

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

Wednesday, March 20, 2024, Noon

I.	Call to Order	Krista Sullivan, Chair
II.	Approval of Meeting Minutes	Krista Sullivan, Chair
III.	Financial Report	James Meacham
	A. Tourism Market Update	
	B. Financial Report	
IV.	Tourism Program of Work Report	
	A. Destination Services, Sales, and Marketing	
	1. Digital Program	Sarah Michalec
	2. Trolley Program	Brooke Arrowood
	3. Sales, Marketing and Communications	Tara Furr
	B. Tourism Development	Sarah Michalec
	1. Wayfinding	
	2. Railwalk	
	3. Agritourism	
	4. Hotel Development Projects	

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VI.

Additional Business

Adjourn

A. Fiscal Year 2023-24 Final Quarter



ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 12:00 pm

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Attending: Craig Pierce, Kimberly Morgan, Stephen Kidd, April Saylor, Andy Maben, Sada Troutman, Therese Henderson, Vivian Hopkins, Richard Reinholz

Not Attending: Karen Alexander, Krista Sullivan,

Guests: Andrew Abramson, Attorney

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

RCTDA Call to Order

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

Approval of the Minutes

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

Second: Therese Henderson

Motion: Approved

RailWalk Redevelopment

Meacham gave a brief update on the RailWalk Redevelopment project and asked the board for their consideration of approval of a zero-cost property ownership transfer, adopt the deed template as well as the operating easement presented in the packet distributed to the board today. Abramson has been working with Glenn Ketner to complete all the necessary legal documents for this transition. Property owners will be donating the property to a government organization (RCTDA) and will receive a letter noting that from the TDA.

Andrew Abramson reported that legally the process is a conveyance of several small pieces of property to the TDA from several owners. Abramson noted that the overall RailWalk Redevelopment plan created by Bill Burgin includes the walkway, pertinent structures adjacent and provides for additional lighting and improvements to the area. There is an easement agreement with local property owners that allows for these improvements in certain areas. The small pieces of property being transferred will be combined into one piece of property on the eventual tax documents under RCTDA ownership. Future improvements to the property will be approved within the purposed easement and with the HPC and City.

Motion: Craig Pierce made the motion to accept ownership from the identified parcels from the survey at no

cost and adopt the deed template and operating easement as presented by council.

Second: Richard Reinholz

Motion: Approved

Organizational & Financial Update

Meacham gave a brief tourism market update repeating that the market is returning to regular seasonality of the pre Covid days. The one area that continues to lag is business travel and especially in the mid-week timeframe and corporate business at the end of 2023 has dropped. January 2024 is still higher than January 2020 but there was a significant double-digit decrease. February looks to be a bit stronger and the overall market in 2024 is still better than 2019 and early 2020.

Meacham reminded the board of the occupancy tax revenues as of 12-31-23 for fiscal year 2023-24 on an accrual basis equaled \$669,496 and are approximately 4.3% behind FY22-23 and are 5.7% better than revised budget expectations. October 2023 occupancy taxes were \$141,296 and approximately 10.3% ahead of September 2022 and 28% ahead of pre-pandemic 2019 levels and 13% ahead of September 2021. November 2023 occupancy taxes were \$109,684 and approximately 5.9% less than November 2022 and 12% ahead of pre-pandemic 2019 levels and 7.4% ahead of November 2021. The year-to-date revenues through the first half of the fiscal year are \$6,302 ahead of expenses. Meacham reviewed the balance sheet as of 12-31-23 reporting total Current Assets equaled \$483,857 and were \$4,179 less than the month ending 11-30-23, due to a decrease in accounts receivable. Accounts Receivables equated \$210,812.87 which includes November and December outstanding occupancy tax revenues. Meacham reported cash on hand as of 12-31-23 equaled \$273,044 which was \$35,820 higher than the previous month.

Meacham reported there was only a slight change from last month to this month. Meacham noted that expenses for holiday marketing were paid in late December and some health insurance premiums were prepaid in January. Meacham reported a year-to-date net loss \$6899 which is really an operating flow for this time of the fiscal year. Staff are being cognizant of operating expenses and the budget cuts outlined earlier in the year have been put in place. February looks much healthier than January as well. Meacham reports that robust growth continues in the short-term rental market of Airbnb and VRBO.

