

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Advisory Board Meeting at Sheraton Chapel Hill
January 17, 2024
8:00 – 9:15 AM**

Board Members Present: Tanya Moore, Sharon Hill, Karen DeHart, Mark Bell – Chair, Shailan “Sam” Vadgama, Beverly Payne, Jon Hartman-Brown, Shannan Campbell, Anna Richards, Paris Miller-Foushee.

Not Present, Grace Holtkamp, Anita “Spring” Council, Heidi Werner Dawson, Randee Haven-O’Donnell.

Staff Attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Hannah Hemphill

Guests: Wendy Smith, Jeri Lynn Schulke, Matt Hughes, Donald “D.R.” Bryan (All future board members pending approval on February 15, 2024, BOCC meeting).

Visiting: Carrboro Mayor Barbara Foushee

Call to Order

Mark Bell, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:13 AM.

Comments from Mark Bell

This year there is a lot of change and new faces for the board, with people rotating off the board. Some of the highlights to call out includes \$62.2 million in projected total lodging revenue in calendar year 2023. This is a \$9.2 million or 17% increase from 2022. Orange County is still trending up in lodging revenue post pandemic. Revenues in 2023 were greater than 2022 in 11 out of 12 months of the year with March, September, October, and November’s year over year revenue growth exceeding \$1 million.

New Officers:

Karen DeHart has agreed to serve as Chair for the Chapel Hill/Orange County Advisory Board, replacing the outgoing Chair, Mark Bell. A motion was made by Meredith Saybe to approve, seconded by Sharon Hill. With all members in favor, Karen DeHart is appointed as Chair.

Sharon Hill has agreed to serve as Vice-Chair. Beverly Payne made a motion to approve, seconded by Meredith Saybe. With all members in favor, Sharon Hill is appointed as Vice-Chair.

Approval of Minutes

Mark Bell requested a motion to approve the November 15, 2023, minutes. Beverley Payne made a motion to approve the minutes and Sharon Hill seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Executive Director’s Report

Laurie presented a certificate to Mark Bell for his service on the CHOCVB Visitors Bureau Advisory Board for the past eight years.

PowerPoint Presentation - 2023 Year in Review ([Click here for presentation link](#))

- Questions and comments following presentation.

- Shannan Campbell asked if we would continue to lead with the “let curiosity lead you here” and the answer is yes.
- Chapel Hill Diversity website has received some criticism. The conversation will continue with input from the board www.chapelhilldiversity.com website.

Budget update through December 2023

- Revenue:
 - Town of Chapel Hill gives an annual grant of \$375k.
 - Occupancy Tax projections for 23/24 fiscal year was \$1.8 million.
 - State grant revenue for the Arts Commission also reflected, as they are also funded by the Visitors Bureau
 - Total budget \$2.4 million
- Overhead– these are costs that are required by Orange County
 - \$112k to pay back the general fund from COVID when Occupancy Tax was not covering Visitors Bureau expenses.
 - \$83k county administrative fee
 - Outside Agencies – these funds are provided by the County Manager’s office and administrated by the Visitors Bureau.
- Advertising/Fund Balance Request
 - Currently almost 90% of the budget is used, with a lot of upcoming promotions we want to include.
 - Occupancy Tax fund balance is currently at \$1 million, with \$776k available to appropriate.
 - The Visitors Bureau would like to appropriate \$150k from this fund balance to use this year on advertising.

Motion to have \$150K of the current occupancy tax fund balance appropriated in this fiscal year to continue to grow and maintain the tourism industry. At Commissioner Richard’s request we will work with the County Manager’s Office on ways to manage the growing occupancy tax fund balance earlier rather than midyear.

B. Payne made a motion to approve the request and S. Hill seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

New Business

Tanya Moore – UNC Updates

- Interim Chancellor Lee Roberts started on Friday.

Meredith Saybe

- Compliments to Marlene Barbera and the Visitors Bureau team for the UNC Friday Center Mingle and Jingle event. She participated as a vendor, and it was a great event.

Shannan Campbell

- Busy Spring in Hillsborough, with many events.
 - River Park concerts
 - Handmade Parade

- Outlandish and Scottish Festival
- Climate Action Challenge
- Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, Orange County History Museum, and Library running Black history Month events throughout February.
- Updating Chapel Hill Transit wraps and official visitors' maps.

Mark Bell

- Climate Action Challenge to run from April 1-22 with mini events each day to highlight things you can do to support climate action. It's a new concept and citizen drive.

Beverly Payne, Alliance for Historic Hillsborough

- Black Church Groups PBS documentary and panel discussion on February 10th and 17th.
- Revolutionary War Living History Day is on April 6th, which includes two tours of the village.
- Historic Hillsborough Excursion Day on May 18th in honor of Preservation Month.
- Orange County Historical Museum will have Gerald Shanklin's Hand Carved African Masks and Collection on exhibit from February 1-29.
- River Park Concert on April 20th

Barbera Foushee & Jon Hartman Brown – Carrboro Updates

- The 203 Project is continuing to move forward; impacts to traffic flow.
- Carr Mill Mall continues an aggressive towing policy. Carrboro Town staff are working to create and post more wayfinding signage for parking in Carrboro.
- Request for the Visitors Bureau to help by communications on VisitChapelHill.org website.
- Staff are exploring whether there are additional ordinances that can be passed to help predatory towing.

Paris Miller-Foushee – Town of Chapel Hill

- Miller-Foushee expressed her commitment to community-based economics that ensure local businesses have a voice in the direction the town wants to grow.

Jeri Lynn Schulke – Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership

- Getting up to speed with the change in leadership at the Downtown Partnership, currently planning for the upcoming year.

Laurie Paolicelli

- Shannon Campbell asked how the U Mall development is progressing. Laurie will investigate having a presentation to update the board.
- January 31 at 7:30 am at the Carolina Inn there will be a presentation from Destination Next about our effectiveness and what we need to work on. RSVP to hhemphill@orangecountync.gov.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at the Hampton Inn & Suites*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 AM.