

**Rock Hill/York County CVB Board of Commissioners Meeting
Rock Hill/York County Airport | April 23, 2025 | 11:30 am**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

- **Board:** David Angel, Natalie Hoekstra, Chip Hutchison, Malinda Foster, Tommy Henry, Brian Jones, Lisa Moseley, and Lamar Thompson
- **Staff:** Allison Cleveland, Andy Clinton, Logan Elrod, Michelle Manning-Osborn, Jordan McCraw, Cortney Peterson, and Annabel Thomas

CALL TO ORDER & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION

David Angel called the meeting to order at 11:42am and opened nominations for Executive Committee. Chip Hutchison nominated Lamar Thompson. Hearing no other nominations, David moved for nominations to be closed and to accept Lamar by acclamation. Chip so moved to second, and Lamar was welcomed to the Board's Executive Committee.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

David referenced the minutes that were sent out previously and asked for a motion to approve. The motion was made by Malinda Foster and seconded by Natalie Hoekstra. All were in favor.

APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT

Approval of FY25 P&L - Natalie Hoekstra provided highlights of the P&L, beginning with income. All municipality funding has been received other than the Rock Hill Accommodations Tax which should be received soon. Allison and Andy will submit one more reimbursement request to get the \$150,000 budgeted amount. Jordan is working to submit a few more events for South Carolina Parks, Recreation & Tourism's Star Grant for sports tourism.

As for expenses, Natalie shared that they are tracking as expected, with the most notable variance being Printing & Design Production due to expenses for *Make it York County*. She noted a few larger expenses to expect that haven't been incorporated into the current P&L, which includes salaries, benefits, rent, the 4th quarter partnership with Rock Hill Parks, Recreation & Tourism, installation of the digital kiosks, and marketing partnerships, which includes Anne Springs Close Greenway.

She continued in sharing that additional projects are in place if Destination Marketing Fee collections exceed what has been budgeted and projected to occur. There is a plan to transfer some funding into the money market account at the end of the fiscal year. A motion was made and supported to approve the presented P&L by Chip Hutchison and seconded by Malinda Foster.

Approval of FY26 Budget - Natalie made a motion to approve the 2026 fiscal year budget, giving Andy Clinton the flexibility to adjust the revenues based on potential future recommendations. Andy provided some additional insight pertaining to scheduled discussions with County Council and the municipalities, as well as their corresponding decisions that are to be determined. Lisa Moseley seconded Natalie's motion and all were in favor. Andy added that the actual FY26 budget will be presented and approved at the June meeting.

HOTEL PERFORMANCE

Cortney Peterson shared Destination Marketing Fee (DMF) collections being at 93% of our \$1.2 million goal, with \$1,125,000 being invoiced. Of that amount, \$944,000 has been collected, with around \$58,000 being 60+ days past due. She and Allison have been having conversations with a delinquent hotel who is significantly behind in their payments due to changes in management and an ownership challenge, but there is no need at this time to work with them on an alternate method of payment. Cortney also noted two hotels still needing to report March numbers which will add to the slight increase YOY for the month of March.

Cortney continued in sharing hotel performance, noting statistics for the first quarter which included occupancy growth of 5%, and an Average Daily Rate (ADR) increase of 8%, equating to a 13% increase in Revenue Per Available Room. Supply was down 0.6% due to rooms being taken out of order, and Demand was up for the quarter with a 4.5% increase resulting in a 13% increase in revenue. She highlighted YOY comparisons which were explained as being related to the way event dates fell rather than lost business and also noted the conversion from the Wingate property to a Spark Hotel which was out of rotation until March 19th.

There was conversation about new hotels being slated for Riverwalk, which are part of the ownership group that Malinda is with. She noted some uncertainty with the specific locations but noted funding and conversations taking place, as well as two brands coming to Rock Hill – Hampton and Homewood. Construction relating to the Shepherd Hotel within the Guardian Building in downtown Rock Hill, as well as the new Hilton property in downtown York was also discussed, as well as an outlook for FY26.

CEO REPORT

Andy highlighted overarching topics including Board updates, with Brain Jones' position now being official, and both Charlie Ruffalo and Tommy Henry being approved and only needing to be sworn in before becoming official. He shared having an open position for Tom Audette's District 1 appointed seat due to Indira Eskieva needing to roll off the Board.

Andy referenced the strategic planning meeting with Heath from Visit Greenville as we work towards formulating a 3-year plan that will be shared at the June meeting. He highlighted the new Destination Guide and Annual Report and mentioned plans relating to the distribution process, including the addition of new locations like the YMCA. Andy shared a status update on the finish line for the cross-country and hiking trails at Catawba Bend that was constructed by Bob Doster through the Partners in Tourism Foundation, noting that there will be a special dedication ceremony at some point – possibly in the fall. Andy has met with members of County Council in an effort to continue to explain what we do, our funding model, and what they contribute to our organization, which is currently 19%.

