

**SALISBURY**  
**ROWAN COUNTY**  
*Authentic North Carolina*

**SALISBURY-ROWAN COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**  
204 E Innes Street, Ste. 120, Salisbury, NC 28144  
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**Name:** Salisbury-Rowan County Convention & Visitor Bureau Board      **Date of Meeting:** November 18, 2015

**Board Chair:** Bill Burgin      **Date of Next Meeting:** December 9, 2015

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**Board Members Attending:** Suzanne Jones, Mark Lewis, Barbara Perry, Vivian Hopkins, Boris Bunich, Krista Osterweil, Karen Alexander, Paul Woodson, Steve Hall, Paula Bohland, Teresa Harris, Bill Burgin, Thad Howell, Dan Peters

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

**Attending Guests, Liaisons, and Officials:** Robert Van Geons (Executive Director, EDC), Steve Chandler, Greg Fuson, and Michaela Marchardt (Chandlerthinks)

**Not Attending:** Darrell Blackwelder, Kelly Alexander, Craig Pierce, Tony Shaw, Michelle Patterson

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Bill Burgin called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Motion: Mark Lewis made the motion for the approval of the October 14, 2015 minutes.

Second: Thad Howell

Motion: Approved

Burgin brought two resignations to the attention of the Board, including Amy Baudoin and John Ketner.

Motion: Boris Bunich made the motion for the approval of Amy Baudoin's letter of resignation.

Second: Vivian Hopkins

Motion: Approved

Motion: Thad Howell made the motion for the approval of John Ketner's letter of resignation.

Second: Boris Bunich

Motion: Approved

### **Financial Report**

Mark Lewis reported on occupancy tax receipts, which totaled \$63,255 for the month of September, a 9 percent increase from 2014. Overall, the first quarter totaled \$190,000, an increase of 10 percent from 2014. Lewis informed the Board that the Quality Inn taxes, fees, and penalties will be collected by the end of February, 2016.

The balance sheet shows three receivables; one being online ticket sales for the Wickedly Witty Tour, of which all funds have been collected and are now cash. Expenses show a three payroll month, which causes the total to be a negative number from an operating perspective. However, this happens usually twice a year and simply means there has been a change in cash position. In addition, \$43,736 has been expended for Rowan County Branding project, but money is continuing to come in from the loan.

Lewis reminded the group that net other income, or net operations, is in the negatives due to a three payroll month. Net ordinary income through the first quarter is \$79,117 to the positive. Overall net income shows a negative \$44,965, but this is, just a change in cash position to the organization and not net income from operations.

Lewis stated that a meeting with the accountants and the auditor took place in October. There was a discussion about the SRCCVB becoming a big agency now with several significant projects taking place. Due to continued growth of the organization, various financial statement layouts will be presented to the Board in an effort to make the information easier to understand. Lewis and Meacham plan to present these in the first quarter of 2016.

Motion: Paul Woodson made the motion for the approval of the financial report.

Second: Thad Howell

Motion: Approved

### **Tourism Master Plan Committee**

Barbara Perry informed the Board that the Tourism Master Plan Committee did not meet in the month of November. Perry shared that a judge came to Salisbury and chose three winners for the 2015 Sculpture Show. The first place winner was an African American artist from Livingstone College, Steven Hayes. The second place winner was Todd Frahm and the third place winner was Ray Katz. Work has begun on next year's Sculpture Show and all of the colleges have shown interest in participating again. So far three sculptures have been sold and the committee will receive 25 percent of those earnings.

### **Destination Marketing Committee**

Tara Ludwig directed the committee to review the destination marketing handout for a brief overview of the most recent marketing endeavors. The Wickedly Witty Tour from October was very successful for it being the first Halloween tour offered. Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour are on sale and begins November 27<sup>th</sup>. This year an overnight package for Scrooge's Trolley is being offered. For every overnight stay in a Salisbury-Rowan County hotel or B&B specifically for the Scrooge Holiday Package the visitor will receive two free tour tickets and a \$40 gift certificate to a Downtown Salisbury restaurant of their choice.

Recently the Fishers of Men fishing tournament wrapped up their visit and about 91 room nights were booked as a result of their presence in town. Partnership marketing with Day out with Thomas generated about 200 room nights consumed as a result of the overnight hotel/event package. Polar Express starts this weekend and 22,000 tickets have already been sold. There is an estimation of 200 room nights to be filled during this event with an estimated visitor related economic impact of \$124,582 from overnight guests. Additionally, from December 8<sup>th</sup> through December 12<sup>th</sup> Aristotle will be visiting Rowan County again to capture a holiday photo and video shoot as part of the branding and digital infrastructure projects.

