

# VISIT ROWAN COUNTY

SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

*Be an original.*

## ROWAN COUNTY TDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, October 18, 2017: 12 Noon, Gateway Building

### CALLED MEETING MINUTES

**Board Members Attending:** Edward Norvell, Steve Hall, Craig Pierce, Amie Baudoin, Tony Shaw, Darrell Blackwelder, Kelly Alexander, Shannon Stewart-Hill (by phone)

**Not Attending:** Krista Osterweil, Whitney Wallace, Karen Alexander

**Guests:** Brian Miller

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

#### I. SRCVB Call to Order

Kelly Alexander called the RCTDA to order at 12:00pm.

#### Approval of the Minutes

**Motion:** Edward Norvell made the motion for approval of the RCTDA September 2017 minutes.

**Second:** Craig Pierce

**Motion:** Approved

#### Occupancy Tax & Restructure

James Meacham stated everything has gone smoothly with changes to the occupancy tax restructure. The change went into effect at midnight on September 1<sup>st</sup>. So far, there has been no negative feedback from properties. The latest occupancy tax report shows an increase to 14% from August 2016 to August 2017. There will continue to be an increase in revenues since additional properties within the county will be at a 6% occupancy tax rate as well.

#### Local Hospitality Industry

Meacham shared that Patterson Farms had a record year with regard to visitation, field trips, and group sales. Approximately 1,600 students are expected to attend the farm for field trips on Friday. Kelly Alexander stated Day out with Thomas was very successful, with 15.7% increase in ticket sales and 21,000 people in attendance. In addition, 62% of tickets, over 31,000, have been sold for the Polar Express event.

Meacham told the group requests for nominations will be sent out for local, front-line, employees to receive awards at the upcoming Chamber of Commerce Gala. This is a chance for hardworking individuals to be recognized for their efforts.

A new hotel, Home2 by Hilton, is in the beginning stages of construction with an opening schedule for the end of next year or early 2019. Home2 will be 5 stories with approximately 95 rooms. In addition, three separate feasibility studies from private companies have been started for additional hotel properties located outside the city of Salisbury.

### **Rowan Arts Council**

Edward Norvell gave an update on the Rowan Arts Council. The Grassroots Grants were recently distributed. The application process for the ACD grants is underway, and groups will be awarded in December. Furthermore, RAC has submitted an application for a National Endowment for the Arts grant, which would help support the Arts & Ag initiative.

### **Brand Update**

Meacham indicated several groups will soon be included under the “Be Original” county brand, including China Grove, Downtown Salisbury, and new EMS brand logos. Also, the official trademark certification has been delivered to the county office. The federal trademarks should be in within 4-5 months.

### **Destination Development**

Meacham stated an infrastructure plan will be put in place during a meeting with Whitney Wallace next week. In addition, City Council approved part of the demo for the Fisher Thompson building in the Rail Walk district. There will be a demolition hearing with City Council soon and a funding model will be in place for approval at the December or January RCTDA board meeting.

### **Destination Marketing Report**

Tara Furr shared the current destination marketing report. Additions to the tourism support investment chart are October Tour, Fin Feather & Fur, and the Blues & Jazz Festival. Year-to-date, there are a total of 2,217 room nights. The Day out with Thomas package ended with 227 room nights, compared to 180 in 2016. In God’s Own Country accrued 2 packages with 2 room nights and October Tour has resulted in 8 room nights. The Polar Express packages continue to be well ahead of last year’s totals. To date, there are 580 room nights booked, and last year there were 440 room nights in total.

Meacham informed the group 60% of traffic on the newly-launched website is mobile. Normally, a drop is expected in website views when a new launch takes place, but there has been a 47% increase over the last 30 days. There has also been a 22% reduction in bounce rate, which means visitors are staying to explore the site. The lodging option has been the number one viewed page, especially during the busy package season.

Fall will be very busy with group sales, including the Southern Tandem Bike Rally, Alpha Kappa Alpha conference in October, and the Cornish Jack American Society. The Norfolk & Western Railroad Historical Society has been confirmed for next May. In addition, an undisclosed group will partner with the RCTDA in 2018 to bring in around 760 room nights.

Trolleys have been steady with ridership at 1,800 in September, in addition to several Saturday tours being sold out. The year-to-date ridership falls at a little over 7,500 with revenue just over \$20,000, and 205 room nights. Advanced bookings for 2018 are currently being added to the calendar.

Weekly meetings are continuing with DSI and the City of Salisbury, with a focus on downtown marketing. A survey was recently sent out to merchants in order to receive feedback for the creation of a marketing plan. Television and radio spots will be running through mid-November for general destination and brand awareness. In addition, a new holiday campaign will be added for the months ahead.

## **II. Adjourn**

James Meacham thanked the members for attending today and the meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.