Andy continued by sharing some recent activity relating to advocacy and awareness through the Preferred Hotel Meeting at the Greenway's Canteen, the ribbon cutting for the hotel in Downtown York, a CEO Summit through Destinations International, and Hospitality Day at the State House in Columbia with State legislators. He touched on the partnership with Winthrop Athletics and a Visit York County ice cream day at a recent baseball game that incorporated a local collaboration. The YoCo Brew Trail was launched with new branded materials and presence at local events. Andy noted staff efforts relating to DMF and marketing goals, as well as the Carolinas Classic All Star Game, Playeasy rankings (7th out of 320 for engagement), and boots-on-the-ground event presence throughout the county. David encouraged the board to share efforts with Council members.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Michelle Manning-Osborn noted recent paid advertising through social ads and Google searches that highlighted Spring festivals and events, the YoCo Brew Trail, as well as wedding venues and hotels. She discovered a way to utilize existing software that tracks the volume of those who show up in market after seeing our digital advertising, which allows us to use that data to make better decisions on our promotional efforts and strategies.

As it related to public relations, Michelle shared the Culture & Heritage Museums' feature in *QC Exclusive* and several press opportunities for St. Patrick's Day and Come-See-Me. She noted a feature on Yahoo Life that was picked up from *The Herald*, as well as coverage from influencers whose stays we paid for and coordinated. This "earned media" does not allow any guarantee or control as to what they write due to no actual form of payment.

Michelle continued in sharing website updates that included a 25% increase in views YOY, noting some of the best pages being events and festivals. Through reviewing data insights and gaining insight into what gets the most views, new fact sheets and blog posts have been created to promote heavily on social media, garnering attention from a news outlet. She also noted a meeting with the website redesign team and working towards a launch in the fall. Relating to social media, Michelle highlighted posts that did really well and noted a 25% follower growth YOY on both Facebook and Instagram.

EVENTS UPDATE

Jordan McCraw referenced several events that happened during the past quarter, including Phenom Hoops TOC and Lady Rumble which attracted over 300 teams; 173 of which were overnight travelers. College Disc Golf Championships brought in over 800 athletes from 3 NCAA divisions who utilized Camp Canaan, Westminster Park, and Winthrop's Disc Golf Course over a 7-day period. He also noted the economic impact from the Palmetto Championships through the Upper Palmetto YMCA Rays Swim Team that brought in over 2,000 competitors from throughout the state.

Annabelle provided an update on event activation to drive engagement for local business deals during tournament dates to connect with the influx of visitors. She highlighted the process of getting Playeasy pages onto the event organizer's websites that direct back to our website and include deals and discounts, as well as hotel listings and complete travel assistance and resources in a highly visible place prior to their arrival. Once in market, this leads to real-time exposure opportunities that are mobile-friendly. Placerai is then utilized to track the traffic from specific facilities to determine where people are going pre-and-post event so that we know which businesses to target for future deals and discounts.

Jordan picked back up to highlight some event leads, including the Carolina's Classic High School Basketball All Star Games that were created in Rock Hill in 1997 and hosted through 2008 before going to other markets. It includes the All Star teams from the North Carolina Coaches Association and South Carolina Coaches Association for both boys and girls. Practices will take place at 4 high schools, with the games at Catawba Ridge High School in March of 2026. Jordan also shared that he is working with the South Carolina High School League and potential venues for their Cross Country State Championships this Fall and for the future as well. He touched on recruitment efforts for the downtown York hotel and working with various departments with the County. The final recruitment efforts he touched on was with the Field of 68 College Basketball Event with Jeff Goodman from ESPN for a 24-hour show at a couple of sites across the country on the opening day of college basketball.

BOARD DISCUSSION

David mentioned the desire to have more input from everybody in order to generate thought-provoking conversation. Andy shared that during the strategic planning process, it was suggested that we look at how our meetings are structured so that we can facilitate more engagement and shared ideas to improve as an organization. David mentioned sharing our data insights with municipalities and businesses. He noted a problem of not having a community calendar. Tommy Henry added that through his role with Winthrop, they have resources to reach over 10,000 people through email newsletters to promote the YoCo Brew Trail and other destination content.

Chip Hutchison referenced Catawba Bend and the idea of better supporting the County through collaborative efforts. David provided some history on a prior failed attempt regarding a fee to support County Recreation and how we can get involved to support current and future efforts. Brian Jones referenced the Gathering Place in Tulsa which was created by a donor. Through the discussion, it was suggested that we, as a group, help raise money for amenities within County Parks so that nature can be a tourism driver. David mentioned having more programming at facilities when tournaments and events aren't happening, as well as in schools when they aren't in session and asked how Visit York County can help bridge gaps within our community and open up lines of communication to encourage collaboration. It was suggested that someone from the county provide insight and educate us so that we can be advocates.

Andy spoke on how the County is trying to grow their communications and marketing efforts and how we can support those efforts, as well as recruitment efforts. He shared that we need to work on showing how our efforts support York County Hospitality Tax funding that fully supports County Parks & Recreation. He noted that the communication and advocacy efforts extends beyond County Council to include County and City staff as well. Andy touched on the May 19th Taste of Tourism Event that takes place at the County Government Building before a County Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chip Hutchison made the motion to adjourn at 12:57pm.