

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ALAMANCE COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 10:00 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Katie Dukeshire
Matt Patel
Jessalynn Strauss

CVB Staff: Grace VandeVisser
Brian Baker
Claire Davis

Absent: Kavita Patel
Cary Worthy

Guest: Sara Danieleley-Kernodle

Financial Officer: Susan Evans

Moment of Silence

Katie Dukeshire, Chair, called the meeting to order and a moment of silence was observed.

Approval of Minutes

Katie asked if there were any additions or corrections to be made to the minutes of the April meeting. No updates were needed. Jessalynn Strauss motioned for the minutes to be approved. Matt Patel seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Collection Report

Susan Evans presented the Financial Reports for July 1, 2019 through April 30, 2020. Total assets are \$1,482,844. Total revenue reported totals \$447,258. Total expenditures total \$420,670. Occupancy tax collections reported through April 30, 2020 totaled \$679,404, a 0.13% decrease over the same period in 2019 with the TDA's share of \$439,370. Sales tax collections reported through April 30, 2020 total \$22,406,889 which is an 8.23% decrease over the same period in 2019. Investments total \$584,340.

Visitor Bureau Updates

Grace VandeVisser opened a discussion surrounding a grant exemption for the City of Graham. The City of Graham used their approved grant money to produce a video for the Love Graham, Festival and had a residual amount leftover of \$297.26. The City of Graham has reached out to ask Grace if they are able to use the leftover money for additional marketing during this time, which would be outside of their application award details. Grace asked if the board would like to consider allowing individuals approved for grants to use their remaining amounts from the grant, during this COVID-19 pandemic. Katie asked Grace if the City of Graham had told Grace what their specific plans were for the remaining grant money. Jessalynn asked if the marketing would be related to COVID-19? Grace stated Graham said this would be used for marketing due to the difficulties local businesses are having during this time due to COVID-19, however they did not state an exact plan. As of now they are just asking for the opportunity to use the money. Jessalynn stated she would like to see what the funds would be used for in detail. Grace agreed that we would need these details. Jessalynn stated that we would need to be clear that this would be a

special situation due to the pandemic and not a normal occurrence. Grace stated she did not see this happening very often as most people max out their grant money. If the board approved this, it would be an exception, not a new normal as the grant application states otherwise. Grace stated we are also planning to relook at the application process and will be reworking some of the content to make it clearer. The City of Graham's plans would have to be approved and we would receive receipts. Katie asked for a motion to allow the City of Graham to move forward with their marketing of the funds that they have not already utilized. Jessalynn made a motion to allow them to use the extra funds given they let us know what they plan to do with it. Matt Patel seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously.

Grace updated the board on when the Visitor's Bureau office will be opening back up, which should be in Phase 3. Brian Baker elaborated on the plan for the Visitor's Bureau office, stating that the CVB is keeping the offices closed to the public as of now because the walk in traffic is low. Other museums and public spaces are closed within Alamance County but may reopen in Phase 3 as well.

Grace stated that this is the Year of the Woman and shared plans to use this concept in summer marketing. Formally, the CVB had an Agritourism story which was collaborated with VisitNC for their website but due to COVID-19 this was unable to take place. Instead, the CVB will be creating their own marketing using the Year of the Woman beginning in July. This will highlight makers in Alamance County, eleven makers in total. Some of the women highlighted will include Gege who owns GeGe the Neighbor Cupcakery in downtown Burlington, as well as Debbie at IronGate Winery, who is the first woman in North Carolina to begin producing wine. The stories will highlight other women including women in Agritourism and other artists and makers. These stories will be highlighted on the VisitAlamance website.

Grace shared about the new paid content campaign that will start in October with Our State Magazine. It will consist of five stories created for October, November, March, April and May. Beginning in Saxapahaw, they will highlight a variety of different businesses and owners in the community. The articles will live on the our State website for a year and in March or April there will be an ad that is part of the campaign, which will run in the magazine. This will tell people how they can learn more about these communities by going to Our State's website. This will give Alamance County a years worth of digital presence with stories about the area.

Grace stated that BMX reached out to us this month about the opportunity to come to Alamance County this year in order to keep the races open. If they do not find another location to accommodate their national this summer, and if phases open up and the City of Burlington agrees to host them, they would make a last minute decision to come. The City of Burlington said they wouldn't be doing anything in June due to the governors guidelines, so possibly July or August. Grace mentioned Ace Speedway, and the mixed feelings of the locals. She has not received direct questions about how the CVB or TDA feels about them opening. She wanted to make everyone aware that Ace Speedway is going forward with opening their track and races. Grace mentioned that we will wait and see what happens with Ace Speedway in regards to the press.

Grace mentioned the businesses in Alamance County that are closing due to COVID-19 and that won't be reopening. Hyperion Bar and Lounge, Company Shops Nighttime Cafe and Cooking Corner are all closing permanently. However, Beechwood Metal has bought three storefronts and the Owl and Rabbit gallery has moved into one of these locations There are plans to perhaps move a bakery into the new space and possibly other businesses. There are new businesses opening up including a new shop called Sweet Grace Market in Mebane. A bookstores is also coming into Downtown Graham.

Grace shared that The Southeast Tourism Society has selected the Carousel Festival as one of their 2020 attractions. The festival has won this award but B-Town events aren't sure if they will have the festival this year.

Grace stated that we submitted a BMX bid for 2021. There was a Sports Development council meeting last week, with discussion about closures and phasing in with the state of tournaments coming to Alamance County. At this time, the senior softball tournament is still scheduled for July. If notice is received that in Phase 3 we can open up for games, those will continue in July.

Cane Creek Mountain has opened up and Brian wanted to make sure everyone knows that they opened the natural area and are in phase one of opening to the public. Reservations are required at this time intended for families with a 3 hour block that includes exclusive access. The natural area is already booked through July and they are hoping to open the park up sooner than later, perhaps in July or August.

Claire gave visitor service updates. The CVB will be adding a section to the website for a blog where the CVB can highlight different attractions, activities, restaurants and more with stories. Some of the topics that will be featured include A Brewery Tour, Family Fun Activities, Date Night Ideas and more. Claire also shared recent website analytics. Facebook, Our State and VisitNC are the number one traffic referral sources followed by google organic searches. The majority of the online visitors searched for outdoor recreation information and the restaurant link for curbside service in April. There was an increase in site visits for visitors between the ages of 18-34 and 65 and older. There was a forty percent decrease in traffic in April and a five percent decrease in traffic in May. Expectation is that we will see traffic increasing to the site as we move into new phases.

Jessalynn mentioned that there is no update on Elon Graduation, but that it appears to be their plan to postpone graduation and reopen in the fall. Jessalynn will let the board know when she knows anything about fall opening plans.

Grace mentioned the Count on Me program with Visit NC, where individuals can go to countonme.org and participate in the program. The program gives viewers an opportunity as a business or an individual to pledge to follow guidelines to keep the community safe as places reopen. There are many restaurants in Alamance County that are participating and displaying the sticker showing they completed online training on the website. Grace also mentioned Our State's Cook It Forward initiative, which has been shared on Social Media. Our State would like chefs to nominate other chefs and celebrate our great community of restauranteurs.

Adjourn

Katie adjourned the meeting at 10:50 am.
Minutes submitted by Claire Davis.