



NORTH CAROLINA

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

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, Noon

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|--------------|--|---|
| I. | Call to Order | Stephen Kidd |
| II. | Approval of Meeting Minutes | Stephen Kidd |
| III. | Financial Report | James Meacham |
| | A. Financial Report and 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. Railwalk | |
| | 2. Wayfinding | |
| | 3. Paul E. Fisher Gateway | |
| | 4. Marriott Towneplace Suites Project Update | |
| VI. | Rowan County TDA and CVB Bylaw Revisions | Stephen Kidd |
| VII. | Additional Business | |
| VIII. | Adjourn | |



ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 12:00 pm

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Attending: Craig Pierce, Stephen Kidd, Sada Troutman, Andy Maben, Kimberly Morgan (ZOOM), Therese Henderson, April Saylor, Krista Sullivan, Richard Reinholz, Annette Privette-Keller (ZOOM)

Not Attending:

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

RCTDA Call to Order

Stephen Kidd called RCTDA to order at 12:00pm.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion: Craig Pierce made a motion for approval of the January 2025 minutes.

Second: Sada Troutman

Motion: Approved

Financial Report & Tourism Market Update

Meacham reported occupancy tax revenues as of 01-31.25 for fiscal year 2024-25 on an accrual basis equaled \$887,391 and are 12% ahead of budget expectations. December 2024 occupancy taxes were 3.7% ahead of December 2023. January 2025 is projected to be 10% higher than January 2024. Year-to-date revenues on an accrual basis through January were \$163,221 ahead of expenses. This is driven by Wayfinding invoices being classified as balance sheet transactions under construction in progress with adjustments being made at close of the fiscal year for the 2024-25 audit. With total revenues equaling \$1,243,586 against total expenses of \$1,080,365.

Meacham reviewed the balance sheet and reported current assets equaling \$548,460, which is \$34,460 higher than December 2024. Current assets consisted of cash on hand and occupancy tax receivables. Accounts Receivables equaled \$208,662 which includes December 2024 and January 2025 outstanding occupancy tax revenues. Cash on hand as of 01-31-24 equaled \$339,872, which is \$30,959 higher than December 2024.

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

Second: Sada Troutman

Motion: Approved

Tourism Program of Work

Michalec reported that the website had 24,866 page views from 11,663 users in January. Visitrowancountync.com website sessions were up 13.8% and engaged sessions were up 15.1%. Organic search produced 55% of the total sessions for the site. There were 33,000 clicks this quarter, which was up by 7% over the previous year. The top pages this quarter were the Balloon Glow and Laser Show page with 3,400 sessions, Polar Express event page which saw a 330% increase over the last year, and the things to do page had an engagement rate of 87% during quarter.

The online booking platform saw significant growth in 2024. As of February 18, there were 42 room nights booked through Ripe with 32 of these as package bookings.

Michalec reported that the email newsletter continues to receive positive feedback from viewers and saw a 33.81% open rate with 5,075 subscribers in January. Special attention was given to Wine About Winter and to Date Night Ideas for Valentine's Day.

Michalec reported an amazing increase in fans and followers on social media in 2024. In January, content was focused on the January event blog, In and Around Salisbury blog, and planning for 2025 Events & Festivals blog. There has been a 38% increase in blog sessions, with the holiday lights blog bringing in the most visitors at 804 for the quarter and the Plan Ahead for Rowan County Festivals & Events blog had an engagement rate of 97%. The January blogs received 3,800 views over 12 posts, with the top post being 7 Spa Experiences in Rowan County.

Michalec reported that in January, social media influencer Jenna posted a video promoting her previous experience with Wine About Winter. The post received 18,000 views with 214 engagements. Total digital impact was 41,000 engagements and almost 62,000 in reach.

Furr reported that the team established 2025 Marketing Benchmarks with percentage difference from one year to the next to show growth and worked with influencers to plan the items to cover over the coming months. In addition, Furr stated that the NCTM and DSI are both receiving tourism support in February for spring events and the city has applied for lodging assistance for the annual Cheerwine festival.

Furr reported the trolleys experienced a quiet January, which is normal for the time of year and the weather. Overall, trolleys are off to a good start for 2025, with a solid number of bookings already on the books. The months of September to December 2025 are especially busy with a number of advanced bookings. Calendar Year to Date, there are 104 bookings, 25 of those over the next 90 days with calendar year to date revenue of \$7,381 for 2025.

