

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -
Board of Directors Meeting
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Minutes

Present

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

Excused

Commissioner Brenda Wilson

Guest

Judy Avery
Brice Connors
Tammy Rodriguez
Melinda Mowery

I. CALL TO ORDER-ROLL CALL:

Chairman Dan Roberts called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:01 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 February Board Meeting. Sabrina Bengel moved to accept all the minutes in the board packet. Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhavala 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 \$129,536 compared to \$134,346 for the same time last year. Due to 2 late payments totaling approximately \$18,000. Online travel companies made up 25.9% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,370,462 compared to \$1,288,049 the previous year which show a 6.4% increase. There was \$175 in penalties and \$1,846 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for February 2023 were \$40,836 compared to \$42,352 last year, showing 3.6% decrease. Room tax is running ahead by 71% of 67% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for February was \$67,382 compared to \$52,586 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below with the budget at 61% of 67%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$73,734. Looking at the balance sheet as of February 28, 2023, the cash balance is \$595,001 Adding in the net income through February of \$73,734 to the fund balance gives a total of \$635,178. Bill Stafford 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 54.0% compared to 54.1% in 2022. ADR was 110.49% compared to 104.6% in 2022 and RevPAR was 59.62% compared to 56.62% last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 43.9% compared to 37.0% last year. ADR was 87.53% compared to 80.15% last year. RevPAR was 38.4% compared to 29.67% last year.

VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: **Visitor stats for the month of February** we saw 290 walk-ins, 86 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 127 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 183 emails, 111 Southern Living Leads and 25 phone calls. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, Virginia, New York, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Top attractions continue to be, Walking Tours, Tryon Palace, Local Events, Dining, and Shopping. | AirDNA: 268 active rentals, showing higher bookings than last year | Arts in April: upcoming promotion featuring events happening through the month of April (music, visual art, performance art). | **Group Business:** Sporting Events: Babe Ruth pro series in July, Champions for Change Invitational EPSON Ladies LPGA Tournament bringing 144 lady golfers. | Large Groups: United Methodist Church conference & the World Axe Throwing Competition each requesting venue space and 500+ rooms a night for their events. | We have a new economic impact report that shows specific venue impacts. | **From the state:** Melissa attended the 365 Conference held in Asheville.

Marketing: Brice Connors provided updates on the Arts in April landing page. | Average page load time has been decreased to 4 seconds, which is faster than many competitive destinations. | Itineraries webpage has made it to the top 10 most visited page in under a year's time. | Social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 1,981,066 Total Clicks: 27,386 Total Cost: \$6,463. | Ellie: Current Events saw a 4% increase MOM, Retirement saw a decrease of 3% MOM | **Print:** Our State: 2 full page print ads, NC Travel Guide: full-page ad, Main & Broad: advertorial in the NC Road-trip Inspiration section, Cary Magazine: A Great Escape advertorial, Wake Living: A Great Escape advertorial, Heart of NC Weddings: two-page spread, NOVA: full page ad, New Bern Magazine: Arts in April Ad **Digital:** | OTT Streaming placed in D.C and Charlotte | An artisan influencer coming in April

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

Melissa Riggle: New visitor center brochure racks have been installed | The ECAHF Gala was held on Feb 24th, Regional women's winter gala on Feb 4, brought in more than 100 guests. | February Revenue: \$26,683.90 Statistics: Visitors 127, Event Guests 1,090, Total Visitors 1,217 Telephone: 12, Email: 7, Ellie: 7. | Website statistics: New Visitors 735 Total Visitors 760, Sessions 912, Page Views 2,137.

VIII. **NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Dan Roberts: Employee Handbook: In review of the new employee handbook policies, Paid Time Off policies need to be adjusted. Full-time employees currently have PTO balances that need to be used or paid out. Starting July 1, 2023 would move to a use or lose policy. Will require a board vote.

IX. **OLD BUSINESS:** Chairman Dan Roberts: employee handbook needs to be approved. Bill Stafford made a motion to approve the new employee handbook. Sabrina Bengel requested an amendment that the new policy begins July 1, 2023. Bill Stafford seconded the motion. Chairman Dan Roberts called for a vote, and it was unanimously approved.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS: Nancy Fiegiel: Winter Feast will be moved from the south lawn to an indoor event due to the weather. Arts in April: Plein Air artists will be allowed to paint in the gardens for free every weekend. Fife and Drum will be performing on April 15th, marionettes will be performing April 1st. Tammy Rodriguez: Calendar updates. Sabrina Bengel: In May we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Mengies bottling group and the history of Pepsi. The National Pepsi Collector's Club will be in New Bern over Memorial Day weekend for the 125 anniversary of Pepsi. Melissa Riggle: Heron Hospitality has had some great press about the renovations at The Harvey. EWN will be having a groundbreaking tomorrow. Chairman Dan Roberts: Great Trent River Raft Race coming up on June 24th. Construction on the front of the building should begin any day now.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Bill Stafford made a motion to adjourn. Sabrina Bengel seconded the motion at 10:31 am.