

Meeting Minutes
Pitt Greenville Convention & Visitors Authority
Wednesday, November 29, 2023
Hilton Greenville (Julep)

Board members present: CVA Chair Diane Taylor, CVA Vice Chair Candace Hollingsworth, CVA Assistant Secretary Bri Lester, Brett Morgan, Aileen Peacock, Dr. Brenda Fairfax, Christie Jahn, Chamika White, Bob Sheck, Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker, County Commissioner liaison Mary Williams Perkins, City Council liaison Rick Smiley, 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, and CVB Executive Director Andrew Schmidt were in attendance.

Board members absent: CVA Secretary Ken Ross and Jay Bastardo, were unable to attend.

I. Call to order: CVA Chair Diane Taylor called the meeting to order at 12:05pm. Executive Director Andrew Schmidt recognized City Councilman Rick Smiley. Councilman Smiley is ending ten years of service as a member of the City Council and on behalf of the CVA Board and CVB staff thanked him for his service to our city and the CVA Board.

II. Approval of minutes: Executive Director Andrew Schmidt reviewed the minutes of the September 21, 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 CVA Chair Diane Taylor and passed unanimously.

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

- Schmidt announced that the CVB would be utilizing a new software system to help track finances and get a much more detailed view of how funds are spent within individual line items. Schmidt said that he has been working with Mitch Gibbs over at City Finance to begin the process. Schmidt shared that the Power Bi software will allow “strings” to be put under each line item to track and understand the percentages of that line item as compared to the entire line-item budget. This will allow for better tracking and a comprehensive understanding of where funds are going in a much timelier manner. Schmidt stated that staff have already worked on their strings and training on how to manipulate these strings will begin in January. The goal will be to fully utilize the Power Bi software by the start of the new fiscal year.

- Schmidt summarized the annual NC Travel Industry Association that was held two weeks ago in Raleigh. Schmidt shared that the major legislative platforms that will be pushed include protecting the school start date law, occupancy tax integrity, workforce development for the hospitality industry and the formation of a sports tourism grant. Schmidt also shared that NCTIA had its first public policy dinner to raise money for a newly formed PAC. Schmidt said that NCTIA will now financially support those who support their initiatives.
- Schmidt shared with the board that his 2-year term as NCTIA President had concluded, and he is rotating into the past president's role. His tenure as a member of the NC Travel & Tourism Board has also expired however he is expected to be appointed by Governor Cooper to sit on the Economic Development Partnership Board as their tourism representative in the spring.

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 September through November. 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 should take place in September and the new version of the destination guide should be available by late January.
- Jones stated that both the Destination Marketing Advisory Committee and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility Committee were both meeting during the month of January. As part of our DEIA support, the CVB will be sponsoring a table at the Pride Dinner on January 6th.
- Jones gave a recap of her conference and events activities for the fall months. Jones shared that she recently returned from Visit NC's Outdoor Workshop and is excited about working to develop some additional assets to promote Greenville-Pitt County's outdoor amenities.
- 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 fall conferences and activities and mentioned that she has finished her first year of STS Marketing College. Singleton also stated that she has now joined the Friends of the Greenville Greenway board. In this role, Singleton stated that she will be advocating for Greenway usage as well as be involved in their current fundraising efforts to place exercise equipment along the Greenway system.

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 the summer months up to the present. Whitten included the summer activities as she was unable to report at the last CVA Board meeting due to travel. Whitten highlighted several events including attending the State of Black Tourism in Washington, DC, attending several sports trade shows with Ce'Nedra to learn more about the sports tourism industry, and holding a Fall Flower and Tea party in Raleigh for meeting and sports events planners.
- Whitten gave an overview to the board of what business has been booked over the past few months. She also summarized what the upcoming business schedule looked like. Whitten mentioned that there was a new category in the reports that showed assisted business. Whitten explained that these are groups that the CVB did not necessarily book but assisted with the execution of the event to make it come to fruition.
- Whitten summarized her upcoming activities for the period of December through February. The AENC Trade show, which Whitten explained is one of the biggest of the year, will be held December 14th in Raleigh. Additionally, Whitten will attend the winter AENC and MPI-Carolinas Chapter Conferences while working to help plan for the Visit NC Statewide Travel & Tourism Conference that Greenville will host in March.

Andrew Schmidt gave an update on the progress of the sports complex study to the CVA Board of Directors. Schmidt shared that Victus Advisors, the consultant working on the feasibility study, was in town in mid-November to give their interim findings. Schmidt emphasized that the study was only partially complete, and that the following information may change.

- Victus identified baseball and softball as sports that currently are booked the most and generate the most room nights out of all the sports booked by the sports commission. Victus also noted the amount of diverse sporting events that can be held in Greenville-Pitt County.
- The interim report showed that there is good partnership alignment between many key stakeholders to advance sports tourism. Key partners identified in the report include the City of Greenville, Recreation & Parks, ENC Alliance, and the Pitt County Economic Development Office. A key issue that continually surfaced between these partners is how a sports complex could positively affect quality of life for residents.

- Victus indicated that of the four key components that drive sports tourism to a destination, Greenville possessed three which are hotels and amenities, reputation of brand, and proximity and access. The interim report showed that Greenville lacks the correct number of quality sports facilities.
- The initial assessment from Victus stated that Greenville would benefit the most from the construction of additional baseball and softball fields. The second recommendation would be an indoor sports complex, followed by rectangle fields and then a natatorium.

V. Treasurers report:

CVB Executive Director Schmidt gave the occupancy tax report for the month of October. Schmidt announced that collections for October 2023 totaled \$143,880.74 which was 7.36% higher than collections in October of 2022. Currently, 2023-2024 collections are 8.00% higher than collections for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Schmidt stated this this was an excellent start to the fiscal year and feels like the rest of the fall will see some modest increases.

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 37.7% of budget and should not exceed 41.7% by the end of November. Schmidt did share that the Convention Center has a payment due which will push the YTD expended to around 40.0% by the end of the month.

Finance Director Byron Hayes has left the city to take a job in Morrisville. Jacob Joyner, who left the city several months ago for another opportunity, has come back and will now be the City's new Finance Director. He will be part of our meetings moving forward in January. With the change in leadership, the finance department was not able to generate a cash balance report for this meeting.

VI. Old business:

Sierra Jones gave an update on the CVB's efforts to develop a Tourism Master Plan. Jones stated that the RFP was in its final stages and would be sent out in mid-December. Selection will take place during the month of January and its hoped-for work to begin shortly after that. Executive Director Schmidt stated that even though the project is a bit behind schedule, we are still on schedule with our ARPA funds if the project is paid out prior to the end of this fiscal year.

VII. New business:

In the first piece of new business, Executive Director Schmidt said that he has formally requested that the rest of the County ARPA funds (\$450,00) be transferred to the CVB. Schmidt stated that the plan is still to utilize \$150,00 for the next three years but that it was

advantageous to both parties to go ahead and disburse the funds. The request will be part of the County's consent agenda at their December 4th meeting.

Schmidt announced that he has contacted the three new City Council elect members and wished them congratulations on being elected. He is also setting up times with each new member to conduct orientations regarding the CVB's role.

Schmidt shared that the 2022-2023 audit process is well-underway and that he has completed about 75% of the requested items.

In a last piece of new business, Schmidt stated that the CVB's lease will expire at the end of next year and the organization needs to find additional offices that will accommodate a few more staff members and allow for more storage space. The CVB also does not have a board room for meetings. Schmidt said that the CVB is looking at the possibility of renting shared space at Nucleus Uptown. Another option could be expanding into the second floor of the current building they are in. The upstairs tenants are moving out as of November 30th. Schmidt has had a brief conversation with Don Edwards who said he could lease both floors for a total of \$6,800 per month. CVA Chair Diane Taylor asked what was doable and Schmidt replied \$5,500 per month. Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker suggested making Mr. Edwards that offer and seeing if it leads anywhere. Schmidt said he will reach out after the meeting.

IX. Adjournment: There being no further business, Dr. Brenda Fairfax made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:51pm. Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker then seconded the motion. A vote was taken which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Ross
Secretary

