

SALISBURY



ROWAN COUNTY

Authentic North Carolina

SALISBURY-ROWAN COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
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Name: Salisbury-Rowan County Convention & Visitor Bureau Board **Date of Meeting:** October 14, 2015

Board Chair: Bill Burgin **Date of Next Meeting:** November 18, 2015

Board Members Attending: John Ketner, Suzanne Jones, Mark Lewis, Barbara Perry, Vivian Hopkins, Craig Pierce, Boris Bunich, Tony Shaw, Amie Baudoin, Krista Osterweil, Karen Alexander, Michelle Patterson

Tourism Staff: James Meacham, Lesley Pullium, Tara Ludwig, Melissa Murguz, Stephanie Centeno, Allyson Teague

Not Attending: Bill Burgin, Dan Peters, Thad Howell, Teresa Harris, Paul Woodson, Darrell Blackwelder, Kelly Alexander

James Meacham called the meeting to order at 12:12 PM.

Approval of the Minutes:

Motion: John Ketner made the motion for the approval of the September 9, 2015 minutes.

Second: Craig Pierce

Motion: Approved

Financial Report

Mark Lewis, Treasurer, updated the Board on the current finances. The current assets total \$372,973 in cash. That is up \$101,000 from last month. Primarily, \$81,000 was a cash increase coming from the first draw on the Branding loan. There was also \$20,900 in cash transfers from the Capital Fund. The accounts receivable of \$19,099 was received for the August Occupancy Tax from Rowan County. The statement of activities for September had a total operating revenue of \$151,806.

There were several primary expenses for September, including Marketing, with a total of \$18,000. This consisted of destination, digital and partnership marketing. The negative \$9,150 was a recoded Master Plan expense due to a miscoding mistake. Under destination development there are a total of two transfers to the Capital account. The first one at the beginning of September was from the July Occupancy Taxes and at the end of the month was from August Occupancy Taxes, with a total of \$20,928. Total expenses from operation is \$82,255 and net ordinary income from operations is \$69,551. Ultimately, the report showed a net income of \$9,429 for the SRCCVB. The \$70,480 is money that was set aside for two capital projects, including the wayfinding signs and public art near the interchange. Net ordinary income through September 30 from operations is \$114,000. There is a small net loss when everything is reconciled of \$4,934.

Motion: Boris Bunich made the motion for the approval of the September financial report.

Second: Craig Pierce

Motion: Approved

Master Plan Committee

Barbara Perry stated that the Tourism Business Development Subcommittee presented a Business Development Grant pre-application and final application. The grant is designed to assist individuals or organizations who are initiating, developing, planning, constructing or expanding tourism related businesses in Salisbury and Rowan County. James Meacham confirmed that non-profit organizations can apply. Meacham conveyed that the grant program is partially modeled after the tourism development program in Asheville, in assisting new or existing tourism businesses get off the ground. Lodging businesses cannot apply for this grant, because from a legal standpoint in North Carolina, occupancy tax revenue cannot be used to support a lodging project.

Meacham continued to review the pre-application and final application processes. The \$10,000 that is set within the grant program annually is money that the Board had already put into the Master Plan budget. The grant is meant to be a one-time opportunity for seed money, so the business will need to explain their plan for sustainability. The SRCCVB Board will set how much money will be available each year for the grant program.

Boris Bunich asked if the money would go toward a project that is ready to happen or if it could go toward a group thinking about the feasibility of the project. Meacham stated the grant money is for a project that is ready. The grant program is 1.5% of the SRCCVB budget this year, so there is room to grow if the program is successful. The website will include information about the Business Development Grant where Staff will be able to evaluate interested groups or individuals as the applications come in. Krista Osterweil asked if the \$10,000 allotted for the grant program is perpetual. Meacham indicated that the total amount is ultimately up to the Board and steps can be taken to make changes as the program naturally unfolds. Craig Pierce

wondered if there is a limit to the number of applications and Meacham stated that the only limit depends on the available amount of funds for various grants.

Motion: Barbara Perry reported that the Tourism Business Development Subcommittee recommends in a form of a motion and second to accept the Business Development Grant application process.

Motion: Approved

Arts & Agriculture Festival

Perry discussed a possible Arts and Agriculture Festival that was presented by Michelle Patterson. It is in the early developmental stages because some feel it might be too much to take on at this time. Patterson expressed that the concept of the Arts and Agriculture Festival would be to highlight a collaboration of the arts and agriculture within our community. Meacham stated that a tentative launch date would be the fall of 2016 or spring of 2017.

