

**Rowan County Tourism Development Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, November 10, 2010**

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

**Not Attending:** Raymond Coltrain, Brian Miller, Andrew Watters, Michelle Patterson

**Guests:** Karen Windate, Turn of the Century Victorian B&B

**Call to Order:** Vice Chairman Millie Cress called the TDA meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

James Meacham gave the invocation.

**Meeting Agenda:**

Motion: Dave Redden made a motion for approval of the meeting agenda.

Second: Jerry Chandler

Motion: Approved

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Motion: Jerry Chandler made the motion for approval of the October 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 noting that occupancy tax receipts for September were down about 5.4% that was with not all properties reporting. With all property totals reported September was a little flat from the previous year. The first quarter of the fiscal year will probably end up about 5% compared to this period last year.

Meacham noted that October 2010 will be a good indicator of the health of the hotel marketplace. As mentioned at the last meeting the Courtyard by Marriott project is moving forward and work has started on the road and structures in that area of town. Hopefully the structure of the hotel will start going up in January of 2011 with completion in the fourth quarter of 2011. This should start to impact the fiscal year halfway through next RCTDA budget cycle. The total project scope should be about \$10M with 95 new rooms coming online.

Meacham reviewed the balance sheet noting the handwritten note there regarding a receivable in the amount of \$62,500 that is due from the Salisbury Tourism Authority for their share of the joint operation from July through November. The marketing has already started and the expenses being incurred have already started to be remitted.

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Those funds will be in soon and will be deposited. The \$26,100 receivable for September's occupancy tax has been deposited and RCTDA should finish the month of October about \$4800 in the black.

Meacham reported that a budget amendment will be presented in December to reflect the changes in revenue. This amendment will reflect changes in revenue with a new revenue structure being presented that will show how the new funds are managed and accounted for.

Because of the additional expenses that have been incurred and not yet having adjusted the budget, some line items have technically going over due to the fact that the budget has not been amended to reflect the revenue.

This is notable in the trolley budget with trolleys reporting well over projected revenues and expenses and that revenue will need to be appropriated. There are some line items in the RCTDA moving faster than expected, co-op advertising has already exceeded budget on the revenue side as well as some other revenues. Total revenue is on pace to exceed current budgeted revenue by about \$8000-9000.

The budget will need to be adjusted as the ebb and flow process is worked out due to the technical administrative details of the joint marketing committee's impact on RCTDA's direct budget. A revised budget will be presented in December for the board's approval.

Meacham reported that the Joint Marketing Committee, the Salisbury Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors voted at their last meeting to essentially fund the Joint Marketing Committee in a monthly apportionment of \$12,500 per month hence the 62,500 receivable mentioned earlier. STAD agreed to fund the joint marketing budget this fiscal year at \$150,000 which divided by 12 months equals \$12,500 per month. The \$62,500 is for the first five months and then moving forward at the first of each month \$12,500 will be remitted to RCTDA. This will make it easier for RCTDA to meet all the payables for the marketing invoices for the various marketing projects all of which are in RCTDA's name. Via the interlocal agreements and executive for authority Salisbury Tourism Development Authority is going to remit the funds on a monthly basis to help to insure that funding flows smoothly and allows the Joint Marketing Committee to plan future expenditures in accordance with the cash flow.

Motion: Dave Redden made the motion for approval of the financial report as presented.  
Motion: Approved

**Personnel & Policy Committee:**

Jarrett Chandler reminded the board of the discussion on the proposed bylaws revisions presented at the last RCTDA board meeting for review. Chandler briefly reviewed the proposed changes.

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Motion: Chandler made the motion for approval of the bylaw changes as presented.  
Second: Kelly Alexander  
Motion: Approved

Chandler presented the nominations for 2011 RCTDA Officers from the Personnel & Policy Committee and Executive Committee. Chair: Michelle Patterson, Chair Elect: Dave Redden, Past Chair: Dan Peters, Treasurer: Steve Hall and Secretary: Millie Cress. These five officers will serve as the Executive Committee.

