

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -
Board of Directors Meeting
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom
Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Minutes

Present

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

Excused

Commissioner Tom Mark
Commissioner Brenda Wilson

Guest

Judy Avery
Brice Connors
Matt Potts
Tammy Rodriguez
Melinda Mowery
Stephen Clayton
Mary McGee
Brynn Harms

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 April 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 April for hotel stays in March were \$223,498 compared to \$193,551 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 21% of the total collected. Fiscal YTD collections are \$1,772,493 compared to \$1,643,046 the previous year which shows a 7.9% increase. There was \$182 in penalties and \$1,212 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for April 2023 were \$70,457 compared to \$61,017 last year, showing a 15.5% increase. Room tax is running ahead by 87.6% of 83.3% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for April was \$77,780 compared to \$82,829 last year. Total expenditures are running slightly below with the budget at 80.5% of 83.3%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$58,441. Looking at the balance sheet as of April 30, 2023, the cash balance is \$551,998. Adding to the net income through April of \$58,441 to the fund balance gives a total of \$619,886. Bill Stafford made a motion to approve the financials. Sabrina Bengel seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

- V. **STR Report:** Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhavalala shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 63.5% compared to 64.8% in 2022. ADR was \$119.4 compared to \$110.55 in 2022 and RevPAR was \$75.79 compared to \$71.64 last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 47.5% compared to 44.7% last year. ADR was \$87.49 compared to \$82.76 last year. RevPAR was \$41.52 compared to \$37.03 last year.

*April/May numbers will be slightly up due to the Croatan Forest Fire.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on VNB Highlights: Tammy attended Cherry Point Welcome Aboard and was a guest speaker for Keller Williams. Melissa attended two Destinations International meetings. NC Film Director Guy Gasser returned for a second photo shoot. | New Visitor Guides will be out by the end of the month! | Fishing University is interested in working with VNB to bring fishing education sessions and to do some filming in New Bern. **Visitor stats for the month of April** (decrease from April 2022, construction on the front of the building and rerouting visitors to the back door) we saw 292 walk-ins, 27 walk-ins at the Cub House (weekends), and 158 walk-ins at the Havelock Visitor Center. There were 155 emails, 705 Southern Living Leads and 31 phone calls. | 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. | AirDNA: 268 active rentals, showing higher bookings than last year | **Group Business:** We generated over 1 million in group lead bookings. Melissa also attended the AENC Spring Conference in Raleigh. **Earned Media:** Our State: featured article on the Hollister house, NOVA Magazine: destination Carolina, inner banks feature. Online article: Most Charming Towns in NC (NB listed #3) **Media Fam Tour:** We hosted four journalists (People Magazine, OK Magazine, Us Weekly and Elite Magazine.) and the PR director of Visit NC for a film inspired fam tour (Nicholas Sparks, Sleepy Hollow).

Marketing: Brice Connors provided updates OTT streaming campaigns: Charlotte & DC markets will continue throughout May, thus far reaching 456,942 households. The AccuWeather campaign has ended, and we are waiting for final performance data. | New campaign photoshoot has been scheduled and finalized for this Friday. So many new great assets to highlight and feature.

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: Flights and weddings saw a 3.5% increase MOM, and accommodations saw a 6% increase MOM, things to do saw a 7% increase MOM. There was an 808% increase in web traffic from Washington DC YOY. | Itineraries page remains in the top 10 most visited pages. | Try On New Bern campaign is coming to an end. Final touches are being made on new ad productions, website edits as well as vendor deals.

Print: Our State: 2 full page print ads, NC Travel Guide: full-page ad, Heart of NC Weddings: two-page spread, NOVA: full page ad **Digital:** New accessible itinerary has been published. Website updates to include being 100% fully ADA compliant. | **Digital Influencers:** Caitlin Rut was here for Arts in April and her content has been shared on Facebook and Instagram. In addition, we have partnered with EWN to bring in Rachel Moon, who is the largest influencer we've had in the market so far, into the market in the second week of June. She has over 85,000 followers on Instagram.

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

Melissa Riggle: Easter Carolina aviation Heritage Foundation held their monthly Development Meeting on April 4 & Board of Directors meeting the following Friday. The City of Havelock Volunteer Appreciation Dinner was held on April 21st. | April Revenue: \$15,493 Statistics: Visitors 156, Event Gusts 895, Total Visitors 1,051 Telephone: 8, Email:3, Ellie; 3. | Website statistics: New Visitors 843 Total Visitors 864 Sessions 1,014 Page Views 2,997. Havelock City Parks & Recreation just launched new self-service kayak rentals on Slocum Creek.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Dan Roberts: The contract for Blueprint Communications is coming up for renewal. There was discussion about moving from a 3-year contract to a 5-year contract. Bill Stafford asked why the change was being made. Brice Connors emphasized the importance of the first 3-year contact was to really get to know the business and community. He then highlighted several projects that would be in the works for the next 5 years. After much discussion, the board approved to move ahead to have our attorney review and finalize the contract renewal for 5 years.

Bill Stafford: suggested that the TDA spearheads a campaign for social districts by reaching out to our accommodation partners. Melissa Riggle will speak with the hoteliers to see if they are still interested in social districts. This week is National Tourism Week, we are celebrating with decorations and refreshments in the front lobby for visitors. It is also National Economic Week, and we are welcoming 50 business recruitment directors from throughout the state.

Sabrina Bengel motioned for a letter to be drafted on behalf of the TDA in support of street cafes. Bill Stafford seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

IX. OLD BUSINESS: Chairman Dan Roberts: Revisit the budget before it goes to vote. If you have questions, please reach out to Melissa Riggle.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS: Melinda Mowery: Deck Party's have returned to the DoubleTree. The deck has been painted and new greenery has been added. Nancy Figiel: Dedication held for the new Wilson Park, New exhibit for the Historical Society's 100th anniversary, African American lecture called Boundless, and preparing for Juneteenth celebrations. Stephen Clayton: Will be hosting a ribbon cutting for our bike rentals, advertisement space still available. Vice-Chairman Paresh Pankhavala: hotels are staying buys with firefighters, construction workers, and Shriners. Bill Stafford: New 16-piece orchestra has signed to his entertainment business. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar updates. Mary McGee: Country Biscuit held business after hours, we received the paving permit from the city for the lot across the street from BSH. Sabrina Bengel: 155th birthday for Caleb Bradham, Caleb Bradham's great, great, grandson saw the special presentation from Bob Stoddard and wants to come visits New Bern for the 155th birthday. The Pepsi collectors club will be in town that weekend as well. Melissa Riggle: update on EPSON Tour Championship for Change. Still looking for volunteers and host families. Chairman Dan Roberts: front of the chamber building is still under construction, but progress is being made! The Great Trent River Raft Race is coming up and getting bigger and better each year. June 24! Still time to build and enter a raft into the race.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Sabrina Bengel made a motion to adjourn. Bill Stafford seconded the motion at 10:50 am.