

Meeting Minutes
Pitt Greenville Convention & Visitors Authority
Thursday, May 18, 2023
Hilton Greenville (Julep)

Board members present: CVA Vice Chair Candace Hollingsworth, CVA Secretary Ken Ross, CVA Assistant Secretary Bri Lester, Brett Morgan, Dr. Brenda Fairfax, (phone-in) Chamika White, Jay Bastardo, Bob Sheck, City Finance Director Byron Hayes, Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker, County Commissioner liaison Mary Williams Perkins, CVB Vice-President of Marketing and Development, & Director of Sales & Services Rachel Whitten, Sports Sales Assistant Ce’Nedra Dillard, Communications & Marketing Assistant Megan Singleton, and CVB Executive Director Andrew Schmidt were in attendance.

Board members absent: CVA Chair Diane Taylor, Aileen Peacock and City Council liaison Rick Smiley were unable to attend.

I. Call to order: CVA Vice-Chair Candace Hollingsworth called the meeting to order at 12:06pm. Executive Director Andrew Schmidt recognized Megan Singleton as the newest employee at the CVB with the title of Communications & Marketing Assistant. Schmidt stated that Singleton would give a quick introduction to her background and first few months of work that she has accomplished since joining the group. Schmidt also acknowledged dr. Brenda Fairfax who is joining the group via phone today.

II. Approval of minutes: Executive Director Andrew Schmidt reviewed the minutes of the March 22, 2023, full board meeting and asked board members to review to see of any changes needed to be made. CVA Secretary Ken Ross made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Bob Sheck 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 ARPA funds that the CVA is to receive from the County. Schmidt stated that the first installment of \$150,000 was received earlier this month and has been placed into a contingency line-item account for “safekeeping.” Schmidt said the funds can then be pulled back out and allocated once the new fiscal year starts in July.
- Schmidt talked about the CVA’s plans regarding developing a Tourism Master Plan. Schmidt continued that the CVB plans to start this process in July and that the benefits to the Pitt County Tourism community would be many. The biggest

advantage of having this plan is that it will direct the CVB's tourism efforts for the next 7 to 10 years.

- Schmidt shared that the City of Greenville and Capitol Broadcasting have entered into an agreement to bring a Coastal Plain League baseball team to Greenville. Stadium renovations to Guy Smith will begin immediately with the goal of adding capacity to 1,500 people. There will be a naming contest in the fall for the team's name and the first pitch will be scheduled for June of 2024.
- Schmidt stated that at the same meeting City Council member Les Robinson asked that the city engage in a feasibility study to construct a sports complex. Funding would come from the CVA's capital reserve account and not from the operations account. Schmidt continued that the time frame for the study would be accelerated and the City hopes for a final presentation in January of 2024.

Staff Updates:

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

- Jones welcomed new team member Megan Singleton. Singleton gave a brief background on herself and summarized what she has been working on for the first several months she has been with the CVB.
- Jones gave an update on the web analytics for Visitgreenvillenc.com for the period of January through May. Jones reviewed the number of users, sessions, page views, locations of viewers, and the top pages viewed.
- Jones shared the number of destination guides that have been requested over the last several months and stated that the CVB has another 5,000 guides on order bringing the total number printed since its inception to 20,000. Jones continued that the most updated destination guide is currently being developed and it's hoped that it will be ready for the fall.
- Jones shared some of the CVB's preliminary media planning for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Jones also gave a snapshot of the CVB's current ad campaigns that are running this spring.
- Jones reported on her upcoming conferences and events as well as the CVB's progress on its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts. Jones mentioned that the next DEI meeting will be combined with the quarterly Destination Partners marketing meeting so that all parties can be updated at the same time regarding the CVB's plans to launch an All Are Welcome campaign. That meeting date is June 7th.

Andrew Schmidt gave a convention sales update on behalf of Rachel Whitten to the CVA Board of Directors. Schmidt explained that Whitten was traveling and could not attend.

- On behalf of Whitten, Schmidt summarized where Rachel has been travelling to cultivate business for Greenville-Pitt County over the last several months. Schmidt also shared the leads that have been generated from that travel. Total leads from January through May were 26. Schmidt also summarized the upcoming travel for Rachel.
- Schmidt shared that Whitten is responsible for putting together the CVB's quarterly hotel-motel meetings. The last meeting was very well attended, and the guest speaker was Corey Barrett from the City of Greenville. Barrett explained the new parking procedures in the Uptown District so that hotel representatives would be able to pass along the information to hotel guests.
- Schmidt stated the Whitten, along with Rhesa Tucker from the Greenville Convention Center played a tremendous role in the successful planning and execution of the North Carolina Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Schmidt shared that the meeting went extremely well, and all participants were impressed with the growth of our city.
- Whitten attended Global Meetings Industry Day on behalf of the Meeting Professionals International Carolinas Chapter. Whitten is now a Vice President within the organization.

