

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: March 9, 2016

Board Chair: Bill Burgin

Date of Next Meeting: April 13, 2016

Board Members Attending: Boris Bunich, Bill Burgin, Mark Lewis, Paula Bohland, Krista Osterweil, Thad Howell, Dan Peters, Craig Pierce, Suzanne Jones, Darrell Blackwelder, Barbara Perry, Michelle Patterson, Vivian Hopkins, Steve Hall, Kelly Alexander, Justin Dionne, Whitney Wallace

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

Attending Guests, Liaisons, and Officials: Karen Alexander (Mayor)

Not Attending: Brian Miller, Tony Shaw

Bill Burgin called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

Motion: Krista Osterweil made the motion for the approval of the minutes.

Second: Mark Lewis

Motion: Approved

Burgin informed the group that it was Boris Bunich's last day on the SRCVB Board. Burgin thanked Bunich for four years of service. Bunich expressed appreciation for the opportunity and thanked the Board.

James Meacham introduced Lauren Litaker, the new Director of Digital Marketing and Content for the SRCCVB as of March 1st, 2016. Litaker worked as an intern for the CVB four years ago while completing a degree from Appalachian State University. Meacham stated that Litaker will be critical to the CVB's digital infrastructure project. Lauren joins the CVB from the CRVA.

Financial Report

Mark Lewis presented the current financial report to the Board. Cash on hand is a total of \$214,921, which is up \$39,200 over the month of January. The Branding Loan payable is about 45% complete, which is in line with where it should be. There have been formatting changes made to the balance sheet and year to date financials in order to make it easier to read. Lewis reviewed the new format with the group.

Motion: Craig Pierce made the motion for the approval of the financial report.

Second: Thad Howell

Motion: Approved

Capital Committee

The Capital Committee has expended money for public art, centerpiece and the wayfinding signage project. Barbara Perry shared a request from the Public Art Committee for support to implement a George Washington sculpture to be placed in front of the Rowan Museum. The sculpture will accompany the May celebration of Washington's visit. The marker will give credit to those giving money to support the sculpture. The Capital Committee approved \$10,000 in funding support.

Lewis thanked Bill Burgin for pro bono architectural work for the Rail Walk project. A meeting with the city has taken place to devise a funding plan in order to move forward.

Master Plan

Barbara Perry updated the group on the Master Plan Committee. The group did not meet this month. The Master Plan Committee is still interested in working on an Arts & Agriculture Festival to take place in the fall of 2017 or spring of 2018. In addition, the committee met with leaders in the community and the Mayor to present a plan for cultural arts for the future. Another meeting will take place on March 30th. The 8th annual Sculpture show will be installed beginning March 31st. All four colleges participated in the show again this year and there were more requests for sculptures than the committee could afford.

Destination Marketing

Tara Ludwig updated the Board on the destination marketing program of work.

The trolleys are off to a solid start for 2016. New tours are in the process of being created, which will focus on producing more packages and more overnight stays in the area.

There are two packages on the market with the NC Transportation Museum, including the Easter Bunny Express and the N&W Class J #611 Excursions. There are already 300 room nights associated with the #611 Excursions. In addition, the grand opening of New Sarum Brewing is set for April 16th and a new package has been created in anticipation for the event.

Lauren Litaker updated the group on digital marketing. There is a steady increase in the total digital reach. The main focus areas are the CRM, CMS, and design of the new website.

Ludwig provided the marketing support report for the year. The total expense for all group support is \$32,574 for fiscal year 15-16 with an event overnight visitor related economic impact of \$222,483, which is about a \$7 to \$1 return on investment.

With regard to group business the Rowan Cabarrus Community College Fine Arts Conference recently took place and was a big success with an over 100 room nights. The CVB is continuing to work with the AACA for the event in June and Scenic America for an event in October, which will fall around October Tour.

In addition, the Little League World Series Regional Softball Tournaments will be held in Rowan County July 21st-24th. This event would most likely take the hotel market to full occupancy for the event time period. James Meacham stated the funding support for the Little League event would consist of about 50% for room nights, which is in line with what the CVB typically does for other large group events. With around 800 rooms needed, the CVB would be offering support of around \$35,000, which would be utilized as “the host sponsor” for housing the visiting teams in local hotels.

Motion: Dan Peters made the motion for the approval of the CVB seeking partnership with the county to receive initial funding for the Little League Regional Softball Tournament. CVB would request County to pay the incentive upfront and the CVB reimburse the County over the course of FY16-17.

Second: Barbara Perry

Motion: Approved

Rowan County Branding Initiative

Michelle Patterson updated the Board on the Rowan County branding initiative. Chandler thinks has been very busy with research, including 1500 residents completing surveys or interviews. Including focus groups and one-on-one interviews, the total reach for branding research is around 2,000 people. This is a fantastic number from a statistical standpoint. Steve Chandler and the Chandler thinks team will be in Salisbury on March 23rd to present the research results to the Branding Task Force and will present the same information to the community at a breakfast event on March 24th at the NC Transportation Museum.

The event will be funded through the branding program and is a part of the community engagement and will serve as an opportunity to display new marketing resources, digital assets and video developed from the expansion programs launched by the CVB.

CVB Resource Allocation Strategy Conversation

Meacham gave the Board an overview of what the CVB is looking at while heading into a new budget season. The overall goal of the CVB is to grow the local economy. Right now the visitor economy is generating around \$3 million in new money for Rowan County per week. The goal is to grow this number to \$5 million per week. The overall strategy is to incentivize visitation.

Meacham presented a four step process for resource allocation. The four areas of focus are leadership, marketing, development, and services for visitors.

Visitor services are approached in three ways, including baseline, expanded and destination. Baseline includes the basic infrastructure of answering a visitor's inquiry and providing a capacity to answer the question. The expanded platform includes kiosks, welcome bags for groups, or other ways to take an extra step toward assisting visitors. The destination platform addresses a broader ability to accommodate visitors, including the wayfinding signage project.

Development has been broken down into two areas, including product investments and product expansion. Product investment is something the CVB controls, including signage, public art, etc. The larger product expansion projects are integrated developments that have multiple parties involved. The trolley program is an example of a product expansion as it has grown and incorporated partnerships with several local organizations.

Destination marketing helps to support partners digitally without having to include extra funding. By creating packages with partners, the visitor's experience is maximized and creates a larger return on investment. About 80% of partner funding support requests are approved. The Board is invited to revisit the policy around destination marketing funding support at next month's meeting in order to address any suggested changes.

Meacham stated the resource allocation process has been working well overall. Justin Dionne shared how important the relationship with the CVB has been for Lee Street Theatre and the overall growth experienced. Dionne stressed that partnership marketing takes a sense of creativity by each organization to develop new opportunities, events, and packages in order to incentivize visitation in Rowan County and receive CVB funding support.

With no additional business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:
Allyson Teague, SRCCVB Office Assistant