Tourism Program of Work

Michalec reported that the email newsletter open rate for January was 35.11% with 4,900 subscribers. Website had a big planning month. The quarterly Simpleview SEO meeting covered the last three months of 2023 and how to project that growth into 2024. The Polar Express Christmas lights and the Hot Air Balloon show were the top searches during those months on Google that lead visitors to website. The Hot Air Balloon page received 5700 sessions in November and Polar Express received around 2500 visitor sessions. During the last 3 months of 2023, 56% of the page traffic was organic. Visitors are actively seeking the destination/events on their own. There were 24,600 page views and 10,000 users in January. The new About Us section of the website is now live and is a much more user-friendly section.

Michalec reported the online package booking platform continues to work well with 22 reservations and 29 room nights in January with 72% of those being package bookings for wine @ winter. RIPE is very busy with all the new package additions for 2024.

Michalec reports that in social media, the top engaged posts for January were Wine@Winter, Martin Luther King Day celebrations, and La Cava's 1st Sunday brunch. Michalec reported that the blog continues to be one of the top visited website pages. In January there were six new blog posts with 1969 views. Wine@Winter was the top visited blog with 384 views.

Michalec reported that influencers continue to be utilized with good reach and engagement. In January Jenna attended Grove Cartel Brewing for date night and a new influencer Meredith visited the Fun Factory with her children for an afternoon in downtown Salisbury. Year to date influencer impact is 175,000 views and 15,000 engagements. Total digital engagements for January were just under 50,000 and 335,000 in reach.

Arrowood reported year to date trolley bookings of 69, and there are 27 bookings occurring in the next 90 days. Revenue year to date is \$9,000. Arrowood briefly reviewed the list of rentals occurring in the next two months. Arrowood noted that staff just finished working with Miller Davis to replace the gold lettering on the trolleys and Trolley 2 is getting new wood trim. Meacham noted that for the fiscal year, July – January on a projected revenue budget of \$60,000, Arrowood has already brought in \$47,000 for the first seven months. The busy season is typically spring so great work Brooke.

Furr reported paid marketing placements of 28 for the month of January. The marketing message continues to focus on storytelling to promote the brand, the destination, destination events and booking overnight stays within the county. The sales strategy for 2024 is pushing the stay & play packages to incentivize booking and increasing room nights. The Wine@Winter package ended with 23 packages and 25 room nights. This is the most packages this event has ever produced, and the staff is happy about the growth of this event with the incentive. The generic Visa Gift Card package is still currently open and the Visa Giveaway as well. Furr reported that there are 13 new packages for 2024 in addition to packages already in place like Day Out With Thomas, OctTour, Brewfest and Polar Express. The new packages include, St. Patrick's Day Train, Earth Day Jam, Spring Fun on the Farm, Hippie Fest, Brew & Chew, Jiggy with Piggy, Cheerwine Festivals, Autumn Jubilee, Cannon Ballers Home games, NCTM Roundhouse 100th Anniversary, Stream over Spencer, Hot Air Balloon Festival, Wine & Dine on the Rails. Some of these are not ticketed events but an incentive for guests to stay overnight will be offered through the package booking platform. If the package is booked on the platform, an incentive for an electronic Visa gift card (amount relating to the specific package) will be given to those who stay overnight.

Furr reported that Hot Air Balloon event will return to the Fairgrounds in 2024. Furr stated that research shows that visitors and attendees from all over the country attended the 2023 event. Furr will be working with the management group to promote this event and the overnight package for the event.

In addition, Furr reported that any partner that receives tourism support dollars will be required to place the booking widget, a button or link on the partner's website to the package booking engine on the visitrowancountync.com website.

Furr reported that partner engagement for January consisted of attending Wine@Winter and the Waterworks Arts Center event and three partner relationship visits. The Kannapolis Cannon Ballers season is just around the corner and Furr is working on both the tourism partnership for the season and the annual hospitality event. Furr noted the event will occur on May 9th this year.

Meacham and Furr met with the local hotel partners to discuss the lodging industry, ways to partner, and challenges. Meacham reported on the partnership with City and the Salisbury PD working on clearing out the local homeless camp near the Interstate interchange on East Innes Street.

In group sales, Furr is currently working with several groups that will be returning in 2024 as well as new groups including the Great State Cook-Off. This is a sanctioned event at the Cherry Treesort in China Grove.

The Dragon Boat Festival will be back in July as well as the Southeastern Little League Tournament. The Smoke-out will also be returning in September.

Furr reported that has received five tourism support requests in January. Furr reported that for the 2024 year ahead, staff will continue to push all the available packages, continue to promote overnight stays through storytelling, a spring trolley push, Cannon Ballers spring and summer partnership and promoting spring events and staff will attend the state Tourism Conference in Greensville, NC in March.