Andrew Schmidt and Ce'Nedra Dillard gave an update on activities from the Sports Commission to the CVA Board of Directors.

- Dillard gave a summary of her trip to Kansas City for the Sports ETA Conference. Dillard shared that she had 17 appointments and of those generated some very positive leads that she thinks will turn into bookings.
- Dillard shared that while at Sports ETA, she was able to complete two of her necessary courses towards her Sports Tourism Strategist designation. With the completion of those two courses, Dillard stated she needed to take one additional course before she would be finished.
- Schmidt gave an overview of the 2023 Little League Softball World Series. Schmidt stated that this year there will be over 700 hours of regional softball coverage leading up to the series in Greenville and this would give our destination additional exposure. Schmidt also let the board know that the final game would be broadcast on ABC.
- Dillard reminded the board that the NC Sports Association would be meeting in Greenville this October. Dates have not yet been set but the location will be at TowneBank Tower pending availability.

V. Treasurers report:

CVB Executive Director Schmidt gave the occupancy tax report for the month of March. Schmidt announced that collections for March 2023 totaled \$135,923.98 which was 15.06% higher than collections in March of 2022. Currently, 2022-2023 collections are 17.36% higher than collections for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Executive Director Schmidt reviewed the current year to date budget report for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Schmidt reported that the CVB was currently at 78.0% of budget as of May 15th and should not exceed 91.7% percent by the end of May. Schmidt said there was an excess in the CVA accounts as the \$150,000 ARPA payment from the County had just been deposited. Upon consultation with Finance Director Byron Hayes, it was agreed that the funds be put into a contingency line item within the current budget until the appropriate line items for the funds could be created. Funds will be available at the beginning of the fiscal year to keep things easier to track.

Finance Director Byron Hayes gave the cash-balance report. The CVA's operating reserve stands at \$934,758 and convention center marketing reserve is currently \$341,577. Currently the Capital Reserve Account balance is \$3,136,026. Hayes shared that the Capital Reserve amount would decrease a bit as a bond payment was due soon on the convention center but that the account was still in very good shape.

VI. Old business:

Schmidt talked more about the CVB's effort to develop a tourism master plan. Schmidt stated that he felt that Chris Cavanaugh with Magellan Strategies, was the right person to help the CVB develop the master plan. Schmidt reminded the board that he was one of the speakers at the CVB's National Travel and Tourism Luncheon. Schmidt said that he preferred not to go through the RFP process as it would take a good amount of time and he would like to get started on the Tourism Master Plan in July which is why he was bringing it up at the May meeting as there is not a July meeting. Schmidt continued to lay out the many reasons that he thought Mr. Cavanaugh was the right person to help with the Master Plan. A motion to hire Mr. Cavanaugh without going through the RFP process was made by Rhesa Tucker. Schmidt said discussion could now begin since a motion was made. Jay Bastardo asked about cost and whether what the ROI would be in having a Tourism Master Plan competed. Schmidt said the document would guide the CVB in its decision making and resource allocation over the next several years and while he could not give an exact amount of ROI, Schmidt stated that he felt it would be significant. Dr. Brenda Fairfax inquired whether the study would just concentrate on sports or look at arts and culture as well. Schmidt responded that it would cover every area of tourism. Finance Director Byron Hayes stated that since the funding for the TMP was coming from APRA funding it may be a good idea to check with Pitt County to see if they would feel more comfortable going through the RFP process. Schmidt suggested that Tucker withdraw her motion and he check with the County for guidance. He stated that he could always bring the item back up and a vote could be taken electronically.

In a last piece of old business, Executive Director Schmidt gave an update on the budget 2023-2024 fiscal year budget process. Schmidt shared that he presented the budget at the May 11th City Council meeting and that there were no issues or concerns from Council members.

VII. New business:

In the only piece of new business, CVA board member Jay Bastardo brought up the fact that the independent restaurant community does not know when major events are coming to Greenville. Bastardo cited the flag football tournament that was scheduled for this upcoming weekend. The only reason he knew about it was that a few people had rented his Air BnB's. He stated that the restaurants want to be better prepared when these events come. Sierra Jones asked Bastardo the best way to get the information to the restaurants. Bastardo said that he knows it was probably not feasible, but bringing information over was probably the best way as the restaurant community is not good with checking their email. He also said that they have quarterly meetings. Schmidt suggested that the CVB be invited to the next quarterly meeting to talk about the best way to accomplish this goal. Bastardo said he would get back to the CVB with the next meeting date.

IX. Adjournment: There being no further business, Christie Jahn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:05pm. CVA Assistant Secretary Bri Lester then seconded the motion. A vote was taken which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Ross
Secretary

