

Rock Hill/York County CVB Board of Commissioners Meeting
Rock Hill/York County Airport | June 17, 2025 | 11:30 am

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

- **Board:** Ben Boyles, Natalie Hoekstra, Chip Hutchison, Malinda Foster, Shea Maple, Lisa Moseley, Charlie Ruffalo, and Lamar Thompson
- **Staff:** Allison Cleveland, Andy Clinton, Logan Elrod, Michelle Manning-Osborn, Jordan McCraw, Cortney Peterson, and Annabel Thomas

CALL TO ORDER

Shea Maple called the meeting to order at 11:41am.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

Shea referenced the minutes that were sent out previously and asked for a motion to approve. The motion was made by Chip Hutchison 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 and current account balances - Checking: \$451,205.07; Money Market: \$922,796.35; and Credit Card: \$4,376.69. As it related to income, we are awaiting a check for \$93,822 for the State Emerging Destination Grant. If it is not received before July 1st, our CPA will make adjustments to reflect FY25. She continued in sharing that three hotels have yet to report for May, which will likely reflect an additional \$5,000. Natalie noted there being expected expenses to come, but we are in a good, overall position. The more significant expenses include kiosk installation estimated at \$70,000, partnership agreements with area high schools, and a new tourism video for advertising opportunities. Natalie asked for a motion to approve the FY25 budget with additional expenses outlined and to finalize an agreed upon transfer amount (by Andy and Executive Committee) for remaining funds to be moved to the Money Market account in mid-to-late July. Malinda Foster made the motion, and Lamar Thompson seconded the motion.

Approval of FY26 Budget – Natalie shifted to the budget for FY26 and noted revenue increases across the board, with the exception of Fort Mill Accommodations Tax due to how those funds were remitted. She referenced a more aggressive increase with the Destination Marketing Fee collections to accommodate growth and expenses, and also mentioned an additional line item for York County Sports Hall of Fame revenue. Notable differences in expenses included salaries and bonuses/incentives associated with additional staff, as well as enhanced hotel and marketing analytics software, additional website and PR software, and adding the York County Sports Hall of Fame and Make It York County as line-item expenses. She also noted the larger dollar amount of DMF going to Rock Hill PRT due to higher collections, and there being more creative advertising opportunities with organizations like the Anne Springs Close Greenway. It was also noted that outsourced PR has been removed, which results in for more in-house efforts via new software and staff. Charlie Ruffalo made a motion to approve the FY26 budget, and Chip Hutchison seconded the motion.

HOTEL PERFORMANCE

Cortney Peterson shared that we exceeded our Destination Marketing Fee (DMF) collection goals for the year, hitting 1.3 million invoiced and 1.18 collected, with 3 hotels still to report for May. Outstanding invoices beyond 60 days was less than 3%. She noted that April marks the first month of 2025 to fall behind 2024 collections, which was due to some events shifting months and Easter falling in March of last year. Cortney touched on trends for the calendar year which showed 62.1% Occupancy and \$105 Average Daily Rate. Demand went down slightly, but overall Revenue was up. April saw the biggest occupancy drop of 11.9%, but May's figures look to be similar to last year, and June has been strong.

Cortney then shared information on the new hotel reporting software scheduled to begin on July 1st. She noted that Key Data not only provides hotel data but will also include data on short-term rentals for the York County market, as well as data on forward-looking dates. This data and indicators will be beneficial in our relationships with the hotels, as well as for investors looking to buy or build. It is anticipated that this data will also prove beneficial when having deeper conversations to incorporate short-term rentals into a DMF platform.

CEO REPORT

Andy provided an update on board make-up, reminding everyone of the open seat for District 1/Tega Cay area. A representative with the Carolina Show Ski Team has submitted her application. Andy also shared that Drew Corrigan with

Carowinds has resigned from the board after receiving a promotion that will take his family to Texas. Conversations have taken place in an effort to find another Carowinds' representative. Andy then shared that Annabelle Thomas recently resigned from her position of Destination Services and expressed appreciation for her work since joining staff in August.

