

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

Present

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

Excused

Bill Stafford

Guest

Judy Avery
Brice Connors
Matt Potts
Tammy Rodriguez
Pam Holder
Sabrina Bengel
Tarshi McCoy
Melinda
Tracy
Garry Curry

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.

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 October 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 October for hotel stays in September were \$227,628 compared to \$226,790 for the same time last year. This sets a new record for the month of September. Year to date total is \$695,974 compared to \$703,137. Online travel companies made up 19.6% of the total collected. There was \$548 in penalties and \$1,717 in late receipts.

Moving on to the financials, room tax revenues for October 2023 were \$71,759 compared to \$71,495 last year, showing a 2.6% increase. Year to date room tax rate was \$262,460 compared to \$265,498 in 2022. The yearly room tax rate is down by 1.1%. Collections are running ahead at 31.9% through 25% of the fiscal year. On the expenditure side you will see the total spent for October was \$80,104 compared to \$53,849 last year. Total expenditure is running slightly ahead of budget at 28.4% of 25%. Total revenues collected have exceeded our expenditures by \$28,831. Looking at the balance sheet as of October 30, 2023, the cash balance is \$594,902. Adding to the net income through October of \$28,831 to the fund balance gives a total of \$657,212. Vice Chairman Nancy Fiegle made a motion to approve the financials. Tracy Du Peza seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. **STR Report:** Chairman Paresh Pankhavala shared the STR report. There have been some changes to the segments and data collected from the STR report, not all the Craven County hotels are reporting this data. Smith Travel will be offering an additional breakdown for the next year as we get the hotels online with the new reporting segments. New Bern's weekly average occupancy is 68.3% and weekends are 68.1% Havelock's weekly average occupancy is 55.7% and weekends are 59.5%

VI. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:** Melissa Riggle gave an update on: **Visitor stats for the month of August:** 587 New Bern Walk-ins, 69 Havelock Walk-ins. There were 222 emails, 24 phone calls and 646 Southern Living Leads. | Top places of origin are North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, & South Carolina. | Top attractions continue to be Walking Tours, Tryon Palace/NC History Center, Trolley Tours, Dining, and Bear Maps. | **VNB Highlights:** Melissa attended several committee meetings including Destinations International EDI, African American Heritage Center, Gospel Fest 2024 planning meeting, Keller Williams quarterly presentation, Interagency & Downtown Business Council. Melissa was appointed as Chairman of the EWN Marketing Committee. | Tammy presented at the Newcomers Club | Phase 1 of our Strategic Destination Planning is complete. | TDA monthly Sun Journal Installment covered our 2022 Annual Economic Impact Review. **Group Business:** We generated over \$290,000 in group leads. We welcomed the Women in Tech group back for a second time. They had over 300 attendees and sold out several hotels, tours and visited the downtown shops and restaurants. **Placer AI:** Welcomed over 37,000 visitors to the downtown area in September. There is a slight decrease in year-over-year traffic, which is why we are focusing on being proactive with our strategic planning survey. Havelock tourist and event center has seen over 6,000 visitors in the last 6 months. At the end of the month Melissa will be giving a presentation to C1A. **Media:** Our State Magazine: Article that highlights our great after-hours venues and events. | Tammy attended the Visit NC In State Media Mission for the first time and met with media partners from across the state. She's already had 3 callbacks from different writers.

Marketing: Brice Connors gave an update on travel statistics, for the first time since October 2021, the average travel budget per household has decreased to just \$3,500 for leisure travel over a 12-month span. Staying proactive, we have created a new itinerary that's focused on budget friendly attractions. We will be bringing in a budget influencer/travel hacks to showcase this new itinerary. | 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. | Fall photo shoot is scheduled for this weekend; we have a family coming in to shoot family friendly attractions.

Matt Potts provided updates on social media ad campaigns (Google, Facebook, Instagram); Meta Ads: 15,006 clicks, Google Ads: 11,253 clicks | Ellie: Retirement saw a 1% decrease MOM, and current events saw a 7.2% increase MOM. With the use of Placer AI we can track where marketing dollars are working the best. This will help us to adjust where we place our ads. Top markets are northern VA, Washington D.C, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Raleigh, and Charlotte.

Print: Our State: full page ad in the October Special Interest Publication: Local's Guide to Downtown. Southern Living: half-page ad in October issue, Wake Living: full page ad, Heart of NC Weddings: 2-page spread has been submitted for the 2024 issue.

Trail to Tryon: 162 runners are registered. This is 27 more than last year this time. We will have registration open till 30 minutes before the race. This year's t-shirt and logo design was created by a local artist. Volunteers are still needed. We're working on setting up registration for next year's race to be ready on race day.

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

Pam Holder: New Staff: Dianna Vaccarella has joined the team as the Administrative Support Specialist. The city of Havelock now has a dog park. | October Revenue: \$17,619.90 Statistics: Visitors 69, Event Gusts 1,050, Total Visitors 1,119 Telephone: 12, Email: 5, Ellie; 2. | Website statistics: New Visitors 305 Total Visitors 306 Page Views 675.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS: No New Business

IX. OLD BUSINESS: Melissa Riggle gave an update on the Strategic Destination Planning; Took Chris Cavanaugh to several locations throughout Craven County. Held several focus groups and one-on-ones with city managers, county managers and stakeholders. He will return for additional in-depth meetings. His findings should be ready by the end of the year and a presentation to be given in January.

X. MEMBER COMMENTS: Vice-Chairman Nancy Fiegle: this weekend is garden lovers' weekend and plant sale. Candlelight tickets are on sale. Decore tours will begin right after Thanksgiving. Tarshi McCoy: Women in Tech group had such a great time here, that they are wanting to return for a third year. Military ball season has begun as well. Melinda: The restaurant has changed its name to Confluence. Garry Curry: Harvey should be open in December/January. Permanent office space opening downtown. Commissioner Brenda Wilson: The Wall that Heals will be making its way to Havelock on October 31 and set up will begin. Wall will be on display November 1-5. Lowe's will build a pavilion/shelter at the dog park. Tammy Rodriguez: calendar of events updates. Dan Roberts: Chamber held their annual Chicken Pickin on base. Sabrina Bengel: Beary-Not-So-Scary Halloween coming up. There will be an interactive map that shows who is participating. The city will have games and music in the street as well. Live Windows Displays are coming in December. The corner parking lot across from city hall has been changed from a leased lot to a paid parking lot.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Dan Roberts made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brenda Wilson seconded the motion at 10:08 am.