Furr reported that the stay and play packages continue to be a great success in driving enticement overnight visitation. Calendar year to date there are 50 packages booked that generated 69 room nights. Furr offered a big congratulations to Sada Troutman and the DSI team on the tremendous success of Wine about Winter. The event has grown each year, and the packages sales have increased. This year there were 41 packages, and 52 room nights associated with the event. That marked the highest number of packages sold for this event since the event began 8 years ago.

Furr reported that there are 3 groups visiting in the month of January that she has assisted with including Preservation NC, the Salisbury Youth Council and the Rowan Salisbury School System's Conference. There

are 7 groups on the books so far for 2025. There is the possibility of an additional group in the fall associated with the YMCA.

Furr had some disappointing news to report about the Little League World Series that hosted an annual July event in Rowan County for seven years. Staff received notice a few weeks ago that the South Eastern Little League Tournament has been pulled from Rowan County for 2025. The decision not to host the tournament in Rowan County was made by the local Little League contacts. After conversation with the local Little League contacts, the decision to leave unfortunately came down to their negative reflection on the partnership they had with the city and the quality of the softball fields. The Tourism Board discussed at length the departure of the tournament and expressed their disappointment and frustration with the management of Salisbury Community Park by the City of Salisbury.

Furr reported that in the month of January there were 25 paid marketing placements. Through a partnership with Visit NC, Furr was able to secure and take advantage of a digital marketing buy that will run in March with Our State magazine. Staff will be attending the annual Visit NC Conference in Hickory in April. Visit NC will present their yearly marketing co-op program.

Partner engagement for January included 1 event visit, 2 partner relationship visits, and 3 PR engagements calendar year to date. Furr said she was happy to have the opportunity to present a presentation to Visit NC to pitch opportunities in Rowan County that will hopefully be featured in the 2025/2026 NC Road Show travel guide. Also, 2026 will be the 10-year celebration of Rowan County's "Be an Original" brand. Furr reported that a series of events to celebrate the anniversary of the brand are being planned for that year and staff have already started work on those.

The 2025 Hospitality Night will be on Thursday, May 8th at the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers. Furr asked everyone to please mark their calendars and plan to attend with their families and coworkers.

Looking ahead, Furr states that staff will continue to push for overnight stays through messaging, promoting spring packages and events, promoting the annual hospitality night event, and attending the Visit NC Conference in early April.

Tourism Development

Michalec reported that the RailWalk construction has begun, and some structures and sculptures have been removed as the area is cleaned up. Michalec said staff are still in the waiting phase while locates are completed and some of the backend tasks are being completed with the contractor and Duke Energy. There are signs up at each end of the Railwalk. Michalec reported that staff is in communication with business owners so everyone knows what is going on. There have been a few phone calls asking for more information on what is going on, but all responses have been positive so far. More of the actual breaking of groundwork should begin within the next 4-6 weeks. When the project is completed a dedication ceremony will take place sometime in the fall that will tie in the Railwalk with the Farmer's Market.

Michalec reported they have finally broken ground on the welcome signs. Landis and Gold Hill's signs are in and look wonderful. Michalec visited both sites yesterday and everything looked great. Lite Rite, Inc. is monitoring the weather for the remainder of the week in hopes of being able to place additional signs. The directional signs are in production. Michalec will be going to the Rite Lite facility this week to take a tour and look at the signs, as well as verify the color profiles. Michalec reported that she has been working with Sada to get locations set for the Downtown signs. Those signs will be going to the Salisbury City Council for consideration in April.

Meacham gave a brief update on the Marriott Townplace Suites project. He reported that the team had the second TRC meeting and submitted everything at the end of January. Meacham said he was notified by the

city that there are additional things they need. The team is working through the various city requests and trying to get that to City staff for approval so that it can then be taken to City Council.

Meacham gave an update on the Gateway building and reported that the fire alarm system has been repaired at a cost of around \$6000 as opposed to the \$75,000 to go to a new system. Meacham said this is not a long-term fix but should work for 3-5 years. The Chamber of Commerce has agreed to update their office carpets and the TDA will cover the cost of the carpet in the little common area entry way. Meacham reported that Michalec is also working on a refresh of the building lobby/visitor center area with some new furniture, and artwork this summer. Data access points are also being updated in the building as well to improve high speed wireless.

