

# VISIT ROWAN COUNTY

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

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## ROWAN COUNTY TDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, November 15, 2017: 12 Noon, Gateway Building

### CALLED MEETING MINUTES

**Board Members Attending:** Steve Hall, Darrell Blackwelder, Craig Pierce, Tony Shaw, Amie Baudoin, Krista Osterweil

**Not Attending:** Whitney Wallace, Karen Alexander, Edward Norvell, Kelly Alexander, Shannon Stewart-Hill

**CVB Staff:** James Meacham, Lesley Pullium, Tara Furr, Allyson Teague

#### I. SRCVB Call to Order

Krista Osterweil called the RCTDA to order at 12:00pm.

#### Approval of the Minutes

**Motion:** Craig Pierce made the motion for approval of the RCTDA September 2017 minutes.

**Second:** Darrell Blackwelder

**Motion:** Approved

#### Occupancy Tax & Restructure

James Meacham stated September was the first month in which the new tax law went into effect. The final report information was positive, with an increase in funding due to a broader base. There were no collection and/or reporting problems from any of the properties in Rowan County, the law changes went in successfully and without any challenges.

The occupancy tax report revealed September 2017 was up 15.1% from September 2016. The first quarter of the fiscal year has been completed, with an increase of 13.7% from the previous fiscal year first quarter, in terms of total hotel market revenue.

There have been follow-up calls with two firms regarding feasibility studies for several new hotel opportunities. One is at Exit 74 and the other is a South Rowan project.

#### Local Hospitality Industry

Meacham told the group requests for nominations have been sent out for hospitality and service awards. The nominees will be local, front-line, employees who will receive monetary awards at the upcoming Chamber of

Commerce Gala in January. Nominations will be accepted through mid-December. This is a chance for hardworking individuals to be recognized for their efforts.

### **Rowan Arts Council**

Lesley Pullium gave an update on the Rowan Arts Council. There are 14 fall ACD grant applications this year, which is the most ever submitted. The applicants being awarded will be chosen and allocated in December. In addition, the Grassroots grants process was completed in late September. Anne Scott-Clement, Grassroots panel chair, along with other panel members, reviewed 8 applications and announcements have been made to the recipients, including the Salisbury Sculpture Show, Rowan Blues & Jazz, Center for Faith & the Arts, Lee Street Theatre, and Piedmont Players.

### **Destination Marketing Report**

Tara Furr shared the current destination marketing report. The current incentive package, Polar Express, has generated 658 packages, with a total of 876 room nights. Wine About Winter will be the next incentive package offered, beginning November 22<sup>nd</sup>. The event will take place on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Meacham informed the group the website continues to be successful with substantial growth of visitors each month. Most visitors are experiencing the website through mobile platforms, at 68%. Social media engagement is continuing to grow as well, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

An undisclosed sports-tourism group will partner with the RCTDA in October - November of 2018 to bring in around 760 room nights. Bids have been sent out to hoteliers for this group. In addition, the Cornish Jack group rented the trolleys for the entire weekend of their recent visit and became very involved with the community during the tours. In October, the visit by In God's Own Country theatre group was a big success as well.

Trolleys have been steady with year-to-date ridership at a little over 11,000, revenue equaling approximately \$27,000, and room nights at 222. There have been 59 advanced bookings scheduled for 2018. In addition, the Scrooge trolley tours will begin the weekend after Thanksgiving. Lee Street Theatre has already sold 600 tickets, with additional shows being added.

Also, 368 visitor inquiries were fulfilled in October 2017. The year-to-date total for visitor inquiries equals roughly 4,000.

### **Branding**

Meacham stated a new brand video will be revealed at the January Chamber of Commerce Gala event. The video will highlight lifting up people that play an important role in making the community run smoothly. This will tie in with the hospitality and service awards.

### **Additional Business**

Meacham touched on the various responsibilities being taken care of while Tara Furr is out on maternity leave. Allyson Teague will focus on incentive packages, trolley rentals, and overall visitor services. Lesley Pullium will continue to manage overall operations and grant applications. Meacham will manage group sales and public relations. In addition, most digital and marketing responsibilities have been outsourced to Miller Davis during Lauren Litaker's maternity leave.

Furr stated the Arts & Ag planning process is in full swing, and Miller Davis is helping with promotions along the way. The event will begin in April at Gold Hill to celebrate North Carolina beer month. The wineries will also

attend the kick-starter event, in addition to food trucks and live music. The NC Transportation Museum will be participating with a Tractors and Trains event and the farm-to-table event at Patterson Farms will take place in May, with the Salisbury Symphony providing live music.

Meacham shared that new community engagement endeavors will be put on a hiatus for a few months due to a lack of resources with two full-time employees out of the office for several months.

The Board discussed recent outreach directed towards the CVB to take on a larger role in community based marketing and expanding outside of visitor based and brand marketing. The Board felt openly that the TDA should not engage in such efforts at this time for two key reasons. The first being the TDA's two primary marketing professionals (Litaker and Furr) are on maternity leave until February and March respectively. The second being a more fundamental belief that because the TDA is currently funded through occupancy taxes and program revenues it generates from services; opening up the TDA to revenue outside of its current sources could potentially change the nature of the organization. A change that could be in a manner not suited for the TDA's primary purpose, especially if new revenues were local tax dollars.

## **II. Adjourn**

Krista Osterweil thanked the members for attending today and the meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm.