

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -
Board of Directors Meeting
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom
Wednesday, July 19, 2023
Minutes

Present

Chairman Paresh Pankhavala
Vice-Chairman Nancy Figiel
Commissioner Brenda Wilson
Dan Roberts
Gary Johnson
Matthew Paul
Bill Stafford
Tracy Du Peza
Tyler Griffin
Craig Warren, Ex-Officio
Melissa Riggle, Executive
Director

Excused

Commissioner Tom Mark

Guest

Judy Avery
Brice Connors
Matt Potts
Tammy Rodriguez
Pam Holder
Melinda Mowry
Stephen Clayton
Mary McGee
Sabrina Bengel
Jeff Wood
Chris Cavanaugh
Matthew Park

I. CALL TO ORDER-ROLL CALL:

Chairman Paresh Pankhavala 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 Paresh Pankhavala asked for any questions in-regards to the minutes for the June Board Meeting. Tracy Du Peza stated that his name was misspelled. Chairman Paresh Pankhavala stated that the correction will be made. Dan Roberts 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 June for hotel stays in May were \$235,655 compared to \$224,981 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 19.1% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$2,234,988 compared to \$2,084,780 the previous year which shows a 7.2% increase. There was \$660 in penalties and \$0.00 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for June 2023 were \$74,290 compared to \$70,925 last year, showing a 4.7% increase. Room tax is running ahead by 97.5% of 100% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for June was \$64,514 compared to \$65,146 last year. Total expenditure is down slightly at 97.5% of 100%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$75,815. Looking at the balance sheet as of June 30, 2023, the cash balance is \$564,330. Adding to the net income through June of \$75,915 to the fund balance gives a total of \$637,360. Bill

Stafford made a motion to approve the financials. Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

- V. **STR Report:** Chairman Paresh Pankhavalala shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 67.9% compared to 68.5% in 2022. ADR was \$127.58 compared to \$117.70 in 2022 and RevPAR was \$86.68 compared to \$80.67 last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 49.3% compared to 50.3% last year. ADR was \$91.37 compared to \$87.42 last year. RevPAR was \$45 compared to \$43.94 last year.

Tracy Du Peza inquired about the changes in Wilmington and Crystal Coast areas and if there were any insights. Wilmington had a new arena built that could be drawing in stays. Crystal Coast's drop in numbers could be due to the end of stimulus money. Wilmington is also charging higher rates for groups, so DoubleTree has been getting a lot of inquiries for group rates. Asheville's group rates are low due to possible crime issues. Convention groups don't have to leave the area and are not as affected by the crime.

Chairman Paresh Pankhavalala welcomed and introduced Tracy Du Peza and Tyler Griffin who are the 2 new At-Large board members. Tracy Du Peza has owned the Benjamin Ellis Bed and Breakfast since 2016. Tyler Griffin is part owner at Baxter's 1892.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: Tammy attended Cherry Point Welcome Aboard. | New Visitor Guides are out, and new Retire/Relocate Brochures will be out later this month. | **Visitor stats for the month of June:** We have decided to shift our focus to the main office as the renovations continue to be completed. We are testing weekend hours here instead of the Cub House to try to capture more out-of-town visitor's vs local traffic that comes into the Cub House. 446 walk-ins, 8 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 238 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 184 emails, 23 phone calls and 233 Southern Living Leads. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. | Top attractions continue to be, Walking Tours, Tryon Palace, Dining, Trolley Tours, and Aviation Museum. | We have had some changes to our team, Nabria has left our team and Skylar our summer intern will be leaving at the end of July. We have added a new part time associate, Ashley Norris & will be adding a second part time associate in August after Skylar returns to school. | **Group Business:** We generated over \$860,000 in group lead proposals. We did have over a million-dollar loss due to inventory. Last week Melissa attended the Congressional Summit on Travel & Tourism with the Southeast Tourism society in Washington D.C. Melissa was able to meet with Representative Murphy, who did not realize the impact that his district alone provided to North Carolina economy which added up to over 3 billion dollars. Nancy Figiel stated that Representative Murphy brought his staff to Tryon Palace a few weeks ago for a full tour. | We have attended several Destination International committee meetings for tourism advocacy. Tammy attended the June Welcome Aboard at Cherry Point. We also held a Sales & Tourism Roundtable with our local hospitality partners to get their input on social districts | We had a follow up meeting with the organizers of the LPGA tournament as well as the Golf Pro from Taberna, they are very interested in coming back. This event had over \$150,000 economic impact for Craven County. If we can get a title sponsor for this event, they would be interested in coming back and having a multi-year contract signed.

Marketing: Brice Connors provided updates on the new It's Time Campaign and that implementation has begun. The Raleigh and Charlotte markets are responding well to it.

Matt Potts provided updates on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Total Impressions: 1,499,079 Total Clicks: 25,439 Total Cost: \$5,842.67. | Ellie: Flights saw a 4.7% increase MOM, and accommodations saw a 3.6% increase MOM. | Retire New Bern guide has been completed and should be arriving today!

Print: Our State: full page print ad in August & October, Southern Living: half page horizontal ad in September, Main & Broad: full page ad in August, Wake Living: full page ad in September, Cary Magazine: full page ad in September | **Digital Influencers:** Rachel Moon provided a great report on performance from her visit to New Bern. Her partnership reach was 105,579 users and generated 7,446 downstream URL clicks. While she was here in market, her followers were actively inquiring about places to stay in New Bern and American Airlines provided a trackable link for her to include in her blog to highlight the Saturday D.C. flights.

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

Pam Holder: New attractions: Harrier simulator. Facilities updates: landscaping and power washing of the exterior, static displays and concrete pads. | June Revenue: \$18,846.98 Statistics: Visitors 238, Event Gusts 1,104, Total Visitors 1,342 Telephone: 14, Email:5, Ellie; 5. | Website statistics: New Visitors401 Total Visitors 395 Sessions 455 Page Views 1,738. ECAHF Family Fly-In is August 18

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. TDA Strategic Planning Presentation – Melissa/Chris Cavanaugh: Proposal to incorporate a Strategic Destination Planning Survey to determine where are strengths and weaknesses are. First component is focused on internal research (example: local businesses, lodging partners, elected leaders, and government staff). The second component is some optional marketing research. Focus would be on a meeting planners' study and a destination perception study which would include an online study why non visitors have not come to New Bern. Cost would be 19,900 which has been allocated in the contingency line of the budget.
- b. Placer AI Discussion – Melissa Riggle/Board: Placer AI is a logistic data software program that monitors cell phone traffic by GPS coordinates. Completely anonymous. Users can geofence specific locations to capture visitor attendance. Great for events such as MumFest or the Havelock Chili Festival. It can filter out residential cell phones vs visitor cell phones. It also shows their traffic patters (example: flying into EWN, traveling to New Bern or to Morehead). This would be a joint venture between VNB, Craven 100 Alliance, and EWN. VNB would be the holder and create reports as requested for other entities. The price for this would be \$12,000. This was no allocated into our operating budget since the came about after the budget was approved. Dan Roberts made a motion for a budget amendment of \$12,000 for the purchase of Placer AI. Bill Stafford seconded the motion. Chairman Paresh Pankhavala called for a vote of approval. The motion was approved unanimously.

IX. OLD BUSINESS: No Old Business

- X. **MEMBER COMMENTS:** Melinda Mowry: Deck Party's have returned to the DoubleTree. Nancy Figiel: Record attendance for the 4th of July. Craven County Community Day September 23: free admission for Craven County residents sponsored by PepsiCo. August 8 there will be a reception at the history center to meet the new director, Crystal Rean. Tracy De Peza: Excited to be a part of the board. As an owner of a B&B, I have a very personal connection with our guests and can offer insights to why they came to New Bern. Bill Stafford: last weekend I rented a boat from Anchors Up, it was a

delightful cruise. Commissioner Brenda Wilson: Havelock hosted their 6th listening session, Next one will be in August. Starting a new culture and arts committee. Tyler Griffin: Excited to be here. At Baxter's we try to talk to every table. We are also trying to cross-promote other establishments and are working on creating a cocktail competition. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar updates. Jeff Wood: Thank you for your vote on Placer AI. Melissa and I are working on a number of projects. Tourism and industrial development are intertwined forever. Last month we hosted the NC economic developers from 20 different counties. They had a great time touring Craven County and for the first time in eight years, they are thinking about coming back to New Bern next year. Dan Roberts: The new conference room at the front of the building is almost complete, stop in and check out the new additions. Still waiting on some finishing touches to the outside including repainting of the entrance way (new grayish blue), old ornate Chamber of Commerce sign, blade signs and a new awning to be installed.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Paresh Pankhavalala asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Brenda Wilson made a motion to adjourn. Dan Roberts seconded the motion at 10:51 am.