

VISIT ROWAN COUNTY

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

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ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM

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Name: Destination Marketing Committee

Date of Meeting: May 9, 2019

Committee Chair: To Be Appointed

Date of Next Meeting: September 5, 2019

Committee Members Attending: Darrell Blackwelder, Annette Privette Keller, Kelly Alexander, Gretchen Witt

Not Attending: Michelle Patterson, Amie Baudoin, Krista Osterweil, Vivian Hopkins, Aaron Kepley

Tourism Staff: Tara Furr, Sarah Michalec, Mary Scott Norris

Tara Furr called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the Destination Marketing Committee Meeting for May 2019.

There was no quorum to make motions for approval; however, the meeting proceeded for informational purposes.

Destination Marketing Report- April 2019

Furr presented the 2019 April Marketing Report. She introduced Mary Scott Norris as the new Tourism Services Coordinator. Furr mentioned that the Trolleys are holding steady and doing well, however, the CVB is excited to have Mary Scott on board as the new primary contact dedicated to the Trolleys and to help grow the trolley program. The CVB intends to get back into doing more specialized tours now that staffing is in place. Historic Tours started back in April. There has been a total of 3 tours so far. April started out slow, but an increase in attendance is expected with ongoing marketing for the tours. Ridership for April was 87 and year to date is 994.

Visitors Services fulfilled 30 traditional inquires in the month of April. The current Destination Incentive Packages going on right now are Day out with Thomas and Polar Express. In April, Day out with Thomas had 19 packages booked and Polar Express had 15 packages.

This is the fourth year the CVB will be sponsoring the Little League Softball World Series, in July. Sponsorship originally started at a \$40,000 level and has since tiered down each year to \$20,000, the first year of the tournament, then to \$15,000, and now holding steady at \$12,500 for last year and this year. Little League has gained other sponsorships and volunteers for food, etc. and has requested assistance only in room bookings. It was discussed that the best way to connect with the families is to give them a print out of Rowan County, in hopes that they would want to come back, and those materials are located at the hotels.

Tourism Supported Investments total 868 room nights and the estimated event-visitor related economic impact is at 1.3 million.

In April, there were 5 media assists and 8 media placement for PR. The Salisbury Post Community Calendar partnership continues with 5,897 views for April.

Sarah Michalec shared the digital report with the group. The website grew with 83.4% new visitors and about 3,000 more views than in March and 3,000 more views compared to this time last year, showing steady growth. There is a new modernized listing, reflective of Yelp style on the website along with a new event calendar. It has had a good response from viewers and businesses submitting events. Michalec is working on replacing some images from the standard Cheerwine photo and encourages those who are submitting events to include a photo with their event as well.

Email marketing has had a 1.2% growth over March and the CVB is looking at a new email marketing platform to use in the future to help encourage the growth.

Overall social media following increased by 117 followers and there was strong engagement on Facebook. The accolade that Salisbury received for being in the top 15 places to start a business received the highest engagement and this article was focused on a destination standpoint, showing Salisbury is special because of the small businesses.

Twitter saw a lot of attention regarding beer month and there is growth on this platform as well. Instagram drew attention around the Chewy announcement from the EDC and Chewy has been interacting back and forth with us as well on Instagram. There were several blogs sent out in April focusing on Arts and Ag and NC Beer Month. The most popular blog was about Easter activities in Rowan County.

Furr went over the program of work developed by the CVB to show when events are ongoing and when tourism supported investments are occurring. Furr stated the CVB was awarded co-op programs from Visit NC in partnership with the NC Transportation Museum. These programs will begin to run in the fall.

Furr went over the strategic marketing goals for 2019-2020 including Digital Marketing, Group Sales, Branding, Visitor Services, and Trolleys. The major goals and objectives included:

- Continue to promote the Rowan County brand through destination marketing and digital avenues to reach a regional audience.
- Emphasize Rowan County key attractions and events to boost and promote overnight visitation.
- Foster relationships between key Rowan County tourism partners and their events to create destination awareness to strengthen existing success and prevent lulls in the tourism market.
- Develop consistent regional marketing through strategic traditional and digital advertising.
- Promote and grow tours and programming of the F&M Bank Historic Trolley System through visitor services and digital avenues.
- Manage and maintain relationships with existing and potential groups hosting events and making group accommodations in Rowan County lodging properties.
- Continue to increase engagement within the destination and expand communication with partners and communities

Furr presented the marketing budget that was presented as part of the overall budget that will be presented at the public hearing. The overall marketing budget for this fiscal year is \$340,000. \$112,500 is for large supported groups, which include Little League World Series, Polar Express, and Day out With Thomas. \$60,000 for digital marketing and infrastructure including website, CRM, CMS, newsletter, simple view, etc., \$15,500 for tourism partner support funds. Furr ensured that even though the number seemed low it is accurate because the other large events including Little League World Series, Polar Express, and Day out With Thomas were not included in this portion of the budget. Last year, \$14,700 was awarded in tourism support funds. Not every group will use the maximum amount awarded to them of \$3,000. Cooperative Destination Marketing efforts are budgeted for \$60,000. These funds are to develop and launch campaigns, which are part of Visit NC and the partnership with the North Carolina Transportation Museum. Arts & Ag is budgeted for \$20,000 for July- October in this Fiscal year. \$60,000 is budgeted for Tourism Marketing Programs and marketing reserves are at \$12,000. These funds combined reach the total of \$340,000. This is the same budget as last year.

Adjourn

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Mary Scott Norris, RCCVB