Tourism Development

Meacham reported that he had the opportunity to have a conversation with Senator Ford and Representative Warren about the RailWalk project and continency funds from the State. The Board discussed the TDA submitting for contingency funding from the state. The amount requested would not be a great deal but would be helpful to the project if any were approved and available. Meacham and Michelac will be working on submitting that request.

Michalec said that there is no major update on the agritourism project. PGAV is working through all the data gathered and staff are anxiously awaiting what PGAV comes up with for the project.

Michalec reported that on wayfinding, staff was waiting on Spencer and those documents have been received. Bizzell is working on getting the presentation to get resubmitted to NCDOT. The Town of Cleveland's gateway signs are ready to go in the ground. These will be the first signs to go in on this part of wayfinding project.

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 pm. Respectfully submitted. Lesley Pullium SRCVB

Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Financial Position As of February 29, 2024

Accrua	I Rasis

	_Feb 29, 24
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1052 · F&M Bank-Operating 9224	33,915.22
1020 · Petty cash	16.83
1050 · First Bank checking #0436	6,435.63
1065 · NC Capital Mgmt Trust	232,779.87
1070 · First Bank MM account-4509	12,781.17
Total Checking/Savings	285,928.72
Accounts Receivable	
1201 · Accounts Receivable	206,398.22
Total Accounts Receivable	206,398.22
Total Current Assets	492,326.94
Fixed Assets	
1503 · RAILWALK PAVILION	506,594.36
1502 · Construction in Progress	23,766.03
1501 · Land	250,604.00
1500 · Building	2,176,919.00
1505 · Computers	21,736.52
1510 · Furniture & fixtures	68,310.00
1515 · Office equipment	23,278.13
1516 · Trolley cars	319,880.00
1990 · Accumulated depreciation	-706,002.81
Total Fixed Assets	2,685,085.23
Other Assets	
1900 · Pension Asset	42,347.00
Total Other Assets	42,347.00
TOTAL ASSETS	3,219,759.17

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Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Financial Position As of February 29, 2024

	Feb 29, 24
LIABILITIES & EQUITY Liabilities Current Liabilities Other Current Liabilities	
2039 · United Way 2035 · Retirement withholding	-800.00 433.30
2100 · Payroll Liabilities	2,140.87
Total Other Current Liabilities	1,774.17
Total Current Liabilities	1,774.17
Long Term Liabilities 2700 · Pension Deferrals	55,846.00
Total Long Term Liabilities	55,846.00
Total Liabilities	57,620.17
Equity 3050 · Investment in fixed assets 3105 · Restricted Fund Balance 3900 · Retained Earnings Net Income	2,685,085.00 239,730.00 234,895.55 2,428.45
Total Equity	3,162,139.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	3,219,759.17

Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Activities Actual vs Budget

Accrual Basis

July 2023 through February 2024

	Jul '23 - Feb	Budget	\$ Over Budg
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income		_	
4350 · Tourism ARP Funding	0.00	333,333.34	-333,333.34
4070 · Misc and Ticket Sales	6,280.34	666.65	5,613.69
4060 · Holiday Caravan Parade 4100 · Fund Balance Interest	56,246.39	37,666.68	18,579.71
4010 · Occupancy taxes	7,580.57	4,000.00	3,580.57
4000 · Trolley Operations	851,494.40	933,333.36	-81,838.96
Toney Operations	54,027.46	40,000.00	14,027.46
4300 · Gateway Building Revenue	80,463.97	89,333.36	-8,869.39
4025 · Partner Services	28,524.43	40,000.00	11,475.57
Total Income	1,084,617.56	1,478,333.39	-393,715.83
Gross Profit	1,084,617.56	1,478,333.39	-393,715.83
Expense			
6501 · Tourism Capital Projects	7,234.89	0.00	7,234.89
6510 · Holiday Caravan Parade Expen	84,832.32	56,666.68	28,165.64
6511 · Partner Service Expense	15,109.00	13,333.32	1,775.68
6500 · Destination Development	84,828.79	500,000.00	-415,171.21
60001 Marketing & Visitor Services	- -	,	
6135 · Salisbury-Rowan CVB	679,923.96	700,000.00	-20,076.04
6465 · Trolley	9,347.15	7,000.00	2,347.15
6070 · Miscellaneous	4,057.29	2,666.68	1,390.61
Total 60001 · Marketing & Visitor Ser	693,328.40	709,666.68	-16,338.28
60002 · Operations & Administration			
6010 · RCTDA Operations Staff	82,518.92	80,000.00	2,518.92
6185 · Supplies-Administration	1,476.82	2,666.64	-1,189.82
6040 · Worker's comp insurance	7,459.00	5,333.32	2,125.68
6105 · Professional Services	23,769.32	21,333.32	2,436.00
6600 · Gateway Building Expenses	81,631.65	89,333.35	-7,701.70
Total 60002 · Operations & Administr	196,855.71	198,666.63	-1,810.92
Total Expense	1,082,189.11	1,478,333.31	-396,144.20
Net Ordinary Income	2,428.45	0.08	2,428.37
Net Income	2,428.45	0.08	2,428.37

