

# VISIT ROWAN COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

*Be an original.*<sup>®</sup>

## ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Wednesday, October 16, 2024, Noon

- I. Call to Order Stephen Kidd
- II. Approval of Meeting Minutes Stephen Kidd
- III. Financial Report James Meacham
  - A. Financial Report & Tourism Market Update
- IV. Tourism Program of Work Report
  - A. Destination Services, Sales, and Marketing
    - 1. Digital Operations Sarah Michalec
    - 2. Trolley Program Tara Furr
    - 3. Sales, Marketing and Communications Tara Furr
  - B. Tourism Development and Infrastructure Sarah Michalec & James Meacham
    - 1. Wayfinding
    - 2. Agri-tourism development
    - 3. Railwalk
    - 4. Marriott Towneplace Suites Project Update
    - 5. Gateway
- VI. Additional Business
  - A. Hurricane Support
- VII. Adjourn



**ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Wednesday, September 18, 2024, 12:00 pm

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Board Members Attending:** Craig Pierce, Krista Sullivan, Stephen Kidd, Sada Troutman, Andy Maben, Annette Privette-Keller

**Not Attending:** Therese Henderson, Kimberly Morgan, Karen Alexander, April Saylor

**TDA Staff:** James Meacham, Sarah Michalec, Brooke Arrowood, Tara Furr

**RCTDA Call to Order**

Stephen Kidd called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. Kidd and Meacham welcomed new board member Annette Privette-Keller from the City of Kannapolis.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Motion: Craig Pierce made the motion for approval of August 2024 minutes.

Second: Sada Troutman

Motion: Approved

**Financial Report & Tourism Market Update**

Meacham reported that starting this month the financials will be in a slightly different format as the accountant has changed software packages. The new format is a little more detailed. Meacham reported total current assets are a little over half a million. Cash on hand is higher than normal due in part to the occupancy tax coming early in August. Total assets are just over \$3.2 million. Meacham said the new finance software is tracking a new addition, prepaid expenses and those will be listed within the financials. Meacham reported very little liabilities, mainly payroll liabilities. August revenue on an accrual basis was \$151,228 versus expenses \$153,987, which is a slight net loss. Total year-to-date revenue is a little under \$305,000 versus expenses of \$311,000.

Meacham briefly reviewed the occupancy chart, noting a very strong and healthy local hotel market. Meacham reported the last four months of revenue are all up compared to the previous year. There is still strong demand through the month of September with occupancy rates just above 70% and revenue up 12% ahead of the previous year. Meacham reported that August taxes are expected to be 10-12% ahead of last year as well.

Motion: Craig Pierce made the motion for approval of the financial as presented.

Second: Sada Troutman

Motion: Approved

### **Tourism Program of Work**

Meacham gave a brief report on hotel market data reporting year to date as of 8/31 all of the primary indicators, Occupancy, ADR and REV Par and total revenue are up over the last four months. Meacham welcomed Michalec back from maternity leave.

Michalec reported that the email newsletter open rate for year to date was 29% with 5,000 subscribers. The website has been revised to reflect the fall season with stats year to date there are 268,000 page views and 118,000 users. Michalec reported that the fourth quarter is typically the busiest time on the year for the website. In August, there were 15,000 page views with 9,000 (60%) of those being organic page views. Which is important as those are new visitors to our site.

Michalec reported RIPE (the online package booking platform) continues to be an asset in booking packages quickly. Year to date through the RIPE platform, there are 314 packages, and 480 room nights booked just through that platform.

Michalec reported that across social media over the summer 3000 new followers were added and 42,000 engagements in that three-month period. This puts the social media totals over the benchmark for the year and staff are looking forward to moving past those benchmarks. Michalec reported top engagement and hot topics for August included the Guide to NCTM, DOWT Stay & Play package, and the Balloon & Laser Show package.

The blog continues to be a top visited page on the website with YTD total of 63 posts and 30,000 views. Top blog post in August was August in the Arts which highlighted all of the county art events. Upcoming blogs focus on Fun in Rowan, Guide to Bell Tower Brew Fest, Haunted Trails, Autumn Jubilee, Lazy 5 Fall Festival and more.

