

**Rowan County Tourism Development Authority &  
Salisbury Tourism & Cultural Development Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, December 15, 2010**

**Members Present:** Jerry Chandler, Millie Cress, Dave Redden, Wesley Thompson, Gretchen Witt, Steve Hall, Raymond Coltrain, Andrew Waters, Michelle Patterson, Kelly Alexander; Kristen Trexler, Melissa Murguz, James Meacham and Lesley Pullium, Staff

**Not Attending:** Brian Miller

**STCDC Members:** Krista Osterweil, Mark Lewis, Gail Elder-White, Joe Morris

**Guests:** Eddie Carrick, Allred & Carrick, CPA's, Buzz Bissell, Bissell Designs

**Call to Order:** Chairman, Michelle Patterson called the RCTDA meeting to order at 11:20 AM.

James Meacham gave the invocation.

**Meeting Agenda:**

Motion: Steve Hall made a motion for approval of the meeting agenda.

Second: Dave Redden

Motion: Approved

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Motion: Millie Cress made the motion for approval of the November 2010 regular meeting minutes.

Second: Gretchen Witt

Motion: Approved

**Committee Reports:**

**Budget & Finance Committee**

James Meacham gave the budget and finance report for the month of November 2010 noting that occupancy tax receipts in September and October 2010 were slightly down however if the outstanding taxes from the Travelodge are added in then September would actually be flat and October would be flat to slightly up compared to the previous year. When the outstanding taxes are remitted the overall taxes will be up slightly so the trend is still holding fairly solid as revenue continues to improve.

Meacham reviewed the balance sheet and profit and loss statement reporting year to date revenue of \$266,000. Between Occupancy taxes, Trolley Operations and what is currently being called Cooperative Advertising, the bulk of that was the STCDC's investment in the marketing program for the joint committee.

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Other revenue is primarily ticket revenue received for tickets sales for community partner events such as the OctoberTour and Symphony concerts. This income is basically a wash as the community partner is reimbursed for the ticket sales minus a small processing fee for the cost of the debit/credit card services.

Total marketing and visitor services expenses year to date is \$143,000, total administration expenses of \$61,000 for total expenses of \$204,000 with a net income of \$61,000 which is almost an equivalency of the \$62,500 check deposited in November from STCDC for the joint marketing. From an administrative expenses standpoint expenses were flat and inline with where they should be at this time in the fiscal budget year.

Motion: Raymond Coltrain made the motion for approval of the financial report.

Second: Kelly Alexander

Motion: Approved

Meacham presented a proposed amended budget for consideration that reflects changes in the revenue section to add the line item of Joint Marketing at \$150,000, Trolley Operations revised upward to \$50,000 and Tourism Master Plan at \$25,000. Total revenue would increase to \$556,700.

In the expense section under marketing & visitor services a new item has been added for joint marketing at \$200,000, \$50,000 has been put in for the tourism master plan, an increase to the trolley marketing line item and an increase in the postage fulfillment line item along with a few small increases in other line items.

Total marketing and visitor services expenses \$422,238 and administration expense at \$134,462, keeping with the balance budget requirements for total expenses of \$556,700.

Steve Hall inquired about increase in health insurance. Meacham confirmed that rates did go up between 17-18%. Staff did receive quotes from several companies including the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and stayed with BCBS of NC who offered the best option with basically the same coverage as the prior year and the 17% increase in cost.

Motion: Dave Redden made a motion for approval of the amended budget as proposed.

Second: Andrew Waters

Motion: Approved

James Meacham introduced Eddie Carrick from Allred & Carrick, CPAs who performed the 2009-2010 Audit for RCTDA.

Carrick thanked the RCTDA board for the opportunity to serve the authority and told the members to always feel free to call him if they have any questions or concerns. Carrick reviewed the 2009-2010 Audit Report that was distributed to the RCTDA board members.

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Carrick noted that 2009-2010 was a good year with revenue over expenses of about \$15,000 compared to a \$44,000 negative the prior year that was the result of the marketing stimulus campaign the board elected to do for the holiday season in 2008.

Revenue in 2009-10 was up about \$100,000 that was primarily made up of the joint marketing efforts with the City and cooperative marketing programs with other community partners. Occupancy tax collections were up last year as well. The only major change in expenditures was advertising and promotions which was up about \$60,000 due to the new joint advertising campaign.

Carrick noted that the authority is charged with spending the majority of revenue for promotion and that is what the agency has done and successfully again this past year. Carrick complimented the staff on the organization of the necessary records and integration and communication between the third party accountant and himself during the audit. Carrick said that having the third party accountant adds an extra level of internal control and expertise by utilizing an outside accounting firm.