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Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Activities Actual vs Budget February 2024

	Feb 24	Budget	\$ Over Budg
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income			
4350 · Tourism ARP Funding	0.00	41,666.66	-41,666.66
4070 · Misc and Ticket Sales	0.00	83.34	-83.34
4060 · Holiday Caravan Parade	5,000.00	4,708.33	291.67
4100 · Fund Balance Interest	1,038.13	500.00	538.13
4010 · Occupancy taxes	91,997.47	116,666.67	-24,669.20
4000 · Trolley Operations			
4210 · Trolley - Rentals	-20,043.37	0.00	-20,043.37
4000 · Trolley Operations - Other	27,118.45	5,000.00	22,118.45
Total 4000 · Trolley Operations	7,075.08	5,000.00	2,075.08
4300 · Gateway Building Revenue	8,625.83	11,166.67	-2,540.84
4025 · Partner Services	982.66	5,000.00	-4,017.34
Total Income	114,719.17	184,791.67	-70,072.50
Gross Profit	114,719.17	184,791.67	-70,072.50
Expense			·
6510 · Holiday Caravan Parade Expen	35.00	7,083.33	7 049 22
6511 · Partner Service Expense	971.72	1,666.67	-7,048.33 -694.95
6500 · Destination Development	30,184.12	62,500.00	-32,315.88
60001 · Marketing & Visitor Services	33,731,72	02,000.00	-32,313.00
6135 · Salisbury-Rowan CVB	16,728.27	87,500.00	-70,771.73
6465 · Trolley	3,538.04	875.00	2,663.04
6070 · Miscellaneous	228.00	333.33	-105.33
Total 60001 · Marketing & Visitor Ser	20,494.31	88,708.33	-68,214.02
60002 · Operations & Administration			
6010 · RCTDA Operations Staff	15,444.08	10,000.00	5,444.08
6185 · Supplies-Administration	200.00	333.33	-133.33
6030 · Retirement	-1,776.43	0.00	-1,776.43
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Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Activities Actual vs Budget February 2024

	Feb 24	Budget	\$ Over Budg
6020 · Health Benefits	-4,150.00	0.00	-4,150.00
6040 · Worker's comp insurance	0.00	666.67	-666.67
6105 · Professional Services	2,500.00	2,666.67	-166.67
6600 · Gateway Building Expenses	7,262.76	11,166.66	-3,903.90
Total 60002 · Operations & Administr	19,480.41	24,833.33	-5,352.92
Total Expense	71,165.56	184,791.66	-113,626.10
Net Ordinary Income	43,553.61	0.01	43,553.60
Net Income	43,553.61	0.01	43,553.60

Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Statement of Activities Actual vs Budget

July 2023 through June 2024	_	
Jul '23 - Jun	Budget	\$ Over

	Jul '23 - Jun	Budget	\$ Over Budg
Ordinary Income/Expense	-		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Income			
4350 · Tourism ARP Funding 4070 · Misc and Ticket Sales	0.00	500,000.00	-500,000.00
4060 · Holiday Caravan Parade	6,280.34	1,000.00	5,280.34
4100 · Fund Balance Interest	56,246.39 7,580.57	56,500.00 6,000.00	-253.61
4010 · Occupancy taxes	851,494.40	1,400,000.00	1,580.57 -548,505.60
4000 · Trolley Operations	54,027.46	60,000.00	-5,972.54
4300 · Gateway Building Revenue		,	·
4025 · Partner Services	80,463.97 28,524.43	134,000.00	-53,536.03
	20,024.43	60,000.00	-31,475.57
Total Income	1,084,617.56	2,217,500.00	-1,132,882.44
Gross Profit	1,084,617.56	2,217,500.00	-1,132,882.44
Expense			
6501 · Tourism Capital Projects	7,234.89	0.00	7,234.89
6510 · Holiday Caravan Parade Expen	84,832.32	85,000.00	-167.68
6511 · Partner Service Expense	15,109.00	20,000.00	-4,891.00
6500 · Destination Development	84,828.79	750,000.00	-665,171.21
60001 · Marketing & Visitor Services 6135 · Salisbury-Rowan CVB	679,923.96	1,050,000.00	-370,076.04
6465 · Trolley	9,347.15	10,500.00	-1,152.85
6070 · Miscellaneous	4,057.29	4,000.00	57.29
Total 60001 · Marketing & Visitor Ser	693,328.40	1,064,500.00	-371,171.60
60002 · Operations & Administration			
6010 · RCTDA Operations Staff	90,292.92	120,000.00	-29,707.08
6185 · Supplies-Administration	1,476.82	4,000.00	-2,523.18
6040 · Worker's comp insurance 6105 · Professional Services	7,459.00	8,000.00	-541.00
6600 · Gateway Building Expenses	23,769.32 81,631.65	32,000.00	-8,230.68
	01,031.03	134,000.00	-52,368.35
Total 60002 · Operations & Administr	204,629.71	298,000.00	-93,370.29
Total Expense	1,089,963.11	2,217,500.00	-1,127,536.89
Net Ordinary Income	-5,345.55	0.00	-5,345.55
Net Income	-5,345.55	0.00	-5,345.55