Michalec reported that the influencer program is still alive and well. Jenna visited the new Towel City Tavern in Kannapolis which overlooks the Cannon Ballers stadium this month. Michalec reported a successful reel by Andrea Fox on Instagram featuring the Hobbit House, a reel by Emily Stamper of Patterson Farm Pumpkin Patch. Michalec added there are plans to partner with Magnolia Megan to cover the Modern Masterpieces exhibit at Waterworks Visual Arts Gallery. Jenson Savannah is planning to attend Brewfest in October and Jenna will attend the Balloon & Laser Show in November. Year-to-date influencer impact is 940,000 views 50,000 engagements. Total YTD digital impact was 440,800 engagements and 2.3 million in reach. Furr reported the team is currently searching for new and additional influencers.

Furr reports that the Trolleys continue to be steady through the summer months with year-to-date bookings of 129. Trolley bookings over the next 90 days of 43. Over the next 90 days, the trolleys are rented out for weddings, Autumn Jubilee, Historic Downtown Salisbury tours, Novant Health Employee event, German Fest, Granite Fest, Art Crawl in Downtown Statesville, OctTour, and more. Trolley rates will be evaluated and raised accordingly in the coming months as operating expenses have been increasing steadily.

Furr reported 62 total paid marketing placements in August bringing the year-to-date total to 295. Furr reported 108 packages and 161 room nights for Day Out with Thomas and totals should surpass last year's numbers. Polar Express package totals 159 packages and 219 room nights. Marketing for Polar Express is getting ready to ramp up so those numbers will be going up. Furr reports year to date 367 packages and 521 room nights associated with those thus far. Packages in place for fall include Balloon Glow, The Polar Express, Visa Package and DOWT, Bell Tower Brewfest, Autumn Jubilee.

Furr reported that Arrowood has completed 14 event visits year to date and Furr has completed 26 partner visits. Public relations engagements year to date were 16 and include press releases, media inquiries and media related communication. Furr said that over the past month she has been working with the NC L Trail by Rail in partnership with NC Craft Brewers Guild who is promoting 10 daily trips between Raleigh and Charlotte that promotes quick daily train trips and beer. Furr has worked with the group to produce a commercial and video for the trail featuring local folks and showcasing New Sarum.

Furr reported another successful group sales year and thanked the hoteliers for their assistance with the Smoke-Out which was highly attended with 317 room nights so far confirmed with that event. Furr says that she is still getting the total numbers in to determine economic impact. Furr reported the Balloon Glow and Laser Show at the Fairgrounds in its second year coming in November. NC Main Street and State Historic Preservation are coming in mid- November. Furr reported that Cherry Treesort is hosting a micro wrestling event on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Furr reviewed the tourism support chart noting 597 direct room nights and economic impact of over \$6 million in tourism and marketing support to various events and groups around the county who are bringing people into town.

### **Tourism Development**

Michalec reported that wayfinding is still moving right along. Ritelite has been hired and Michalec will be working with them to get the sign locations secured in each municipal area. Michalec reported that the kickoff meeting is tomorrow for the remainder of the directional signage and those will be going in the ground soon.

Michalec reported that Congressman Bishop's lease is up at the Gateway Building at the first of the year and the LandTrust will be taking over that space at that time.

Meacham reported that the long-term strategic development plan for argi tourism is moving along well at Patterson Farm. Through a partial grant from the TDA, Patterson has a new attraction installed called the Mega Drop. Meacham encouraged everyone to stop by Patterson Farm and see the additions.

Meacham reported that the RailWalk request for bids has gone out and the bids will be open Tuesday Oct 8<sup>th</sup>. Bids will be brought to this board for approval at the October meeting.

### **Additional Business**

Meacham reported that the Marriott hotel project is moving now after clearing some hurdles with City planning. This is a 100-room property located next to the Cracker Barrel.

The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.

Respectfully submitted.

Lesley Pullium

SRCVB



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT AS OF 09-30-2024

Report Date: October 15, 2024

**\*The Tourism Authority utilizes modified accrual-based accounting in accordance with GASB. Year-to-date expenses typically run about 6 weeks ahead of year-to-date revenues. \***

### **Fiscal Year 2024-25 Statement of Activities: Highlights as of 09-30-24.**

- Occupancy tax revenues as of 09-30-2024 for fiscal year 2024-25 on an accrual basis equaled \$387,451 and are 15% ahead of budget expectations.
  - August 2024 occupancy taxes were 14.8% ahead of August 2023 and
  - August 2024 occupancy taxes were the highest ever collected for the month of August and were 9.8% ahead of the previous high in 2022.
  - September taxes are projected to be between 10% to 15% higher than September 2023.
- Year-to-date revenues on an accrual basis through September were \$60,157 ahead of expenses. With total revenues equaling \$480,222 against total expenses of \$420,067.

