

**Rock Hill/York County CVB Board of Commissioners Meeting**  
**Carowinds | December 17, 2024 | 11:30 am**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

- **Board:** David Angel, Elizabeth Bowers, Ben Boyles, Drew Corrigan, Malinda Foster, Porter Gable, Amy Gonzalez, Natalie Hoekstra, Shea Maple, Lisa Moseley, Brown Simpson, and Mark VanSickle
- **Guests:** Tommy and Carolyn Adkins, Tom Audette, Debi Cloniger, Caroline Floyd, Mitch Miller, Sydney Munn, Jenny Parrish, Mollie Rose, and Chuck Rey
- **Staff:** Allison Cleveland, Andy Clinton, Kaylin Dettman, Logan Elrod, Cortney Peterson, and Annabel Thomas

**CALL TO ORDER**

David Angel welcomed everyone and recognized guests from York County Council, York County Economic Development, the York County Regional Chamber, Rock Hill Parks, Recreation & Tourism, the Olde English District, and Winthrop University (individuals referenced above). He and Andy continued in sharing data collected from visitation to Carowinds, noting investment and growth over the years with over 2 million visitors to date during calendar year 2024. As it related to taxes during FY23, over 6 million dollars was paid to the State and 2 million dollars to York County, of which \$600,000 was in hospitality taxes. Carowinds employs over 800 residents of York County, and it was noted that SC Labor Laws allow for greater flexibility in making it a great location for employment and business investments.

**APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES**

David referenced the minutes that had been sent out previously and asked for a motion to approve. The motion was made by Porter Gable and seconded by Amy Gonzalez. All were in favor.

**APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT**

Shea Maple provided highlights of the P&L, including the accommodations tax funding that has been resolved with the Town of Fort Mill, relating to the hotels in unincorporated York County. He noted the continued monthly receipt of funding for York County accommodations tax and the upcoming submission to SCPRT for the Emerging Destination Grant. Collections of the Destination Marketing Fee are outpacing the previous year. As it related to expenses, it appears as though travel will be slightly over budget with professional development and conferences. Shea also noted the new logo and associated expenses relating to the new design of office signage and branded materials.

Mark VanSickle made a motion to approve and Porter Gable seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**HOTEL PERFORMANCE**

Cortney Peterson reviewed calendar YTD hotel occupancy performance through October. Occupancy increased 4.1%, and Average Daily Rate (ADR) increased by 3.5%. Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) showed a 7.7% growth. Due to storm damages, October experienced the highest demand for the year with a growth of 21% YOY.

Cortney reviewed the Destination Marketing Fee (DMF) Program and reported being at 69% of the annual goal at \$699,000. Of that figure, \$503,000 had been collected. She noted that the Wingate Inn was not operating due to a conversion to a Spark Hotel. Even so, the DMF increase was 37% YTD.

Cortney recognized the two hoteliers in the room and shared a holiday gift that would later be delivered to other participating Preferred Hotels.

**APPROVAL OF PIT FOUNDATION REQUEST**

David and Andy reported on the \$52,880 within the Partners In Tourism Foundation's account. They noted that the foundation was created when the Panthers were going to be part of the community, but with the shifted plans, the foundation component was no longer needed. As a result, the executive committees of both the Partners In Tourism Foundation and Visit York County discussed the dissolution of the foundation, with the funds to be utilized for the unified brand and marketing assets associated with Make It York County, the collaboration between Visit York County, York County Economic Development, and the York County Regional Chamber.

There was discussion pertaining to how staff consulted with the CPA to ensure compliance with the bylaws as it related to dissolution, as well as how to properly document the transfer of funds. The proposal to transfer the funds to Visit York County's operating account to fund the project was approved by Executive Committee and presented for board approval.

Elizabeth Bowers made the motion to consolidate the accounts by transferring the funds to the Visit York County account, and Shea Maple seconded the motion.

There was discussion about contributions from the chamber and economic development, as well as how the County, Winthrop, and other partners will support and utilize the collaborative brand for recruitment and additional purposes. Elizabeth Bowers called the question on the motion, and all were in favor to move the money.

## **CEO REPORT**

**Organization Engagement:** Andy provided an update on recent engagement which included representation the Winthrop Eagle Club Board and The Arts Center at Fountain Park Board. He recognized Logan for serving on a panel discussion on marketing with state-wide tourism organizations with the SC Travel & Coalition. Andy also acknowledged being featured in a Post & Courier article on the mobile location data we utilize.

**Year-End Review:** Andy touched on accomplishments from the year, including Taste of Tourism, partnership with Winthrop University, Make it York County, rebranding, and software platforms. He elaborated a bit on Playeasy and how it ultimately helps businesses with the deals and discounts. Andy continued by noting the Hospitality Series being utilized to help educate our hospitality partners, with the most recent one focusing on customer service. He also touched on things moving forward with the refreshed website and kiosks, as well as the new hotel being built in York, and looking forward at incorporating cross-country and disc golf at Catawba Bend.

## **EVENTS UPDATE**

Annabel Thomas highlighted the NCAA Cross-Country Regionals, noting over 50 universities and 4,000 visitors which equated to 1,800 room nights being sold and an economic impact of \$600,000. She also touched on event activation with the deals and discounts wristbands for Palmetto Volleyball and the Eagles Nest at Winthrop Coliseum where we are working to increase fan engagement.

## **MARKETING**

Kaylin Dettman spoke about paid advertising and earned media, including recent activity as a result of the efforts of our new PR firm. She referenced Andy's upcoming podcast and recent interviews, as well as hosting multiple travel writers. Logan Elrod reported on YTD website data, including over 2 million website views, which was a 21% increase for the calendar year. He also shared some recent content that had been used to drive people to the website. The collaboration with Chef Rob and the password for entry into his new speakeasy received the most clickthrough's from social to the website, with 10,000 page views in a week. Logan continued in noting the significance of short form video and getting 515,000 views where we showcased video assets that highlighted the County. He shared that 68% of Gen Z book travel through TikTok, so we are continuing to utilize it while we can. Logan shared that the YoCo Buzz is sent out to 17,000 subscribers every Thursday morning to engage with locals and help partners boost their events. We continue to see an above average open rate at 55%.

## **BOARD & STAFF RECOGNITION**

Andy recognized members rolling off the board and thanked them for their service over the years. Mark VanSickle and Amy Gonzalez were presented with appreciation plaques. Denise Cubbedge, Laurie Helms, and Brown Simpson were acknowledged in their absences. Andy also acknowledged Kaylin Dettman's resignation and touched on her impact over her four years with the organization. Elizabeth Bowers encouraged the board to support and put forth the resources to attract and retain great talent.

## **CAROWINDS PRESENTATION**

Drew Corrigan (Director of Operations), Mark Rockage (Entertainment Production Manager), and James Sidler (Construction and Facilities Manager) spoke on behalf of Carowinds, touching on the history, impact, investments, and future projects of the park. Two of the more noteworthy investment projects to come to life in 2025 and 2026 include a swim-up bar on the York County side of the park, as well as a record-breaking water ride, and two major family rides within Camp Snoopy.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:08pm, and attendees were asked to step outside for a character send off and photo opportunity, as well as a bird's eye view of the park.