

Alamance County Tourism Development Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

April 23, 2024

Carolina Hosiery, Burlington

Present: Anderson Rathbun
Kavita Patel
Teena Koury
Danielle Claudio

CVB: Grace VandeVisser
Reed Northcott

Financial: Susan Evans

Moment of Silence

Anderson Rathbun called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Danielle motioned to approve the February minutes, and Teena seconded. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Collection Report

Susan presented the Financial Reports as of March 31, 2024. The total fund balance is \$2,099,442. Total revenue received was \$633,075. Total expenses to date were \$645,830. Occupancy tax collections were \$926,720. Investments totaled \$1,098,695. Sales tax revenues to date were \$27,318,761.

Susan asked the board to approve entering a contract with Martin Starnes to audit fiscal year 2024 and allow her to sign the management rep letter. Danielle made a motion to approve, and Teena seconded. Motion carried.

Visitor Bureau Updates

Grace provided a handout of the budget. Danielle made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Kavita. The budget was unanimously approved.

Information was sent to ABSS, Private, and Home Schools and shared via Peach Jar. The TDA received one application for this scholarship from Zoe Dean, a current Alamance Burlington Early College student. Grace mentioned that this student provided all the necessary information. The board reviewed the scholarship application, and Danielle motioned to approve and Teena seconded to award Zoe Dean the scholarship. The motion was unanimously approved.

Grace discussed the Animal Park's previous grant awarded for use of funds from February-April 2024 in the amount of \$10,000. The board previously approved the grant for digital advertising with a 30-mile market radius from the facility along with the construction of signage along Highway 62. The Animal Park did not begin their campaign until March (with continuance through May). Grace spoke with the Animal Park and reminded them that approved grants could not overlap with any new grant submissions. Therefore, the board suggested they will not get reimbursement for their advertising efforts as approved through for April.

Grace provided a handout of 4 grant applications, including Alamance Parks, DMDC (Mebane Main Street), Alamance Arts, and Animal Park.

Grants:

Alamance Parks: This is a re-application of a previous grant in the amount of \$10,000 to promote the observation tower at Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area, which was not used. Jamie stated the tower's design had to be changed, and the cost of materials increased by more than \$200,000. The previously awarded grant expired during the cost reevaluation. Construction has begun on the observation tower, which must be completed before February 2025. They are expecting to complete the tower in the Fall 2024. Alamance Parks is re-applying for the grant for advertising leading up to the tower's completion and opening.

DMDC (Mebane Main Street): They are requesting \$9,300. The grant would be for a 6-month Google ad campaign, a social ad campaign, and a 3-month online streaming TV campaign.

Alamance Arts: Requesting \$10,000 for The Life and Art of Charles M. Schulz exhibit. The grant would be used for Google Ad Words, social media, geo-targeting, digital marketing with Our State, and digital billboards in the last quarter of 2024. The exhibit would start in November and run through January 17, 2025.

Danielle moved to approve Alamance Parks, DMDC, and Alamance Arts; Kavita seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Animal Park: Requesting \$10,000. The grant will be used for new Park signs at the entrance to the park and the building inside the park. The signage cost is \$4,000. They would use WFMY, social media, and streaming platforms for digital marketing and local advertising through billboards and publications. Digital advertising markets must be 30 miles from the property. Danielle motioned to approve \$4,000 for new signs, \$4,200 for digital marketing, and \$1,800 for social media with provided receipts. Teena seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Rachel Kelly with the City of Burlington reached out regarding recommendations for their board. Grace also suggested the opportunity to have the TDA's work together to leverage funds in the best possible way so that we do not duplicate the same activities when marketing/advertising.

The City of Burlington is currently an active agent on our contract with Placer AI. With the TDA's renewal contract, Placer will not offer this option to outside organizations/municipalities to be included. Grace reported that both Main Street directors for the Burlington Downtown Corporation and Mebane Main Street have resigned and the positions are open.

We will continue our contracts with ITI Digital (event sourcing), Cision (media monitoring) and Simpleview (CRM/CMS).

Opportunities for video creation are available through Our State and Visit NC. Visit NC takes on 4 to 5 clients annually, and Grace hopes we on selected this year. Most of the opportunities with Visit NC are selected through a lottery based on interest.

America 250 NC is a new initiative through the Department of Cultural Resources. Grace is working with Alamance Battleground, Mebane Historical Museum, and various others interested in history who are interested in being on a committee. This initiative would tell the stories from the American Revolution through today. Grace hopes to work with them on marketing and branding under America 250 NC. Once a committee is established, a resolution must be passed to be officially part of the America 250 NC program. Alamance Battleground has an upcoming event under this program. Grant opportunities are available to non-profits as well.

An agreement with Fishing University has been confirmed to film this fall. Episodes will be on the Outdoor Channel, CBS Sports, and World Fishing Network in the first quarter of 2025. They will be filming at Lake Mackintosh. They will also provide us with the content for our use. Also included is to arrange a time with a local high school for a 1-hour program about the outdoors. The sponsorship cost was \$7,500 along with accommodations and limited meals. This was previously approved by the board.

Visitation data according to Placer AI: Majority of visitors are from NC. After North Carolina, following are states we received the most visitors from: Virginia, Georgia, New York, Florida, South Carolina, Maryland, and New Jersey.

North Carolina Field and Family released sponsored editorial highlighting Agritourism this month. The Piedmont Farm tour occurred last weekend. Our State released sponsored editorial highlighting three outdoor itineraries for exploring Alamance County, which can be viewed online.

Grace reported on combined social media that we have had a 72% growth year over year in the first quarter, along with a 58% growth year over year in engagements on social. In the first quarter, we also had 597 media mentions of our area, with Buc-ees at the top, followed by the Netflix show 50/50 Flip. In the first quarter, there were more than 228,000 engagements of people looking at events in the area and learning more about our area on our website, which is ahead of last year. We are currently promoting the Dogwood Festival, which is the last Saturday in April, and the Carousel Festival, which is the first weekend in May. We have been promoting these festivals throughout North Carolina and Northern Virginia. Representatives from Mebane and Burlington have also been on WCHL in Chapel Hill promoting the festivals. National Tourism Week is May 20-24. If anyone is interested in that campaign and wants to co-brand, Destination International has branding tools you can add to your posts to celebrate National Tourism Week.

Reed reported on new businesses that have opened in the area. McKays in Mebane buys, sells, and trades books, music, videos, and games. The Mediterranean Deli has reopened in Elon, Halls at Burch Bridge Restaurant has opened near The Valley, and Crush Superfoods has opened in Burlington.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.