### **Balance Sheet: Summary as of 09-30-2024**

- Total Current Assets equaled \$609,016 and were \$66,725 higher than the month ending 8-31-24 due to an increase in revenues and occupancy tax receivables.
- Accounts Receivables equaled \$255,200 which includes August 2024 and September 2024. outstanding occupancy tax revenues.
- Cash on hand as of 9-30-24 equaled \$353,816.

ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
Statement of Financial Position - Accrual Basis  
As of September 30, 2024

Assets

Current Assets

Petty cash	\$	16.83
First Bank Checking - 0436		24,801.08
F&M Operating - 9224		32,157.67
NC Capital Mgmt Trust		276,706.44
First Bank Money Mkt - 4509		20,134.81
Accounts Receivable		255,200.00
Total Current Assets		609,016.83

Fixed Assets

Building		2,176,919.00
Land		250,604.00
Construction in Progress		23,766.03
Railwalk Pavilion		506,594.36
Computers		21,736.52
Furniture & fixtures		68,310.00
Office equipment		23,278.13
Trolley cars		319,880.00
Accumulated depreciation		(706,002.81)
Total Fixed Assets		2,685,085.23

Other Assets

Pension Asset		42,347.00
Total Other Assets		42,347.00
Total Assets		3,336,449.06

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Retirement Withholding		1,458.18
Federal and Fica Withholding		1,742.30

See accountants' compilation report

**ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Statement of Financial Position - Accrual Basis**  
**As of September 30, 2024**

State Withholding	177.00	
Total Current Liabilities		3,377.48
<b><u>Long-term Liabilities</u></b>		
Pension Deferrals	55,846.00	
Total Long-term Liabilities		55,846.00
Total Liabilities		59,223.48
<b><u>Net Assets</u></b>		
Investment in fixed assets	2,685,085.00	
Restricted Fund Balance	215,679.04	
Retained Earnings	316,307.07	
Change in Net Assets	60,154.47	
Total Net Assets		3,277,225.58
Total Liabilities and Net Assets		\$ 3,336,449.06

See accountants' compilation report

**ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Statement of Activities Actual vs. Budget - Accrual Basis**

	1 Month Ended September 30, 2024 Actual	1 Month Ended September 30, 2024 Budget	Current Period Over/(Under) Budget
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
Trolley Income	3,865.35	6,666.67	(2,801.32)
Occupancy Taxes Income	120,200.00	116,666.67	3,533.33
Partner Services Income	2,658.79	5,541.67	(2,882.88)
Holiday Caravan Parade Income	33,620.89	4,708.34	28,912.55
Miscellaneous Income	0.00	83.34	(83.34)
Interest Income	1,121.58	1,000.00	121.58
Gateway Building Income	13,802.77	11,875.00	1,927.77
Tourism ARPA Funding	0.00	41,666.67	(41,666.67)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Income	175,269.38	188,208.36	(12,938.98)
<b><u>Operating Expenses</u></b>			
Salaries - regular	9,392.63	10,333.33	(940.70)
Worker's Comp and Liab Ins.	0.00	708.33	(708.33)
Miscellaneous	701.72	375.00	326.72
Professional Services	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00
CVB Appropriation	80,270.82	91,291.66	(11,020.84)
Supplies & Equipment	0.00	375.00	(375.00)
Trolley	739.70	958.33	(218.63)
Tourism Development	206.43	62,500.00	(62,293.57)
Holiday Caravan Parade	7,778.25	4,708.33	3,069.92
Partner Services	1,064.12	2,083.33	(1,019.21)
Gateway Building	5,433.95	11,875.00	(6,441.05)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Operating Expenses	108,587.62	188,208.31	(79,620.69)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Operating Income (Loss)	66,681.76	0.05	66,681.71

