

Craven County Tourism Development Authority -
Board of Directors Meeting
Chamber of Commerce Boardroom
Wednesday, September 13, 2023
Minutes

Present

Chairman Paresh Pankhavala
Vice-Chairman Nancy Figiel
Dan Roberts
Matthew Paul
Tracy Du Peza
Tyler Griffin
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
Pam Holder
Sabrina Bengel
Tarshi McCoy
David Jones
Pam Simpson
Patrick
Marzanne

I. CALL TO ORDER-ROLL CALL:

Chairman Paresh Pankhavala called the Craven County Tourism Development Authority Board Meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and thanked everyone for being there. Welcomed special guest from Leadership Craven.

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 August Board Meeting. Dan Roberts made a motion to accept all the minutes in the board packet. Tracy Du Peza 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 August for hotel stays in July were \$242,898 compared to \$256,663 for the same time last year. Online travel companies made up 21.9% of the total collected. There was \$12 in penalties and \$80 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for August 2023 were \$76,573 compared to \$80,912 last year, showing a 5% decrease. Room tax is down by 2% of 16.6% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for August was \$93,605 compared to \$104,767 last year. The largest variance was for hosting AENC last year and this year's contractual line is up for new software (Placer AI). Total expenditure is running slightly ahead of budget at 18.7% of 16.6%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$37,863. Looking at the balance sheet as of August 31, 2023, the cash balance is \$588,005. Adding to the net income through August of \$37,863 to the fund balance gives a total of \$668,437. There is a -\$2,193 in unrestricted net assets that should not be there and is being reviewed. Vice Chairman Nancy Fiegler made a motion to approve the financials. Bill Stafford seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. **STR Report:** Chairman Paresh Pankhavalu shared the STR report. New Bern's YTD numbers for occupancy was 68.7% compared to 71.1% in 2022. ADR was \$133.09 compared to \$125.09 in 2022 and RevPAR was \$91.46 compared to \$88.98 last year.

In Havelock YTD Occupancy was 52% compared to 53.2% last year. ADR was \$95.70 compared to \$92.67 last year. RevPAR was \$49.79 compared to \$49.45 last year.

VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on: **Visitor stats for the month of August:** 569 New Bern Walk-ins, 172 Havelock Walk-ins. There were 178 emails, 49 phone calls and 653 Southern Living Leads. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, & South Carolina. | Top attractions continue to be Tryon Palace/NC History Center, Walking Tours, Trolley Tours, Dining, and Pepsi. | **VNB Highlights:** Melissa attended a take-off conference with Andy from EWN in Atlantic City. We met with American and other carriers and had some good conversations, and we were able to tell them about our updates to the airport. We were also able to address the price issues with American and they said they would review their revenue management issue. | We are part of the MumFest Concert Committee and will be helping with promotion of the Sugar Ray Concert on October 21 | Tammy played a valuable part in securing volunteers for the RCS Gala, which turned out to be a great success | We saw an increase of \$10 Million in our annual visitor spending for 2022. | We have had several onboarding sessions with Placer AI and are already using data from the new software. This software will allow us to dive deeper into tourism data that can be utilized by economic development, city & county. This is an asset that can be shared with the city, county and economic development. **Group Business:** We generated over \$426,000 in group leads. We did see a loss of \$71,000 due to lack of hotel inventory. **Earned Media:** Our State Magazine: 7-page article in September, focus on the trolley tour.

Marketing: Brice Connors gave a shout out to Judy for reaching 10,000 followers on Instagram! | Historically, December has not been a strong month, we started taking a proactive approach to marketing all the great holiday events. Current promotion will be RALtoday (One month holiday blitz campaign), Print partnerships (Our State & Southern Living) and Digital (PPC, PPV, OTT) | 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. | Inclusive Marketing shows buying power, consumer trends and the power of diverse teams. This report shows that 89% of household spending decisions are done by women. Accessibility is an important focus as 1 in 4 people self-identify with a disability.

Matt Potts provided updates on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); We have invested in an elevated reporting software. Meta Ads: 20,446 clicks, Google Ads: 13,485 clicks | Ellie: Retirement saw a 3.9% increase MOM, and things to do saw a 1.1% increase MOM.

Print: Our State: full page print ads in August & October issues, Southern Living: half-page ad in September issue, Cherokee Media Group: full page ad in August Main & Broad, September Wake Living and September Cary Magazine. **Digital:** Trail to Tryon digital ad campaign launched on August 15 and has generated 30 new sign-ups. Currently, 53% of race participants are from out of market.

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

Pam Holder: We hosted the 12th Annual Fly-In with approximately 400 people. Three new billboards ads to encourage guests to explore the Aviation Exhibits. An Electric Vehicle charging station is being installed at the TEC. | August Revenue: \$15,742.69 Statistics: Visitors 172, Event Gusts 1,581, Total Visitors 1,753 Telephone: 31, Email: 5, Ellie; 1. | Website statistics: New Visitors 459 Total Visitors 465 Page Views 833.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS: Bike MS was a little slower this year, not as much impact on downtown businesses as in previous years.

IX. OLD BUSINESS: Melissa Riggle gave an update on the Strategic Destination Planning; Chris Cavanaugh will be here September 26 -28 to meet with focus groups throughout the county.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS: Judy Avery: Trail to Tryon is less than 2 months away. Come on out to run or walk the event. Volunteers are needed as well. Dan Roberts: Front room is complete, new awning should be here next month. Sabrina Bengel: Pepsi Collectors Appraisal Event on Saturday. Tarshi McCoy: a new handicap accessible ramp is being installed, new tenting of the windows to help reduce excess heat. Nancy Feigel: Symphony will be performing at Tryon Palace. Pam Holder: Havelock Chamber Executive Director Erin Knight has put in her resignation. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar of events

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Dan Roberts made a motion to adjourn. Tracy Du Peza seconded the motion at 10:40 am.