The new strategic plan was highlighted, including the overarching goals and objectives relating to those goals. These included Tourism Industry Leader, Destination Marketing, Organization Sustainability, and Increased Economic Impact. Andy touched on the success of our Taste of Tourism event that included strong representation of County Council and staff. He also recognized Jordan for completing the Chamber's Leadership York County program and being recognized as the VIP of the class. He highlighted relationship-building efforts to secure increased funding through Rock Hill and York County Accommodations Tax and noted being close to or over 100% on FY25 goals as we begin the process of conducting performance reviews with staff.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Michelle Manning-Osborn noted recent paid advertising through social ads and Google searches. She shared data relating to the number of in-market visits by those who saw the spring ads – out of 4,000 people, almost 50 showed up in market from outside of the Charlotte area. Greenville, Raleigh, and Atlanta continue to be strong markets for us. She noted how the data helps to make better decisions on where and what to advertise, as well as retargeting opportunities for return visits. Michelle continued by highlighting recent PR that included the Ag + Art Festival. She noted an increase of 23.6% in website page views over mid-April and also highlighted the interactive map for the new website.

New software was referenced, including Bandwango, which allows for digital trails (a coffee trail is being created), as well as Muck Rack which provides access to contact information for travel writers, bloggers, and news outlets rather than working through an agency. Logan Elrod highlighted some of the high-engagement content being pushed out through our social channels and touched on strategy and relationships with content creators compared to paid influencers. As a result of this strategy, we gained 3,400 followers, which was 360% more than the same time period last year. Logan also noted trends relating to short form video content and the increases we've seen in views.

EVENTS UPDATE

Jordan McCraw provided some YOY comparisons for May. While there were 23 events in May of 2024 compared to 32 events in May of 2025, there was a noticeable, yet expected, decrease in economic impact due to BMX Worlds. He referenced several top-producing events that happened, including the Phenom Basketball Memorial Day Classic that had 184 teams with over 2,000 participants of which 68% were overnight visitors. The rodeo at Black Hawk Ranch was also noted, including the impressive website traffic from the coverage and blog post. Attendance totaled around 9,500 over the weekend. Jordan also highlighted the first Adidas event at the Rock Hill Sports & Event Center that brought 1,100 competitors from all over the country, which equated to 1.3 million in economic impact.

From a recruitment standpoint, Jordan referenced Cam Newton's CIN 7-on7 national camp event that would take place in the fall at South Pointe High School. He has been working with a USA Netball developmental camp out of Charlotte for an event in August that will also incorporate curriculum at Rock Hill High School. Jordan also touched on having a new contact for track and cross-country events. There is potential to host regional and state qualifiers at Winthrop in April or May of 2026. He shared details about Field of 68's opening day of college basketball with a triple-header at the Rock Hill Sports & Event Center in November. Four of the six contracts have been signed, and we are working on different partnership ideas and activities to get people in the stands for the first game to start at 8am. It was also noted that Andy and Brian Jones recorded a podcast with the Playeasy event platform and discussed the partnership between our organizations, as well as with area restaurants and hoteliers. The video is used to market the platform to other destinations. Jordan also touched on the numbers associated with our Deals & Discounts and events pages that Annabelle had worked on, as well as creative ways to get in front of the visitor.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Allison touched on the value of keeping event recruitment top of mind so that it can be brought into day-to-day conversations that may generate event leads. Andy encouraged the board to share any ideas that could lead to partnerships and events, as well as to share photos if they're at a festival or new restaurant. There was discussion about residents utilizing our website as a resource and creating content with a storytelling mindset that's geared towards members of our community. Destination merchandise was discussed, as was SC 250.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlie Ruffalo made the motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by Ben Boyles at 12:58pm.