

Alamance County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

May 23, 2023

Burlington Historic Depot

Present: Anderson Rathbun
Matt Patel
Teena Koury

CVB: Grace VandeVisser
Reed Northcott

Financial: Susan Evans

Grace introduced Jamie Merchel. Jamie is the new Director for Parks and Recreation for Alamance County.

Moment of Silence

Anderson Rathbun called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Teena made a motion to approve the March minutes and Matt seconded. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Collection Report

Susan Evans, Financial Representative, presented the Financial Reports as of April 30, 2023. The total fund balance is \$2,014,843. Total revenues collected were \$678,020, which is 76.1% of the budget. Total expenses to date were \$543,446. As of April 30, 2023, YTD occupancy tax collections were \$1,025,381 which is an increase of 11.83%. Investments were \$586,034. Total sales tax revenues were \$32,712,772.

Susan stated that Martin & Starnes has begun the interim audit testing and there have been no issues found.

Visitor Bureau Updates

Grace spoke regarding the current budget presented to the County Commissioners. The 2024 submitted budget is \$901,224 as presented by finance. These figures were based on FY23 and not the actual suggested budget that Grace had completed. Grace pointed out that the total amount budgeted in grants alone would exceed the presented budgeted amount. Susan stated that adjustments can be made since the grants are submitted quarterly. There are several accounts affected by this. Matt made a motion to approve the budget, seconded by Teena, with the understanding of the differences. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Marketing Grants for Alamance Parks, Town of Gibsonville and Animal Park were submitted via email prior to the meeting and approved by the board via email. Matt made a motion to approve the grants, seconded by Teena. The applications were unanimously approved.

Grace mentioned Studio 1 Grant came in after the email was submitted for grant approvals. The requested amount is \$7,500. Studio 1 has some productions this year at Snow Camp Outdoor Theatre. The grant request would be for social media, geo fencing and advertising for events on the main stage and at Snow Camp Outdoor Theatre. Grace stated that if the grant was approved the board might consider direction on advertising programs. A copy of the 2023-2024 brochure from Studio 1 was handed out which lists

programs at Snow Camp Outdoor Theatre along with a schedule of events on the main stage. Anderson suggested that 50% of grant money should be used in advertising Snow Camp Theatre events and suggested that Studio 1 should advertise events at least one month in advance. Matt made a motion to approve, Teena seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Grace spoke about upcoming vacant TDA Board positions. Matt Patel's position ends August 31, 2023. Grace will contact some of the previous hotel applicants to see if any are still interested in filling the upcoming vacant position. Chuck Marsh's position will also end August 31, 2023, this position will be open to the community.

Grace stated the contract for ITI Digital has been signed and we will begin our onboarding process within the next few weeks. The site should be live beginning the first of July.

Grace reported on the preliminary findings of the Convention study, and she will email the report to board members to review. Meetings have occurred with municipal leaders and partners inside and outside of the community. The report suggested a possible multi-use event center which would hold around 3000 people. There were several potential sites suggested in Burlington, Graham and Mebane. Some of the preliminary findings suggested that it would be of value to the area for a sports or entertainment event space with the potential to be used for meetings.

Grace recapped on Placer AI. As mentioned previously, we are ending our contract with Zardico. Data from Placer AI is stronger and more accurate as it applies to visitor count. The tracking information Placer AI obtains is 90% to 93% accurate. Grace asked for a report with information regarding attendance at the Dogwood Festival this year as an example of how they can track and provide user information. Placer AI negotiates with the apps to get panels inside the apps to track for high level tracking. This information can provide very detailed percentages of where people come and go within the geo fenced area. Some information provided showed 71% of people attending the Dogwood Festival came from home, and 11% came from a dining facility, while after the festival, 58% of people attending returned home, while 18% went to eat. Grace will contact area municipalities and see if they are interested in signing on with Placer AI through the TDA at a fee of \$5000 giving them access to some very beneficial information. The City of Mebane has spoken with Grace and stated they would be interested and would like to submit it to the City Council for approval. This would be a great opportunity to tie the municipalities back into the TDA. Grace has contacted other organizations that are using Placer AI and they are all very pleased. Matt made a motion to approve the contact with Placer AI, Teena seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Grace has heard from the DOT. The new welcome sign saying Welcome to Alamance County home of the Haw River Trail has been approved.

Grace attended the Simpleview conference in Houston, Texas in April which she felt was beneficial for the TDA. She gained a lot of knowledge and new information that will be useful.

The TDA is continuing our marketing program with VisitNC, Our State, Carolina Traveler and North Carolina Field & Family which included sponsored content. Grace is discontinuing marketing with Southern Travel and Lifestyle due to lack of digital reporting.

Social platform updates reflect Facebook engagement up 141% from last year at this time. Instagram is slightly down. Engagements are over 1,600 since the last meeting.

Signage will be updated for the Year of the Trail highway billboards.

Grace reported both Destination Downtown and the Mebane Main Street organization, are investing in promoting downtown events and the overall downtown to draw more people into the area.

The top NC cities that visitors are traveling from include Raleigh/Durham, Charlotte, and Greensboro/Winston Salam area. Virginia and Georgia are the top producers of inbound travelers to date.

Meeting was adjourned at 12pm.