

Rock Hill/York County CVB Board of Commissioners Meeting
York County/Rock Hill Airport
September 27, 2023 | 8:00 am
MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

- **Board:** David Angel, Elizabeth Bowers, Denise Cubbedge, Amy Gonzalez, Laurie Helms, Chip Hutchison, Mark Van Sickle, and Lamar Thompson
- **Staff:** Andy Clinton, Allison Cleveland, Kaylin Dettman, Jordan McCraw, Cortney Peterson, Andrew Sapochak, Mallory Snyder, and Madelyn Strader

CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS: Amy Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 8:05am and asked to begin with the Destination Marketing Fee update to allow for a quorum.

DESTINATION MARKETING FEE: Cortney Peterson referenced the Summer Preferred Hotel meeting in August that included Dr. Cooper from York Technical College, who shared insights on a strong workforce and how York Tech can play a role in employee training, continuing education, and employee retention. Andrea Barnette with Rock Hill Parks, Recreation & Tourism (Rock Hill PRT) also spoke at the meeting. Cortney continued in sharing that hotel site visits have been brought back and shared a sample survey. The first set of visits recently took place, where the City of Rock Hill provided bus transportation for the group who visited five of the Preferred Hotels. The intention is to visit all the Preferred Hotels within the next six to seven months as part of the yearly rotation. Cortney shared that a version of the survey will also be given to guests whose rooms we secure in an effort to gain insight into a true guest experience. Hotels were given new plaques, as well as table tents with QR codes that will be positioned within the common areas to get more traction for the website.

Cortney continued in discussing DMF collections, sharing that we exceeded year over year, closing out the 2023 FY with a 17% increase. Everything has been invoiced, and staff is only waiting on one payment from May. In reviewing marketing trends for June – August, she noted occupancy and revenue per available rooms were down and likely due to weather-related tournament cancellations, but the average daily rate was up. Cortney highlighted the collected fees and aging summary and brought attention to the Holiday Inn who filed bankruptcy. It was noted that we had an agreement for comp rooms through the end of this past fiscal year, but we don't anticipate collecting the outstanding balance of \$4,800, so Andy is working on a solution to get it cleaned up within Quick Books.

Chip Hutchison asked if the site visits were something new as a result of our partnership agreement with Rock Hill Parks, Recreation & Tourism. Andy mentioned that the City had once completed the site visits when they operated their Host Hotel Program. Chip asked if there was a way to highlight hotels who exceed a certain threshold within the grading system. Cortney added that she will not be completing surveys herself, but she will be grading them based on their responsiveness.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES: Andy referenced not printing out the minutes since they're emailed in advance and made available through a QR code. David Angel moved to approve the minutes; Denise Cubbedge seconded, and all were in favor.

APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT: Amy provided the report and referenced the presentation slides. She began by highlighting the revenue side and touched on municipality revenue streams. To date, nothing has actualized, as we will see the revenue stream come in the Spring of 2024. The breakdown of municipality funding shows Rock Hill providing 20% of municipality funding from A-Tax, followed by Fort Mill at 18%, with the other municipalities at or below 4%. She also referenced that 55% is from York County. We have received \$75,000 of the \$322,000 from York County Accommodations Tax, which will come through on a monthly basis.

Amy continued in sharing that we were awarded \$140,000 through the South Carolina Parks, Recreation & Tourism's (SCPRT) Emerging Destination Grant. We will begin submitting for reimbursement soon. She also referenced \$15,000 of the \$50,000 SCPRT Star Grant was recently utilized for the youth football event.

Amy then switched over to expenditures, highlighting costs associated with a 2-month internship, audit expenses, hotel reporting, website maintenance, and the Annual Event/Taste Trail Kick Off. Event expenses included \$100,000 toward Bike Across SC. Andy shared that we will go over budget on both 8320 and 8582, but we will see money come through on the revenue side, so they will offset one another. It was also noted that the first quarterly check of \$87,500 was submitted to Rock Hill PRT, towards the total \$350,000.

In reviewing the bank balances, Amy shared that the South State operating account was closed out. Current balances include: First Citizens operating at \$350,957.73; Money Market account at \$669,771.17; and Quick Books First Citizens (reflective of checks and expenses) at \$324,326.91.

Denise Cubbedge made the motion to approve the treasurer's report; seconded by Mark Van Sickle.

CEO REPORT: Andy Clinton introduced the two new staff members, Andrew Sapochak, overseeing business operations and HR, and Madelyn Stader, who adds to our marketing team. Both provided brief introductions. Andy referenced the new organizational chart and mentioned Mallory's maternity leave coming up soon. He acknowledged our team being set as it relates to positions and wants to work on growth from a staff development standpoint. Andy provided meeting highlights include with both local and state organizations, as well as touched on the initiative to be a part of various boards and committees. He also shared that our CPA is finalizing our audit and will be reporting at our October board meeting.

