

Approved November 15, 2023

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting
October 18, 2023**

Board Members Present: Manish Atma, Mark Bell – Chair, Karen DeHart, Jon Hartman-Brown, Sharon Hill, Grace Holtkamp, Tanya Moore, Rebecca Mormino, Damon Seils

Not Present: Spring Council, Heidi Werner Dawson, Lisa Ganzermiller, Earl McKee, Beverly Payne, Karen Stegman

Also Present: Scott Czechlewski - Chief Executive Officer, Hillsborough Orange County Chamber of Commerce; Tim Hoke, Aaron Nelson - President & CEO, The Chamber for a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Meredith Sabye, Union Grove Farm

Staff Attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Steve Brantley, Marlene Barbera, Susan Rice

Guest Speaker: Shelly Green, Principal and Chief Executive Officer for MMGY NextFactor

Call to Order

Mark Bell - Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:11 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mark Bell requested a motion to approve the September 20, 2023 minutes. Sharon Hill so moved and Manish Atma seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Introductions

Executive Director's Report: September 2023

- Supply was down -60 room nights from last year to an even 48,000 room nights.
- Demand was up considerably from 27,806 last year to 33,027 room nights. This represents 18.8% growth in sold room nights.
- As a result of basically flat supply and strong demand growth, occupancy grew nearly 11 points from 57.9% to 68.8%.
- ADR growth has normalized in the past two months with growth of only 3.1% from \$175.72 to \$181.25.
- As a result of the occupancy and ADR changes, revenue capture grew considerably (up 22.5%). In September, lodging revenues were \$5,986,097. This was up nearly \$1.1M to last year and over \$800K greater than 2019.
- Revenue Per Available Room was up \$23 per available room to \$124.71 from \$101.67.

Chelsea v. Wrexham

- This event (held at Kenan Stadium on 7/19/2023) showed increased demand starting on Monday 7/16/2023 that lasted through Wednesday 7/19/2023.
 - Over these dates, occupancy in Orange County grew from 69.7% last year to 82.9% this year. This represents growth of 13.2 points. The highest occupancy came on 7/19 at 91.1%. This occupancy was the highest occupancy for any day of the month (by nearly 20 points).
 - ADR over these dates were also up significantly (\$199.69 vs. \$135.63). This is a variance of \$64.06.
 - This led to increased room revenue capture over these three dates of \$340,268 (\$454,519 last year compared to \$794,787 in 2023).
- When you remove these three dates from the month of July, occupancy was down - 4.1% from 62.4% in 2022 to 58.4% this year. ADR was up \$11.99 from \$131.89 to \$143.89.
- From these changes, RevPAR grew \$1.64 for the non-soccer dates. In July, revenue grew \$409,300 (of which \$340,268 came over the demand dates for the soccer game. This equates to 83.1% of the revenue growth in the month came in these three days.

What can tourism do to contribute to the health and well-being of our communities?

Laurie spoke about the need to evaluate tourism's future in Orange County and what's next for this sector of the local economy. To this end, the Visitors Bureau has hired a Durham based consultant who represents the firm, [MGMY](#). Shelly Green will lead an online assessment of 600 local and area stakeholders to gain feedback on Orange County's strength as a tourism destination and community alignment around the tourism and hospitality industry.

Guest Speaker:

The tourism industry has enjoyed decades of growth and success, but today we face emerging economic, political, social and environmental pressures that are forcing us to adapt to new realities. The vision of DestinationNEXT is to provide destinations with practical actions and strategies for sustainable success in this dramatically changing world. This benchmark survey provides a framework for communities to critically assess their destination and have conversations around priorities and focus areas for the future.

Green explained how the Destination Next study for Orange County will work. The next steps are:

- 600 industry and community leaders in Orange County will be surveyed in November.
- The DestinationNEXT Assessment Tool will evaluate information received.
- The diagnostic tool is based on a comprehensive stakeholder survey that measures destination strength and community engagement, based on a series of 24 variables.
- The survey results will plot Orange County results into a Scenario Model, which shows the specific opportunities for Orange County leaders and partners to build upon.
- Information will be shared with the community.

Discussion

- Aaron Nelson: possible disconnect: self-assessment vs. what others think; how welcoming we think we are vs. what others think
- Laurie Paolicelli: example of that, we think we are diverse, visitors ask “where is the brown?”
- Laurie: Mention what other destination have done with the results – example: Raleigh’s expansion of sports facilities
- Possibility of using UNC sports fields, could depend on University restrictions
- Shelly Green: she will try to match up other similar towns to ours as examples
- Grace Holtkamp: Can there be survey questions about farms? Yes
- Mark Bell: Questions not answered. ‘Do not know’ can be an answer
- Shelly Green: A disconnect of answers can indicate a lack of communication
- Challenges with the survey: 3 vastly different towns
- Survey list of people to send to is very important, Aaron and Scott (Chambers) will contribute email address

New Business

New board seats open:

Meredith Saybe accepted the At Large Seat

Approved by Manish Atma, seconded by Karen DeHart

Sam Vadgama was nominated for the Hotel Seat

Approved by Damon Seils, seconded by Sharon Hill

Karen DeHart - Associate Commissioner, NCHSAA

Talked about [the new government rulings](#), the association is not sure at this point what the total impact that these changes will have on high school athletics. Laurie gave a brief history on

why the Visitor Bureau board has a board position filled by the NCHSAA and the impact high school athletics plays on the local economy.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at The Carolina Inn*

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 a.m.