

Meeting Minutes
Pitt Greenville Convention & Visitors Authority
January 18, 2024
Hilton Greenville (Julep)

Board members present: CVA Chair Diane Taylor, CVA Assistant Secretary Bri Lester, Aileen Peacock, Jay Bastardo, Dr. Brenda Fairfax, Chamika White, Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker, City Finance Officer Jacob Joyner, County Commissioner liaison Chris Nunnally, City Council liaison Matt Scully, CVB Vice-President of Marketing and Development Sierra Jones, Vice-President of Sales & Services Rachel Whitten, Sports Sales Manager Ce'Nedra Dillard, Communications & Marketing Assistant Megan Singleton, CVB Intern Lawton Henderson and CVB Executive Director Andrew Schmidt were in attendance.

Board members absent: CVA Vice Chair Candace Hollingsworth, CVA Secretary Ken Ross, Christie Jahn, Brett Morgan, and Bob Sheck were unable to attend.

I. Call to order: CVA Chair Diane Taylor called the meeting to order at 12:03pm. Executive Director Andrew Schmidt recognized City Councilman Matt Scully as the new City Council liaison to the CVB Board. Schmidt also welcomed County Commissioner Chris Nunnally as the County Commissioner liaison to the CVA Board. Lastly, Schmidt introduced Lawton Henderson who is interning with the CVB for the next few months.

II. Approval of minutes: Executive Director Andrew Schmidt reviewed the minutes of the November 29, 2023, full board meeting and asked board members to review to see of any changes needed to be made. Aileen Peacock made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker and passed unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's report: Executive Director Schmidt shared the following during his Executive Director's report:

- Schmidt gave an update on the progress that Victus Advisors has made on the sports feasibility study for the City of Greenville. Schmidt shared that Victus has completed the sports tourism market and facility opportunity analysis portion of the study. The first portion of this phase of the study analyzed Greenville's proximity as a potential sports tourism destination. The data showed that there were approximately 25 million people within a five-hour drive of Greenville and close to 8 million within a 2 ½ hour drive which is a positive for a potential sports complex. This part of the study also showed Greenville's proximity to the I-95 corridor was a positive. Schmidt also shared that this part of the study compared

hospitality amenities between competitors east of Raleigh and Greenville stacked up well looking at the quality of lodging, culinary, and retail options. Greenville's experience and reputation in sports tourism is also something that would help our destination stand out. The final part of this portion of the stated that the quality of the facilities was the most important factor to the sports tournament organizers so anything that was potentially built would have to be done the right way.

Schmidt stated that the next steps for Victus were to look at the operating and financial analysis of the recommended type of sports venue which is currently baseball and softball fields. (which may change in the final analysis) Victus will also report on the economic impact that a potential complex would have along with a funding analysis of how the potential complex would be paid for. Schmidt said that the final report from Victus will be given at the City's annual council retreat and workshop on January 26th and 27th.

Staff Updates:

Sierra Jones and Megan Singleton gave a marketing and communications update to the CVA Board of Directors.

- Jones gave an update on the web analytics for Visitgreenvillenc.com and social media statistics for the month of December. Jones reviewed the number of users, sessions, page views, locations of viewers, and the top pages viewed for the website and number of followers and reach for the CVB's social media platforms.
- Jones shared that she is working to oversee the final additions to both the new version of the Greenville-Pitt County Destination Guide as well as the relaunch of the Pitt County Brew and Cue Trail. Jones said that the Brew and Cue Trail launch items have arrived at the CVB and just need to be distributed to partners before an official launch. The new ETA for the Destination Guide is sometime in late February. Lastly, Jones shared the new timeline to get the CVB's Tourism Master Plan kicked off.
- Jones stated that both the Destination Marketing Advisory Committee and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility Committee were both meeting during the month of February. As part of our DEIA support, Jones mentioned that the CVB sponsored a table at the Pride Dinner on January 6th.
- Jones gave a snapshot of her upcoming conferences, events, and activities for the spring months. Jones stated she will be prepping for the Visit NC Conference held in Greenville this March and starting her CDME certification work in April. Jones also mentioned that the CVB will be holding its National Travel and Tourism Week luncheon at the Martinsborough on May 21st. Jones stated that work will continue to update the CVB's website throughout the spring.

- Singleton updated the CVB Board on several current projects that she has been working on including writing blogs, working on the CVB's events calendar, generating press releases as well as the CVB's monthly newsletter, and posting on our social media platforms.
- Singleton gave a recap of her upcoming spring conferences and activities and mentioned that she has now become active in the Young Professionals in Pitt County attending several events over the last few months. Singleton also stated that she is continuing her work with the Friends of the Greenville Greenway board. Singleton mentioned that FROGGS was having a fundraiser on January 20th and shared details with the CVA Board on how to get involved if they so desired.

VP of Sales & Services Rachel Whitten gave a sales program update to the CVA Board.

- Whitten gave an overview of her travels and conference activities that covered December to the present. Whitten specifically highlighted the Association Executives of North Carolina Trade Show which is the largest that the CVB participates in all year. Whitten reported that the show was a success and that the CVB and its partners won the most interactive booth award with its Pirate theme.
- Whitten shared that she has started a new program that involves an hour each week called the sales huddle. She and Sports Sales Manager Ce'Nedra Dillard will spend an hour each week discussing sales progress, taking advantage of training opportunities, and planning for future opportunities.
- Whitten gave an overview to the board of what business has been booked during the month of December. She also summarized what the upcoming business schedule looked for the spring which is quite active with membership meetings and trade shows.

Sports Sales Manager Ce'Nedra Dillard gave a sports sales update to the CVA Board.