Visit York County is taking over the York County Sports Hall of Fame. The nomination form has been added to our website. David, Lamar, and Brown are on the committee that is helping with the selection process and banquet. The plaques that have been in the Rock Hill Galleria have been moved to the Charlotte Ave. YMCA with much more visibility.

The digital kiosks are slated for downtown Fort Mill, Rock Hill, and potentially in front of the Sports & Event Center. We are getting buy-in from the municipalities for hardware and installation costs. This includes Fort Mill A-Tax funding and funding from the Old Town Association in Rock Hill. Elizabeth Bowers shared that it did come up at a Fort Mill Town Council Meeting with positive feedback. Mallory acknowledged that the kiosks will integrate with our website.

MARKETING UPDATE:

Kaylin shared that we not only hit 1 million page views for the fiscal year, but also year-to-date with 1.3 million. She continued in sharing that we shifted to more spotlights, itineraries, and highlights, and are working on a strategy to incorporate YouTube and TikTok. Amy acknowledged the 181% increase in engagement across all platforms. Kaylin mentioned that Madelyn is taking over the Buzz, while she turns some of her focus onto shorter format reels that are visually appealing, leading to increased engagement.

Mallory touched on recent partnerships with influencers, including Moms of Myrtle, Adventures Abound, and Charlotte Momma, who provided dedicated content on each municipality. She also touched on the recent placements in the Post & Courier, both locally and out of Charleston, sharing that they produced an in-depth feature on Kounter and the Friendship 9. Mallory shared there are several features planned with QC Exclusive through the end of the year, advertising within Southern Travel, and we are working with CN2 on "Savory Scoop" to promote restaurants. She also shared that digital display ads have been updated with Fall content and mentioned the print and digital signage in the new Allison Creek Park.

Mallory continued in sharing that we had a successful Taste Trail Week and kick-off event with lots of great media coverage. Chef Rob was victorious in the competition. Restaurants have provided positive feedback through the surveys and will be submitting revenue figures to determine increases in sales. The plan is to have this as an annual event. Andy acknowledged that page views increased from 10,000 to 25,000 in just one year.

Mallory concluded in touching on the partnership with Crawford, the agency who is facilitating the joint branding project with the York County Regional Chamber and York County Economic Development. After

hosting them for discovery sessions and tours, they are working on brand strategy, as well as a marketing and communications plan to be ready in November.

EVENTS UPDATE:

Jordan provided a review of the last quarter, from April through June, acknowledging that there were 67 events, producing 37 million in economic impact, with an overnight percentage over 60%. He noted that some events took place during different quarters which skewed the visuals of the reporting and highlighted two top events: Under Armour with 97% overnight and NCAAU Spring Nationals that took place in Fort Mill at the Comporium Athletic Park.

Jordan continued by highlighting the Adidas week of July 5 – 11 that generated over \$10 million in economic impact and utilized every basketball court in the county. It was noted that Adidas will be coming next year, as will Under Armour. There were a total of 18 events in July with \$20 million direct economic impact. He noted that August was all about cornhole and the \$8 million in economic impact they brought in.

Andy made note of the recent purchase of the economic impact calculator for meetings and festivals, which will prove to be an asset for the municipalities.

David shared concern over the lack of visibility for Rock Hill and York County during the recently televised events. Laurie added that they have added new signage with the City's logo in strategic locations within the Sports & Event Center for the best visibility when televised.

Jordan continued in sharing that Play Easy is a new service to post hotel discounts, restaurant promos, etc. to link back to our website and provide leads. He continued in sharing plans for US Disc Golf where Visit York County will distribute mini discs, koozies, and passports promoting the YoCo Brew Trail. He also touched on future events including a 5K run through Carowinds at night tied in with WinterFest during November of next year, as well as Battle at the Rock in December, Rock the Winds in March or April at Carowinds, the Red Bull Campus Clutch in October, and the upcoming Bicycle Across SC that starts at Velodrome but includes all of York County.

NEW BUSINESS: Andy touched on the FY24 initiatives and the 4 pillars where things fall within our strategic plan and organizational goals. Over the next month or two, he will compile things to seek direction from the board on organization-wide goals. Andy also shared that he will be presenting to Rock Hill City Council and Fort Mill Town Council before the end of this calendar year, as well as to County Council in the spring.

Denise asked about the status of Partners in Tourism. Chip shared that they are partnering in the joint marketing efforts previously discussed, and they are waiting to see how things evolve. It was noted that they are not actively fundraising and are utilizing the existing money on the right projects.

Chip mentioned an upcoming anniversary event at Catawba Bend with Forever York County.

Laurie shared that Rock Hill was featured in national magazine produced by the professional association for parks and recreation. The article focused on how parks and recreation agencies see value of combining tourism in what they do, and Rock Hill was used as a prime example.

ADJOURNMENT: Denise Cubbedge made the motion to adjourn; Laurie Helms seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:07am.