**Update of Trolleys:** Meacham gave a quick update on the Trolleys noting that due to the Trolley Coordinator, Melissa Murguz's hard work Trolley ridership in this fiscal year has grown 32% from July 1<sup>st</sup> to Nov 20<sup>th</sup> from the previous year. Revenue is close to \$28,000 which is amazing considering the first year the TDA owned the Trolleys revenue did not meet \$20,000. Booking and rentals for 2011-12 are up as well.

Addressing Mr. Coltrain's question regarding maintenance issues, Meacham noted that issues are occurring more often as Trolleys are being used more. The F&M is typically more the problematic Trolley; however the RBA Trolley is having more issues as well.

Meacham reports that staff and City personnel are currently searching for used Trolleys to purchase to replace the F&M Trolley, replace the wheel system on the RBA Trolley and use parts from the retired F&M to keep the RBA Trolley in service.

Chairman Patterson thanked the STCDC for lunch today and the NC Transportation Museum staff for hosting the dual TDA board meetings today. Patterson adjourned the meeting for attendees to get lunch before continuing the meeting.

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**Joint Marketing Committee:**

Introductions were made around the room as members of the STCDC have arrived. James Meacham gave a Power Point presentation updating both RCTDA and STCDC members on the joint marketing. Meacham noted that investing more marketing funds has produced solid results. Highlights Meacham touched on regarding the visitnc.com joint marketing efforts included:

- 17 event listings have been featured and have reached 15,052 visitors since April 2010.
- 407 Visitor Guide brochures have been downloaded from visitnc.com since May 2010.
- Sweepstakes Entries from visitnc.com total 16,051
- Thomas the Train 7,288
- Holiday Shopping Giveaway 8,793
- Marketing leads from 7 publications total 14,903

Meacham reviewed the publications that will a part of the NC Tourism Marketing Campaign in spring 2011 which included Southern Living, Blue Ridge Outdoors, Atlanta, Family Fun and more.

The holiday marketing campaign is in place now and includes TV spots (942), radio spots (764), online banner ads, interstate billboard, holiday events flyer, kiosks, promotional sweepstakes on Facebook and the visitnc.com website.

James offered statistics and names of winners of the Holiday Getaway Sweepstakes. All prize packages remaining will include: one overnight stay, \$100 VISA gift card, \$100 Salisbury Downtown Dollars, \$50 gas card and a gift basket. Meacham reported that some of the winners have posted photos and comments about their visit to the area on the Facebook page.

**Kiosk Program:** Meacham reported that phase I of the kiosk program is complete and kiosks are in place at 8 sites (listed below). RCCVB staff visits kiosk partners on a bi-weekly basis to replenish brochures.

- Visitors Center (1)
- North Carolina Transportation Museum (2)
- Holiday Inn (1)
- Hampton Inn (1)
- Comfort Suites (1)
- Rowan Public Library (potential)
- Patterson Farm (upon market opening in Spring)
- Lazy 5 Ranch (1)

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Potential sites for Phase II that have been identified are:

- Dan Nicholas Park
- Gold Hill Village
- Waterworks
- Lodging Properties
- Rowan County Government
- Rowan Museum
- City Hall
- Train Depot
- City Park
- Sloan Park

**Tourism Marketing Grants:** Meacham reviewed the Tourism Marketing Grant Project Guidelines that have been developed by the Tourism Marketing Grants Subcommittee as follows:

- Projects shall be of a promotional, advertising or marketing nature, designed to develop increased visitors for the organization or event, and in turn the destination, and area hotels/motels, and tourism-oriented facilities.
- Projects must be tourism-related and will be granted only on the basis that they enhance tourism in the destination, promote out-of-town visitors, and have more than merely a local impact.
- Projects shall help to enhance the destination's image as a visitor destination.
- Funding shall not be granted to an organization for assistance with its normal or routine operating and administrative costs. Routine expenses include (but are not limited to) such costs as: rent, lodging, telephone, shipping, salaries, and fringe benefits.
- The Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee shall have the authority in granting fund for the tourism grants marketing program upon recommendation from the grants subcommittee.
- In making decisions on grant applications, the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee will consider such factors as the type and scope of the applying organization, the impact and priority of the proposed project and the potential for success in meeting the destination's objectives.
- Organizations receiving tourism grants in the past must re-apply each grant cycle. There shall be no guarantees that each organization shall receive similar grants from cycle to cycle. Quarter one will start July 1-September 30, quarter two October 1-December 30, quarter three January 1-April 30 and fourth May 1-June 30.