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Occupancy Tax Monthly Revenues 2019-2021-2022-2023-2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	\$80,100	\$56,292	\$96,919	\$115,064	\$88,997
February	\$87,894	\$62,049	\$94,531	\$108,890	\$95,000 projected
March	\$93,891	\$84,372	\$114,826	\$125,057	\$105,000 trending
April	\$97,301	\$90,628	\$119,033	\$125,347	
May	\$92,105	\$97,168	\$126,307	\$125,954	
June	\$92,255	\$102,792	\$115,684	\$109,365	
July	\$85,062	\$105,515	\$120,021	\$108,732	
August	\$87,388	\$99,851	\$115,189	\$110,177	
September	\$89,695	\$100,792	\$119,443	\$114,690	
October	\$113,427	\$115,325	\$128,088	\$141,296	
November	\$97,848	\$102,438	\$116,523	\$109,684	
December	\$79,687	\$95,875	\$103,835	\$95,960	
Total	\$1,096,653	\$1,113,097	\$1,370,400	\$1,390,216	<i>YTD</i> ####### YTD

Rowan County Occupancy Tax Receipts Collected (GROSS)

MONTH	FY19-20	FY20-21	%CHNG	FY21-22	%CHNG	FY22-23	%CHNG	FY23-24	%CHNG
July	85,062.04	61,737.08	-27.4%	105,514.79	70.9%	120,021.34	12.1%	108,732.65	-9.4%
August	87,388.13	66,399.96	-24.0%	99,851.17	50.4%	115,189.06	13.3%	110,177.63	-4.4%
September	89,694.58	78,562.08	-12.4%	100,792.04	28.3%	119,443.37	15.6%	114,690.69	-4.1%
Quarter Total	262,144.75	206,699.12	-21.2%	306,158.00	48.1%	354,653.77	13.7%	333,600.97	-6.3%
October	113,427.41	76,794.51	-32.3%	115,324.55	50.2%	128,088.16	10.0%	141,296.02	10.3%
November	97,848.24	60,357.00	-38.3%	102,438.16	69.7%	116,523.19	12.1%	109,684.96	-5.9%
December	79,686.64	64,749.41	-18.7%	95,874.73	48.1%	103,834.94	7.7%	95,959.89	-8.2%
Quarter Total	290,962.29	201,900.92	-30.6%	313,637.44	55.3%	348,446.29	10.0%	346,940.87	-0.4%
January	80,100.88	56,291.87	-29.7%	96,918.80	72.2%	115,064.17	15.8%	88,997.47	-22.7%
February	87,894.99	62,049.03	-29.4%	94,530.61	52.3%	108,890.30	13.2%		
March	62,149.01	84,372.26	35.8%	114,826.05	36.1%	125,056.96	8.2%		
Quarter Total	230,144.88	202,713.16	-11.9%	306,275.46	51.1%	349,011.43	12.2%		
April	39,870.97	90,628.43	127.3%	119,032.67	31.3%	125,347.11	5.0%		
May	50,585.59	97,167.69	92.1%	126,307.46	30.0%	125,953.79	-0.3%		
June	56,142.85	102,792.30	83.1%	115,684.25	12.5%	109,364.77	-5.8%		
Quarter Total	146,599.41	290,588.42	98.2%	361,024.38	24.2%	360,665.67	-0.1%		
Adjmts Penalities									
Penalities									
Year Total	\$ 929,851.33	\$ 901,901.62	-3.0%	\$ 1,287,095.28	42.7%	\$ 1,412,777.16	8.9%		