Meacham reminded the members of the proposed By-Law amendments with outlined revisions that they should have received in recent weeks and asked if everyone has had the opportunity to review those and could be prepared to discuss and vote on the proposed changes at the March 2025 board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.
Respectfully submitted.
Lesley Pullium
SRCVB



FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT AS OF 2-28-2025

Report Date: March 19, 2025

***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 2-28-25.

- Occupancy tax revenues as of 2-28-2025 for fiscal year 2024-25 on an accrual basis equaled \$991,387 and are 13% ahead of budget expectations.
 - January 2025 taxes were 15.8% higher than January 2024
 - February 2025 taxes are projected to be 3% higher than February 2024
 - The first two weeks of March are trending 12% to 15% higher than March 2024
- Year-to-date revenues on an accrual basis through February were \$211,925 ahead of expenses. Total revenues equaled \$1,427,244 against expenses of \$1,215,319.
 - Most of the operating income on the budget vs actual statement is primarily driven by the wayfinding program; with the program's expenditures occurring as balance sheet transactions.
 - Less wayfinding program revenues Tourism's operating income is \$10,693

Balance Sheet: Summary as of 2-28-2025

- Total Current Assets equaled \$537,390 and were \$11,145 less than January 2025. Current assets consisted of cash on hand, occupancy tax receivables and wayfinding receivables.
- Accounts Receivables equaled \$263,985 which included January and February outstanding occupancy tax revenues and wayfinding revenues.
- Cash on hand as of 2-28-25 equaled \$273,405 which is \$66,467 less than January 2025.
 - The decrease in cash is primarily connected to an outstanding receivable from February 2025 to Rowan County for wayfinding reimbursement in the amount of \$59,989 that was received in March 2025.

ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Statement of Financial Position - Accrual Basis

As of February 28, 2025

Assets

Current Assets

Petty cash	\$	16.83	
First Bank Checking - 0436		27,407.66	
F&M Operating - 9224		4,289.39	
NC Capital Mgmt Trust		230,453.38	
First Bank Money Mkt - 4509		11,238.60	
Accounts Receivable		<u>263,985.08</u>	
Total Current Assets			<u>537,390.94</u>

Fixed Assets

Building		2,176,919.00	
Land		250,604.00	
Construction in Progress		285,887.45	
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		<u>(803,083.81)</u>	
Total Fixed Assets			<u>2,850,125.65</u>

Other Assets

Pension Asset		<u>45,079.00</u>	
Total Other Assets			<u>45,079.00</u>
Total Assets			<u><u>3,432,595.59</u></u>

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Retirement Withholding	1,503.67
Federal and Fica Withholding	1,567.60

See Accountant's Letter

ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Statement of Financial Position - Accrual Basis

As of February 28, 2025

State Withholding	243.00	
SUTA	17.98	
FUTA	41.99	
Total Current Liabilities		<u>3,374.24</u>
<u>Long-term Liabilities</u>		
Pension Deferrals	<u>76,977.00</u>	
Total Long-term Liabilities		<u>76,977.00</u>
Total Liabilities		<u>80,351.24</u>
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Investment in fixed assets	2,615,032.00	
Restricted Fund Balance	274,236.00	
Retained Earnings	251,051.26	
Change in Net Assets	<u>211,925.09</u>	
Total Net Assets		<u>3,352,244.35</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets		<u>\$ 3,432,595.59</u>