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- An organization receiving a grant must give the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee a written analysis of the project relative to its success or failure in meeting the project's objectives in the destination within 90 days of grant completion. Failure to provide the statistical analysis of the relative success of the project may result in keeping the organization from being considered for funding of future projects.
- TDA Board members, Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee members, and their affiliates are eligible to apply for grants and may present applications to the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee but shall not participate in any discussion or deliberation on such applications and must leave the Committee and/or Board meetings during such discussions.
- Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis, and grants will be awarded in a cycle format on a quarterly basis. Grants will be awarded based on merit and priorities as presented by the applying organization. The Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee may choose to give priority to new applications each year to support new projects.
- The applying organization should participate in educational sessions sponsored by the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee, when applicable.
- Grant applicants may be invited to make a personal presentation to the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee to support the request.
- All grant recipients will be required to provide recognition that they received a marketing grant from the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority and the Salisbury Tourism Development Authority.
- After approval of a grant, the grant recipient is asked to submit the final creative for the event/project to the Salisbury-Rowan County Joint Marketing Committee.

Tourism Marketing Grants approved this fiscal year include: Historic Salisbury Foundation for the 2010 October Tour—\$10,000; Salisbury-Rowan Symphony Society, Inc. for "The Nutcracker"—\$1,500 and season radio campaign—\$1,000.

There are two pending tourism marketing grant applications that will be reviewed by the marketing grant subcommittee will take up at their January meeting. Those applications are from: Piedmont Players for TV, radio, and Facebook advertising and The Public Art Committee for the Sculpture Show.

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**Group Business:** Meacham gave a list of group incentive/sponsorships that are currently “in the pipeline.” Meacham reported that the Joint Marketing Committee had an in-depth planning session. These goals and objectives will be presented for the master planning process.

Starting with the originating purpose of tourism development and marketing efforts in Salisbury/Rowan County—to promote travel, tourism and conventions and to promote and sponsor tourism-oriented events and activities (initial enabling legislation).

Meacham reviewed the Joint Tourism Marketing Committee Purpose to:  
Annually plan and implement an annual inclusive destination marketing program.

**Joint Tourism Marketing Strategies and Tactics**

**Innovative Marketing Strategies/Tactics:**

- Application development and enhanced technology platforms
- Outside examination of marketing effectiveness, continue to innovative
- Perpetual content development
- Expand point-of-service interactions for visitors
- Stronger central event presence
- Brand growth through an integrated incentivized marketing program
- Web aggregation and dissemination
- Continue the use of integrated marketing campaigns and programs that cross-promote the destination and reinforce overnight accommodations

**Group Sales Strategies/Tactics:**

- Incentive tools and sponsorship funds
- Advocacy and knowledge base of group facilities and products
- Marketing directly to meeting planners and sports
- Expand mindset of what group business it (ex: dance competitions, weddings)
- Explore adding a full time Director of Sales and Marketing

**Simplified Visitor Services Strategies/Tactics:**

- Expansion of the Kiosk Program for marketing and visitor access
- Wayfinding signage
- Centralized events website and/or aggregation platforms for collecting event data
- Visitor-friendly technology (easy access with handheld devices and electronic applications)
- Visitor champions, people who volunteer and speak on behalf of events (across multiple platforms, social networking, bloggers, tweeting)
- Maintain a visitor-centric mindset that reinforces brand consistency in the destination and focuses on the needs of the visitor (think like a visitor)
- Work to provide a consistent visitor experience in the destination

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**Partner Support and Development Strategies/Tactics:**

- Consistent communication to partners on events and visitor based marketing
- Educational marketing sessions on reaching visitors that are available for tourism partners
- Serve as a conduit and resource for marketing and tourism information and educational opportunities
- Creating vehicles and avenues for leveraging partner brands with the tourism brand (messaging)
- Educating partners on best practices (for tourism marketing) ex: developing marketing plans, securing media buys, cooperative marketing, analyzing the best opportunities
- Raise the level of marketing knowledge
- Clear and consistent marketing grant guidelines
- Provide marketing funds and sponsorship funds for tourism events and activities and visitor development initiatives.

Meacham noted that from the staff perspective, it has been amazing to see how quickly the Joint Marketing Committee has come together and how effective they are in getting these programs out the door. Kelly Alexander, Joint Tourism Marketing Committee Chair agreed and expressed her excitement and gratitude to all committee members for the work that has been completed thus far.

Meacham reported that the tourism master plan will get under way at the beginning of the next year (2011).

RCTDA Board member and County Commissioner, Raymond Coltrain thanked everyone for all the work they have done.

Motion: Jerry Chandler made the motion for adjournment of the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority Board meeting.

Second: Steve Hall

Motion: Approved.

**Next Meeting Date:**

The next regular scheduled meeting of the TDA Board will be held on Wednesday, January 12, 2011 at 12 Noon. The meeting will take place in the Gateway Building, Salisbury. There being no further business to discuss meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Hall

Secretary to the Board

Prepared by: Lesley Pullium, Clerk to the Board