- Dillard shared that she has been engaged in several different professional development opportunities over the last two months. Dillard stated that she is continuing her work in the Chamber Leadership Institute and plans to attend the Sports ETA Women's Summit in Cleveland in early April. Dillard said she is also active in Young Professionals of Pitt County and looking into participating in the Junior League as well.
- Dillard reported that there are not as many sports' tourism specific trade shows in the spring as in the fall, but that she will be attending the annual Sports ETA Summit in Portland April 22-25.
- Dillard shared some of the upcoming tournaments and meets that would take place in Greenville this winter and early spring. The first is the Beast of the East Soccer Tournament this upcoming weekend.

V. Treasurers report:

CVB Executive Director Schmidt gave the occupancy tax report for the month of November. Schmidt announced that collections for November 2023 totaled \$97,185.82 which was 16.56% lower than collections in November of 2022. Currently, 2023-2024 collections are 3.52% higher than collections for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Schmidt stated this drop was due to poor attendance at November ECU football games and smaller Military balls due to deployments.

Executive Director Schmidt reviewed the current year to date budget report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Schmidt reported that the CVB was currently at 30.5% of budget and should not exceed 58.3% by the end of January. Schmidt said that the County's recent ARPA Payment is the reason that the budget year to date is so much lower than where it should be this time of year. That revenue will be part of an upcoming budget amendment during the month of February.

Finance Director Jacob Joyner gave the cash balance report. Joyner said that revenues are looking very good for the CVA and Greenville Convention Center. Currently, the CVA has a reserve of \$1,035,650 and the Convention Center has a marketing reserve of \$365,835.

VI. Old business:

There were several items under old business on the agenda.

The first item of old business involved the CVB's office space. Schmidt shared that their lease would end at the end of the year and that the organization is running out of space for existing personnel and did not have any capacity to add new personnel. There is also no suitable place for storage for support materials like tradeshow backdrops and giveaway items. Executive Director Schmidt reminded that he came to the board at the November full CVA meeting with a proposal from Don Edwards to acquire the upstairs offices in addition to the downstairs which the CVB already occupies. At that time, Edwards had stated that we would offer the upstairs and downstairs for \$7,200 per month and the CVA Board asked Schmidt to go back negotiate to see if there was room to get a lower offer. Schmidt reported that Edwards had agreed to start rent at \$6,250 per month for the first 14 months with a move in date of May 2024. Schmidt stated the rent schedule for the five-year lease would be as follows:

- Year 1 (14 months) \$6,250 per month
- Year 2 \$6,500 per month
- Year 3 \$6,700 per month
- Year 4 \$6,850 per month
- Year 5 \$7,000 per month

At the end of five years, CVB would have the option to renew the lease. Schmidt stated that the price is just over \$10 per square foot to start and that the average price in downtown Greenville is anywhere between \$16 to \$20 per square foot. CVA Chair Diane Taylor said she felt this was a great deal. Schmidt noted that it would be more expensive than what they were used to but if they stayed where they were CVB would end up having to rent outside office space and pay for climate-controlled storage. Finance Director Joyner said that everything is

more expensive, and it would be good to solidify space while we can. Schmidt noted that he liked that it would allow them to stay downtown and across from the new hotel being constructed. The CVA Board then instructed Schmidt to ask Edwards for a formal lease that could be voted on at the March meeting.

In a second piece of old business, Executive Director Schmidt gave a final proposal on the possibility of the CVB having a tuition assistance program. Schmidt stated that each board member had an advance copy of the proposed program to form any questions that they might have. Schmidt shared the highlights of the program.

- The employee must be a regular full-time employee.
- Class schedules cannot interfere with the employee's regular work schedule.
- Tuition assistance is for items not covered by other forms of financial assistance
- A passing grade of C or better is required for each course for which ETAP funds are awarded.
- The yearly budgeted amount for the ETAP program will be set by the President & CEO of the organization and approved by the CVA Board.
- There is a schedule of reimbursement to the CVB should an employee leave voluntarily upon completion of the class. The schedule is in the ETAP proposal.
- Involuntary separations listed in the ETAP program do not require the employee to reimburse the CVB.

CVA Chair Diane Taylor thanked Executive Director Schmidt for the work that he put into creating the program. CVA Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker stated she thought this would help the CVB to be more competitive in the marketplace.

Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker made a motion to approve the ETAP program for the CVB. Aileen Peacock seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

In a last piece of old business, Executive Director Schmidt announced that he had completed CVA orientations with new councilmembers Portia Willis and Matt Scully. Schmidt shared that he had a meeting with Tonya Foreman that she had to cancel due to a work obligation but that he would be rescheduling that as soon as possible.

VII. New business:

In the first piece of new business, Executive Director Schmidt said that he has begun working on the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget. Schmidt mentioned that he and City Finance Director Jacob Joyner had met earlier in the week and reviewed the current state of the CVA's finances. Schmidt stated that the budget approval schedule would be as follows:

- Proposed CVA budget meeting with CVA Executive Committee on February 20th
- Proposed CVA budget meeting with Full CVA Board on March 14th
- Proposed CVA budget presentation to City Council on May 9th

In a last piece of new business, Schmidt stated that the CVB would be restarting its annual board appreciation dinner as a thank you for board member's service. Schmidt announced that

this year's dinner would take place on Thursday, February 15th from 5:30pm until 8:00pm at Starlight Café. Schmidt will send invitations out to the group asking for RSVPs to get a correct head count.

IX. Adjournment: There being no further business, CVA Chair Diane Taylor proclaimed the meeting adjourned at 12:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Ross
Secretary