

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023  
Minutes

**Present**

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

**Excused**

Vice-Chairman Pares Pankhaval  
Gary Johnson

**Guest**

Judy Avery  
Brice Connors  
Matt Potts  
Tammy Rodriguez  
Melinda Mowery  
Tracy Stuckrath  
Stephen Clayton  
Pam Holder  
Mathew Park  
Jordan Pead

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

Chairman Dan Roberts called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:00 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 March Board Meeting. Bill Stafford moved to accept all the minutes in the board packet Sabrina Bengel 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 March for hotel stays in February were \$178,534 compared to \$161,446 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 19.7% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,548,996 compared to \$1,449,490 the previous year which shows a 6.8% increase. There was \$2,661 in penalties and \$20,386 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for March 2023 were \$56,282 compared to \$50,895 last year, showing a 10.6% increase. Room tax is running ahead by 78.5% of 75% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for March was \$67,095 compared to \$47,151 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below with the budget at 70.5% of 75%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$65,582. Looking at the balance sheet as of March 31, 2023, the cash balance is \$564,785. Adding to the net income through March of \$65,582 to the fund balance gives a total of \$627,027. Sabrina Bengel made a motion to approve the financials. Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Craig Warren requested for the audit contract to be approved by the board as required by the LPC. Audit fees are \$2,900 to cover audit and the writing of financial statements. Bill Stafford made a

motion to approve the audit contract request. Commissioner Tom Mark seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

- V. **STR Report:** Melissa Riggle shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 58.2% compared to 61.6% in 2022. ADR was 113.37% compared to 107.44% in 2022 and RevPAR was 65.96% compared to 66.20% last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 44.9% compared to 41.2% last year. ADR was 87.33% compared to 82.27% last year. RevPAR was 39.19% compared to 33.90% last year.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: **Visitor stats for the month of March** we saw 465 walk-ins, 62 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 193 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 193 emails, 107 Southern Living Leads and 31 phone calls. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and South Carolina. | Top attractions continue to be, Walking Tours, Tryon Palace, Trolley Tours, Dining, and Shopping. | AirDNA: 268 active rentals, showing higher bookings than last year | Arts in April: weather has impacted our weekends a little, but we have a great lineup starting with Friday night Art Walk, followed by the Music Festival on Saturday. The Civic Theatre will have special performances and Tryon Palace is offering Plein Air painting in the gardens. | **Group Business:** We generated about \$12,000 in lead bookings. We attended the API International Business Exchange in Charlotte which was well attended. 90% of attendees said that New Bern was too small of a destination and did not offer enough hotel rooms. Additionally, there was a high inquiry for boutique style hotels. **Earned Media:** Our State: featured article on birthplace of Pepsi, Our State Digital Article: Anchored by the Arts. The New Bern Sun Journal has offered a column space for TDA updates. Melissa submitted her first article "Did you know? New Bern not just for visitor" on the March 20, 2023.

**Marketing:** Brice Connors provided updates OTT streaming campaigns: Charlotte & DC markets will continue throughout April. The AccuWeather campaign has ended, and we are waiting for final performance data. | Updates and enhancements are being made on our walking tours, visitor guides, itineraries and website to bring them up to ADA compliance. | To match the state's initiative Year of the Trail campaign, we have aligned our website to show what great outdoor assets we have in New Bern and Craven County. | 23-24 marketing plan was submitted to the budget committee. | Matt Potts provided updates on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 1,937,478 Total Clicks: 27,281 Total Cost: \$6,766. | Ellie: Accommodations saw a 4% increase MOM, things to do saw a 7% increase MOM. There was a 340% increase in web traffic from Washington DC YOY. | **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 | Digital ad campaigns have been created for Trail to Tryon to help ensure it is bigger and better than the last year. | Plans for a spring 2023 photo and video imagery updates have been scheduled. | Two digital influencers are scheduled to come to New Bern in April: Caitlin Rut and a RAL staff writing. In addition, we have partnered with EWN to bring in Rachel Moon, who is the largest influencer we've had in market so far. She has over 85,000 followers on Instagram.

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

Pam Holder: Practical Aeronautics group visits the TEC 2-3 times a month, Havelock Chamber of Commerce hosted their annual Artisan Affair featuring over 50 local artists. | March Revenue: \$19,402.67 Statistics: Visitors 193, Event Gusts 832, Total Visitors 1,025 Telephone: 9, Email:3, Ellie; 5. | Website statistics: New Visitors 543 Total Visitors 559 Sessions 674, Page Views 2,236.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Dan Roberts: Last night's alderman meeting unanimously approved the request from Bradham's Legacy to apply for the grant request up to \$950,000 to be used towards the Pepsi Museum.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS:** No old business.

**X. MEMBER COMMENTS:** Tracy Stuckrath: Hosting a group featuring 12 female chefs from the state. Tracy is also on the cover of Meetings Day Magazine. Tammy Rodriguez: Calendar updates. Commissioner Brenda Wilson: Salute to the Vets May 9. Judy Avery: signed contract with Weyerhaeuser as our title sponsor for the 2023 Trail to Tryon. Chairman Dan Roberts: repairs to the front of the Chamber building have finally begun!

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Sabrina Bengel made a motion to adjourn. Bill Stafford seconded the motion at 10:25 am.