See Accountant's Letter

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

	8 Months Ended February 28, 2025 Actual	Current Year June 30, 2025 Budget	Current Year Over/(Under) Budget
<u>Income</u>			
Trolley Income	41,094.49	80,000.00	(38,905.51)
Occupancy Taxes Income	991,387.39	1,400,000.00	(408,612.61)
Partner Services Income	20,184.52	66,500.00	(46,315.48)
Holiday Caravan Parade Income	63,689.69	56,500.00	7,189.69
Miscellaneous Income	5,722.24	1,000.00	4,722.24
Investment Income	7,670.27	12,000.00	(4,329.73)
Gateway Building Income	96,263.42	142,500.00	(46,236.58)
Tourism ARPA Funding	201,232.26	500,000.00	(298,767.74)
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Total Income	1,427,244.28	2,258,500.00	(831,255.72)
<u>Operating Expenses</u>			
Salaries - regular	79,342.60	124,000.00	(44,657.40)
Worker's Comp and Liab Ins.	5,376.00	8,500.00	(3,124.00)
Miscellaneous	5,599.71	4,500.00	1,099.71
Professional Services	35,244.75	36,000.00	(755.25)
CVB Appropriation	798,162.11	1,095,500.00	(297,337.89)
Supplies & Equipment	592.99	4,500.00	(3,907.01)
Trolley	11,196.14	11,500.00	(303.86)
Tourism Development	93,437.05	750,000.00	(656,562.95)
Holiday Caravan Parade	67,724.18	56,500.00	11,224.18
Partner Services	12,590.22	25,000.00	(12,409.78)
Gateway Building	106,053.44	142,500.00	(36,446.56)
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Total Operating Expenses	1,215,319.19	2,258,500.00	(1,043,180.81)
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Operating Income (Loss)	211,925.09	0.00	211,925.09

See Accountant's Letter

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

	1 Month Ended February 28, 2025 Actual	1 Month Ended February 28, 2025 Budget	Current Period Over/(Under) Budget
<u>Income</u>			
Trolley Income	9,116.02	6,666.67	2,449.35
Occupancy Taxes Income	103,995.66	116,666.67	(12,671.01)
Partner Services Income	489.01	5,541.67	(5,052.66)
Holiday Caravan Parade Income	0.00	4,708.34	(4,708.34)
Miscellaneous Income	4,151.24	83.34	4,067.90
Investment Income	738.02	1,000.00	(261.98)
Gateway Building Income	5,178.00	11,875.00	(6,697.00)
Tourism ARPA Funding	59,989.42	41,666.67	18,322.75
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Total Income	183,657.37	188,208.36	(4,550.99)
<u>Operating Expenses</u>			
Salaries - regular	9,005.17	10,333.33	(1,328.16)
Worker's Comp and Liab Ins.	0.00	708.33	(708.33)
Miscellaneous	3,000.00	375.00	2,625.00
Professional Services	4,211.95	3,000.00	1,211.95
CVB Appropriation	93,459.54	91,291.66	2,167.88
Supplies & Equipment	40.53	375.00	(334.47)
Trolley	1,845.29	958.33	886.96
Tourism Development	18,306.35	62,500.00	(44,193.65)
Holiday Caravan Parade	35.00	4,708.33	(4,673.33)
Partner Services	1,783.11	2,083.33	(300.22)
Gateway Building	3,266.50	11,875.00	(8,608.50)
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Total Operating Expenses	134,953.44	188,208.31	(53,254.87)
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Operating Income (Loss)	48,703.93	0.05	48,703.88

See Accountant's Letter

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%	133,536.09	14.1%
Quarter Total	206,699.12	306,158.00	48.1%	354,653.77	13.7%	333,600.97	-6.3%	393,588.07	15.2%
October	76,794.51	115,324.55	50.2%	128,088.16	10.0%	141,296.02	10.3%	172,137.56	21.8%
November	60,357.00	102,438.16	69.7%	116,523.19	12.1%	109,684.96	-5.9%	130,039.92	18.6%
December	64,749.41	95,874.73	48.1%	103,834.94	7.7%	95,959.89	-8.2%	99,625.62	3.7%
Quarter Total	201,900.92	313,637.44	55.3%	348,446.29	10.0%	346,940.87	-0.4%	401,803.10	13.7%
January	56,291.87	96,918.80	72.2%	115,064.17	15.8%	88,997.47	-22.7%	103,025.92	15.8%
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%		
Quarter Total	202,713.16	306,275.46	51.1%	349,011.43	12.2%	319,731.80	-9.2%		
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%		
Quarter Total	290,588.42	361,024.38	24.2%	360,665.67	-0.1%	414,689.11	13.0%		
Adjmts Penalties									
Penalties									
Year Total	\$ 901,901.62	\$ 1,287,095.28	42.7%	\$ 1,412,777.16	8.9%	\$ 1,414,962.75	0.2%		