Perry shared a Charlotte Observer article with a report about a similar festival that took place in the downtown area, where arts and agriculture were presented together. The Board would need to discuss ways to generate seed money for this endeavor. Although the festival would be a big undertaking, Perry felt it would be a good way to expose people to what Salisbury and the surrounding communities have to offer.

In addition, Perry told the group that a judge has chosen a winner for the Sculpture Show. There are also three inquiries from a church and three colleges about buying certain sculptures. Prices have been negotiated with the artists, so it is a matter of the interested parties raising the funds to make a purchase. The SRCCVB will get a portion of these sales.

Capital Committee

John Ketner presented the updated budget for the Capital Committee. The account balance is a total of \$247,039 and unrestricted funds total \$128,224. There were no expenses in the month of September and, year-to-date, the budget is 10% ahead of projected revenue for the Capital program. Fabrication of the wayfinding signs are slated to be completed in November. Meacham shared with the group that with all the rain there was a leak in the building that had to be addressed. Meacham also thanked Lesley and the rest of Staff for making the building look festive for the fall season.

Destination Marketing Committee

Osterweil reported on two requests for funds. The first was from Livingstone College for the Commemorative Classic football game on November 7th. A request was approved that consists of a package including two tickets for the football game and \$65 in Downtown Dollars if a hotel room is booked in Rowan County. Livingstone also asked for \$1,000 for marketing expenses but this did not meet the criteria for available funds. Instead the DMC offered Livingstone accommodations for officials or other important visitors coming to Salisbury for the event. The second request for funds was from Rowan Cabarrus Community College for their Fine Arts Conference on February 25th-27th. The DMC is covering the per-person cost for meals excluding the tax and gratuity. This includes breakfasts and lunches for three days.

Tara Ludwig presented a PowerPoint presentation on the current standings of destination marketing. The Trolley program has continued to bring in significant revenue with tours, related overnight stays, etc. The Harvest Tour was a success with one whole trolley staying in the local hotels and B&Bs. The Wickedly Witty Tour starts this weekend, October 16th with 100 tickets having already been sold. With regard to partnership marketing, Homes and Harmonies with Lee Street Theatre took place last weekend, which included Sam Bush tickets and the October Tour with an overnight stay in a local hotel. There were approximately 13 packages with Homes and Harmonies. In addition, Day out with Thomas with the NC Transportation Museum was very successful with an estimation of 201 overnight stays and 77 overnight stays are approximated for the upcoming Polar Express event.

Ludwig continued the presentation with group business. Preservation NC was in town recently, but Staff is still working on producing the total overnight stays. The original projection was 400 rooms, but Staff will get a total soon. Husqvarna reached out for a conference and utilized the hotels and trolleys during their stay. There were 29 projected overnight stays with an estimated visitor related economic impact of \$8,145. Staff is still continuing to work with the AACA. The projected room nights are 600 and the estimated visitor related economic impact is \$133,583. Fishers of Men is coming up November 3-7. Ludwig informed the hotels there is not a designated host hotel, but to be aware of the group's arrival. The total digital marketing reach for September is approximately 168,515 visitors, including social media, email, and the website.

Ludwig expressed that the Branding shoot took place between Tuesday, October 6th and Tuesday, October 13th, with a crew of four people, and shared the various locations within the community the group visited during their stay. Some locations include the Rowan County Airport, West Rowan High School, Fibrant, Rowan Museum, Catawba College, and Gold Hill. Due to the rain, the shoot was shortened to seven days versus the planned ten days. The group was able to acquire footage of towns specifically with welcome signs and will be coming back to capture locations that were missed. A holiday and spring shoot are being planned as well. Ludwig was impressed with the professionalism of the crew and their equipment.

Branding

Patterson stated at the last Branding meeting the firm Chandlerthinks was chosen for the Branding project. The first focus group will take place Tuesday, October 20th at 8:00AM. Meacham and Patterson agreed that Steve Chandler could produce a fresh perspective for the rebranding of Rowan County, addressing both good and bad aspects in order to execute the project successfully.

Motion: Craig Pierce made the motion for the approval to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Barbara Perry

Motion: Approved

There were no questions. The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Allyson Teague, SRCCVB Office Assistant