See accountants' compilation report

**ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Statement of Activities Actual vs. Budget - Accrual Basis**

	3 Months Ended September 30, 2024 Actual	Current Year June 30, 2025 Budget	Current Year Over/(Under) Budget
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
Trolley Income	10,006.83	80,000.00	(69,993.17)
Occupancy Taxes Income	387,451.46	1,400,000.00	(1,012,548.54)
Partner Services Income	7,443.79	66,500.00	(59,056.21)
Holiday Caravan Parade Income	34,620.89	56,500.00	(21,879.11)
Miscellaneous Income	1,244.00	1,000.00	244.00
Interest Income	3,344.33	12,000.00	(8,655.67)
Gateway Building Income	36,110.77	142,500.00	(106,389.23)
Tourism ARPA Funding	0.00	500,000.00	(500,000.00)
	<u>480,222.07</u>	<u>2,258,500.00</u>	<u>(1,778,277.93)</u>
<b><u>Operating Expenses</u></b>			
Salaries - regular	28,329.49	124,000.00	(95,670.51)
Worker's Comp and Liab Ins.	3,422.00	8,500.00	(5,078.00)
Miscellaneous	2,252.72	4,500.00	(2,247.28)
Professional Services	10,479.00	36,000.00	(25,521.00)
CVB Appropriation	317,959.66	1,095,500.00	(777,540.34)
Supplies & Equipment	200.00	4,500.00	(4,300.00)
Trolley	1,390.12	11,500.00	(10,109.88)
Tourism Development	20,219.96	750,000.00	(729,780.04)
Holiday Caravan Parade	9,222.10	56,500.00	(47,277.90)
Partner Services	4,393.41	25,000.00	(20,606.59)
Gateway Building	22,199.14	142,500.00	(120,300.86)
	<u>420,067.60</u>	<u>2,258,500.00</u>	<u>(1,838,432.40)</u>
Operating Income (Loss)	<u>60,154.47</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>60,154.47</u>

See accountants' compilation report

Rowan County Occupancy Tax Receipts Collected (GROSS)									
MONTH	FY20-21	FY21-22	%CHNG	FY22-23	%CHNG	FY23-24	%CHNG	FY24-25	%CHNG
July	61,737.08	105,514.79	70.9%	120,021.34	12.1%	108,732.65	-9.4%	133,587.33	22.9%
August	66,399.96	99,851.17	50.4%	115,189.06	13.3%	110,177.63	-4.4%	126,464.65	14.8%
September	78,562.08	100,792.04	28.3%	119,443.37	15.6%	114,690.69	-4.1%		
<b>Quarter Total</b>	<b>206,699.12</b>	<b>306,158.00</b>	<b>48.1%</b>	<b>354,653.77</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>333,600.97</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>		
October	76,794.51	115,324.55	50.2%	128,088.16	10.0%	141,296.02	10.3%		
November	60,357.00	102,438.16	69.7%	116,523.19	12.1%	109,684.96	-5.9%		
December	64,749.41	95,874.73	48.1%	103,834.94	7.7%	95,959.89	-8.2%		
<b>Quarter Total</b>	<b>201,900.92</b>	<b>313,637.44</b>	<b>55.3%</b>	<b>348,446.29</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>346,940.87</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>		
January	56,291.87	96,918.80	72.2%	115,064.17	15.8%	88,997.47	-22.7%		
February	62,049.03	94,530.61	52.3%	108,890.30	13.2%	106,875.73	-1.9%		
March	84,372.26	114,826.05	36.1%	125,056.96	8.2%	123,858.60	-1.0%		
<b>Quarter Total</b>	<b>202,713.16</b>	<b>306,275.46</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	<b>349,011.43</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>319,731.80</b>	<b>-9.2%</b>		
April	90,628.43	119,032.67	31.3%	125,347.11	5.0%	137,682.85	9.8%		
May	97,167.69	126,307.46	30.0%	125,953.79	-0.3%	144,974.27	15.1%		
June	102,792.30	115,684.25	12.5%	109,364.77	-5.8%	132,031.99	17.2%		
<b>Quarter Total</b>	<b>290,588.42</b>	<b>361,024.38</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>360,665.67</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>414,689.11</b>	<b>13.0%</b>		
<b>Adjmts Penalties</b>									
<b>Penalties</b>									
<b>Year Total</b>	<b>\$ 901,901.62</b>	<b>\$ 1,287,095.28</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>\$ 1,412,777.16</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>\$ 1,414,962.75</b>	<b>0.2%</b>		

