% compared to 89.46% in 2021. RevPAR was 47.03% compared to 46.67% last year.

VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: Tammy attended the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event for Havelock Tourist & Event Center, VNB presented a check for \$2,000 to American Legion Post 539 from the Trail to Tryon proceeds. Special thank you to the downtown business council, Tryon Palace, and Beary Merry for helping to make New Bern a premier holiday destination. Website has been updated to highlight Havelock. | New Nicholas Sparks self-guided tour has been created to feature location around Craven County that are featured in The Return. | **Visitor stats for the month of December** we saw 263 walk-ins, 114 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 121 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 190 emails, 135 Southern Living Leads and 37 phone calls. | In addition, Melissa gave an update on the annual totals for 2022: 5,483 walk-ins, 1,482 Cub House, 1,338 Havelock Visitor Center. Top places of origin are North Carolina, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Top attractions continue to be, Walking Tours, Tryon Palace, Trolley Tours, Dining, and Shopping. | Arts in April: upcoming promotion featuring events happening through the month of April (music, visual art, performance art). | AirDNA: 268 active rentals | **Group Business:** We are working with North Carolina District Attorney's Association to bring a group in that is over \$250,000. **From the state:** Judy attended our first trade show of the year in New York to showcase our Retire New Bern program. **Earned media:** NC Weddings mentioned New Bern several times, Our State repurposed an older article featuring Baker's Kitchen. Total value was over \$14,000.

**Marketing:** Brice Connors share key marketing updates for January to include March Our State ad, Our State email newsletter, DEI Statement being worked on, The Return Tour, new retractable banner, TDA Advocacy word flow, staff headshots, Arts in April logo design is in production. | Matt Potts gave an update on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 1,813,950 Total Clicks: 28,922 Total Cost: \$6,630. | Ellie: Things to do saw a 5% increase MOM, Accommodations saw an increase of 2.5% MOM | December secure the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest pageview of all time. Things to Do was the most visited page by more than 10,000 views. Users from Virginia, Georgia, and New York saw an increase of more than 42% YOY Weddings look to be a strong category as the Heart of NC starts circulation. **Print:** NC Travel Guide: full-page ad, Our State: full-page December ad, Heart of NC Weddings: full page ad **Digital:** | Search engine optimization overhaul includes meta descriptions to help the website run faster (insight score from 73 to 85) | Trail To Tryon: added drone video and imagery to our database. Digital ad reached 200,000 people, generated 8,700 clicks and 220,000 views for our sponsor logos.

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

Pam Holder: We celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on December 7th. Approximately 100 people attended the event. | December Revenue: \$18,044.61 Statistics: Visitors 121, Event Gusts 995, Total Visitors 1,116 Telephone: 11, Email:5, Ellie; 4. | Website statistics: New Visitors 727, Total Visitors 744, Sessions 859, Page Views 1,262.

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

**IX. OLD BUSINESS:** Melissa Riggle: Employee Handbook: Has been created to reflect the needs of the TDA. Ross Hardeman has reviewed it and we are in legal compliance. Employee earned vacation time and leave of absence will be addressed on case by case situations.

**X. MEMBER COMMENTS:** Carol Bechton: Thank you for all your help and support with the Great Fire event. Rowena Arroza: Christoph's has a new menu and will be undergoing a redesign, including a new look and new name. Gary Curry: Social districts supporters need to contact the alderman and mayor to show support. Business community needs to request a meeting with the alderman. Nancy Figiel: Tryon Palace is trying to get a grant for African American History public art. History in Bloom will be a special event with floral arrangements to reflect the collection pieces. Candlelight was sold out shows, around 1700 each night. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar of event updates. Matthew Paul: swearing in new board members next week. Dan Roberts: The new windows are in and we are awaiting the framers to finish their current job and should start in about 3 weeks. Chamber banquet will be held at the DoubleTree.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**  
Chairman Dan Roberts made a motion to adjourn. Sabrina Bengel seconded the motion at 10:34 am.