

SALISBURY
ROWAN COUNTY
Authentic North Carolina

SALISBURY-ROWAN COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
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Name: Salisbury-Rowan County Convention & Visitor Bureau Board **Date of Meeting:** February 10, 2016

Board Chair: Bill Burgin **Date of Next Meeting:** March 9, 2016

Board Members Attending: Vivian Hopkins, Steve Hall, Teresa Harris, Whitney Wallace, Tony Shaw, Boris Bunich, Bill Burgin, Krista Osterweil, Mark Lewis, Thad Howell, Dan Peters, Craig Pierce, Darrell Blackwelder, Suzanne Jones

Tourism Staff: James Meacham, Lesley Pullium, Tara Ludwig, Melissa Murguz, Allyson Teague

Attending Guests, Liaisons, and Officials: Karen Alexander (Mayor), Chris Cavanaugh (CVB Consultant: Magellan Strategies)

Not Attending: Barbara Perry, Brian Miller, Diana Moghrabi, Justin Dionne, Kelly Alexander, Michelle Patterson

Bill Burgin called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

James Meacham conveyed the meeting would be a checkup and conversation with Magellan Strategies Consultant, Chris Cavanaugh, to review where the CVB is and where the organization is heading in the future.

Cavanaugh stated that the meeting should take place as a strategic dialogue among Board members with the following objectives:

- (1) Review current vision, strategy and goals
- (2) Review overall strategy for growing visitor economy
- (3) Current areas of focus and strategies
- (4) Generate ideas and thoughts for future guidance

The Board reviewed a handout that would be an exercise for the strategic dialogue. The handout asked the members to list three primary passions for potential visitors and complete the following equation:

> This existing destination (Salisbury/Rowan County) asset plus _____ would make the community a more compelling place to visit.

Cavanaugh stated that one of the main reasons people travel is a direct result of certain passions. Passions are defined as the things that motivate someone to travel to various locations. The Board was encouraged to complete the handout as the strategic conversation developed.

Cavanaugh continued with a PowerPoint presentation to highlight the main points of the discussion.

(1) What do passions mean?

> Passions are what individuals personally invest in to travel.

(2) CVB Goals and Strategy

> The goal and vision is to increase the economic impact of the visitor economy. The ten year goal established in 2013 was to grow the visitor economy in Salisbury to a \$250 million annual impact. The numbers from the state of North Carolina through 2014 show Salisbury with a \$154 million economic impact. The result is a need for a little less than \$100 million to be generated by 2023.

> The overall destination development and marketing for the CVB is to incentivize visitation.

(3) There are four primary CVB focus areas.

- > Destination leadership and support
- > Destination marketing
- > Destination development
- > Visitor services

(4) VISITOR SERVICES

> For many destination marketing organizations, visitor services represent the basic types of things the CVB does to support the visitor. Some examples of these efforts are maintaining front desk staff and printing brochures and maps to hand out. However, the CVB carries out an expanded version of visitor services with the kiosk system, trolley tours, partner services support, and digital services, which reach over 1.2 million website visitors a year. This area will change dramatically over the next twelve months with the new digital infrastructure. Furthermore, the CVB offers wayfinding and continuous partner engagement as services.

(5) DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

> There are a number of product investments over the past few years that the CVB has been successful in implementing. Wayfinding, the trolley program, the Lee Street Theatre partnership effort, the Fairground event center, Visitor Center improvements, public art, and even Christmas decorations are some examples of these investments.

> Product expansions are reflective of multiple sectors coming together for product development. The Rail Walk project is an example of several sectors coming together to create something important for the visitor experience and the visitor economy. In addition, the CVB has expanded the trolley program into a destination development asset, which drives overnight visits. The trolley tours have morphed into an attraction and enhance partnership marketing efforts. A key strategy is to drive overnight visitation, which can be difficult for the CVB since Salisbury is a destination that can be visited in one day for many people.

(6) DESTINATION MARKETING

> Destination marketing is where the CVB brings the overarching strategy of incentivizing visitation on an everyday basis. There were 2500 room nights in 2015, which added over \$1.2 million to the local economy. This is a direct result of incentives provided.

> One of the key ideas is to capture visitor passions by knowing what the CVB is capable of doing and also understanding what the CVB is not capable of doing. In a lot of ways the CVB has to act as a one-stop shop to maximize visitation and leverage visitor passions. The key investment the CVB will make over the next year in is digital infrastructure with the new website. This implementation will make it easier for staff, partners and visitors alike.

(7) DESTINATION LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT

> Leadership represents areas where the CVB is providing a leadership for community opportunities and for growing the visitor economy. The Rowan County branding effort is an example of the CVB supporting something important to the community. In addition, the CVB is providing leadership and support for the Rowan Arts Council and the Gateway Building as a whole.

> Four key areas under support include general county and municipal support, education, sports and recreation, and partners. These are areas where the CVB is providing support, but not playing a leadership role. The model of support provided by the CVB encourages lots of requests from community partners for support. Due to this model the CVB has to be comfortable with saying “no” unless the request is genuinely a good opportunity for tourism.

(8) Passions and Return on Investment

- > The CVB must pay attention to opportunity costs and decide if a project is worth pursuing.
- > The CVB should review the returns on an investment.
- > The CVB should identify the intersection of the visitor passions versus the community passions.

(9) Road Ahead and Resource Allocation

- > The CVB allocates resources to grow the visitor economy through visitor services, destination development, destination marketing, and destination leadership and support.
- > The CVB manages a strategy of incentivizing visitation.
- > The CVB allocates resources to maximize returns on investments.
- > The CVB works to capitalize on visitor passions.

Cavanaugh invited the group to share thoughts about how well the CVB is executing the four main focus areas and where the potential challenges may be for the road ahead.

Mark Lewis conveyed it is important to define what tourism is. Some visitors come to Salisbury for overnight trips while some visitors are only in town for a day. Bill Burgin stated it is a constant challenge to encourage visitors to stay overnight because while Salisbury is easy to get to, as a central location, it is also easy come and go within a day. Boris Bunich expressed it is important that visitors be informed about the variety of destinations that can be reached from Salisbury during overnight stays.

Cavanaugh informed the group that as the CVB's resources grow it will be harder to make decisions about requests and various projects, so it is important to continue executing the Master Plan with this strategic discussion in mind.

Meacham encouraged the Board members to think about the ideas presented and prepare additional thoughts for the meeting in March.

There were no questions. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Allyson Teague, SRCCVB Office Assistant