### **Capital Committee**

Meacham stated the Capital Committee will be sending a recommendation to the Board for an economic development partnership project between the SRCCVB, EDC, the City, Downtown Salisbury, and others as an avenue to continue to grow downtown. There is a request for \$70,000 in Centerpiece Funds, which are the Wells Fargo funds, given to the SRCCVB via a \$100,000 grant. Specifically these funds were meant for developing the downtown area.

The project location in the 400 block of Lee Street is just under 9,000 square feet, and is located along Lee Street in the Rail Walk District. The 1.44 million dollar project would transform the vacant building into a restaurant and brewery through a partnership between Morgan Ridge Vineyards and Rowan Investment Company. Meacham shared the artist's renderings of what the restaurant and brewery and surrounding area would possibly look like. Rowan Investment Company would own the property and lease it to Morgan Ridge Vineyards. The project would bring a Rowan County agritourism business to downtown Salisbury.

Robert Van Geons, Executive Director of the EDC, addressed the Board further about the Rail Walk project. There will be 2 to 3 full time jobs, as well as several part time jobs, generated for the restaurant, and another 13 full time jobs as a result of incorporating the brewery. The project creates a centerpiece for the area and helps with expanding downtown. By taking an already existing arts district and incorporating a restaurant and brewery, an attractive destination is created for potential visitors. Meacham added that the Capital Committee made a unanimous recommendation to the Board to approve the \$70,000 for the project and reminded the group that

SRCCVB has already committed \$125,000 a year to assist with the development of the Rail Walk District. The project helps to further the Master Plan goals of expanding the tourism economy and supporting the agritourism business. The Master Plan addresses bringing two flagships together, including agritourism and downtown.

Paula Bohland, with Downtown Salisbury, Inc., conveyed that DSI is in support of the project and feels the use of the vacant building is important to the historic restoration of the downtown area. In addition, the new use of the building and implementation of the restaurant and brewery will increase the tax base of Rowan County. Mark Lewis conveyed that the craft brewery business has taken off in NC and how the Rail Walk project will encourage people to visit Rowan County and Downtown Salisbury.

Karen Alexander asked when the money will be disbursed for the project and if there is a policy in place to ensure the funds are utilized properly. Meacham specified that the Capital Funds are typically disbursed on the front end, and a legal agreement would be drafted stating that if the project is not completed then the funds have to be remitted back. Since these are grant funds from a private party the small rules could apply. Bill Burgin suggested that a written policy be put in place to safeguard the project funds in case things don't go as planned.

Motion: Bill Burgin reported that the Capital Committee recommends in a form of a motion and second to invest \$70,000 of Centerpiece Funds (Wells Fargo Grant funds) to support the Morgan Ridge Vineyards restaurant and brewery Rail Walk project.

Motion: Approved

### **Rowan County Branding Initiative**

Meacham introduced the Chandlerthinks team from Tennessee to the group. The data gathering is the first stage that the team is conducting this week, and again in December, including individual interviews, focus groups, and site visits.

Steve Chandler thanked the Board for approving the budget to pursue the Rowan County Branding Initiative. Chandler expressed the ideas behind a community branding, including the importance of engaging the entire community and how everyone is part of the product. What matters most with branding are the experiences people have while visiting Rowan County and how visitors feel. Each person in the community can play a role in telling the story of Rowan County. Chandler conveyed that the team views the research from the perspective of a travel writer while conducting tours, individual interviews, and focus groups. Chandler planted an idea with the group that each person needs to always continue working on the branding of Rowan County and strive to keep momentum without stalling out.

Chandler shared a website, [brandingrowancountync.com](http://brandingrowancountync.com), with the Board, which gives the basics of what the Chandlerthinks team is doing and the progress being made. There will be a

community survey for people not participating in a focus group or individual interview. The survey will be available online through the branding website, as well as other avenues. The website will allow anyone in the community to contact Chandlerthinks and get involved with the branding initiative. Meacham stated that November and December is the initial research period, including planned meetings and focus groups with various stakeholders and community leaders. Starting in January a broader research period will begin where Chandlerthinks will be reaching out to the city, towns, and smaller communities by depending on everyone to participate in disbursing surveys and additional information about the branding project. Chandler encouraged the Board to share the community survey with anyone they can through social media, word of mouth, or any other avenue in order to reach a maximum number of individuals in Salisbury and Rowan County. This will ensure the branding project receives a large, diverse group of opinions to allow for a more detailed overall story. Chandler shared his personal email with the Board as a way to directly contact the Chandlerthinks team.

There were no questions. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Allyson Teague, SRCCVB Office Assistant