Motion: Chandler presented the nominations as a motion from the committees.  
Second: Kelly Alexander  
Motion: Approved

**Joint Marketing Committee:**

Kelly Alexander asked Meacham to present the report on the Joint Marketing Committee meeting. Meacham presented a PowerPoint Presentation on the progress of the co-operative marketing campaign with visitnc.com. The campaign has been broad and has promoted events and attractions from all around the destination.

Meacham stated that 390 copies of the Visitors Guide have been downloaded from the Visitnc.com site. In print advertising the best producing ad has been the ad in Oprah magazine with 5,641 leads thus far. The Heritage and Culture ads have produced a little over 3,000 leads. Meacham reviewed the AirTran ad that was featured in a special North Carolina section in the on-flight magazine.

A total of 14,268 leads have been received as of October 31, 2010 with the expectation of 20,000 by the end of spring. Meacham reports that it is more likely that leads will total around 35,000-38,000 leads by the end of spring. Print ads will continue in various publications through the spring of 2011 including Southern Living, Our State, WNC, Family Fun, Rachel Ray, Blue Ridge Country and more. Print ads are tailored to the specific publication and the demographic to whom the publication serves featuring activities that appeal to the proper demographic.

The 2010 holiday marketing campaign is already underway and the two primary pieces of the campaign focus on the holiday events and activities and retail sales. This is a very integrated campaign using radio, TV, billboard and Internet with a holiday shopping sweepstakes throughout the promotion to encourage visitors to come to Salisbury-Rowan County for shopping and participate in holiday events through the holiday season. The sweepstakes theme focuses on boosting your holiday budget with sweepstakes spending packages. The sweepstakes is similar to the Thomas sweepstakes with 7 drawings over the 7 weeks, 1 grand prize, 1 large prize package, 2 medium packages and 3 small packages. Advertising is focusing on the major metro areas along the I-85 corridor from Raleigh to Gastonia.

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Sweepstakes winners must actually come to the destination to pick up the prize packages. Meacham reviewed the Facebook, Visitnc.com and visitsalisburync.com components of entering the sweepstakes and explained how each works together to capture leads/entries and increase the Salisbury-Rowan County Authentic North Carolina Facebook friends.

932 commercials will run on Time Warner cable channels and weather on the ones targeting women. The TV and radio spots were presented featuring our old friends Claire and Amy and will run through January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The radio spots will run in Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Greensboro and total over 600 spots. Brand consistency was stressed in all of the marketing including the billboard, online social networking and sweepstakes.

The Facebook campaign is averaging 150-160 new fans per day. The visitnc.com sweepstake promotion started today and will be listed on the visitnc.com sweepstake page as well as featured in the visitnc.com e-newsletter that goes out to over 170,000 subscribers and will be posted on the visitnc.com Facebook page as well.

Meacham reviewed how the Salisbury-Rowan County Authentic North Carolina Facebook is promoting Cheerwine to fans using their new marketing videos. The Salisbury-Rowan County Authentic North Carolina Facebook page currently has 1,211 friends with a long-term goal of building that up similar to destinations such as Charleston, SC who has 122,222 friends. This new marketing venue offers RCTDA a new audience to talk and market sites and events to all year around.

The Kiosk Program has been delayed due to some difficulties on Miller Davis' end. The kiosks were ordered in September to insure delivery by October so that the kiosks could be utilized during the many October events. The delay in delivery has prevented that from occurring and slowed the program down substantially. It is hoped that kiosks will be available and in place for the holiday season at most of the main attractions and hotels.

Meacham reported that the subcommittee on grants and sponsorships recognizes that there is a large desire and need for marketing grants. The subcommittee will meet on November 15<sup>th</sup> to approve the revised guidelines and application. Instead of grants funds directly to the firm for marketing of an event, it has been suggested that RCTDA handles the marketing for the firms in order to assist partners in visitor based marketing and at the same time educate partners on this type of marketing.

The group incentives and sponsorships are looking positive for next year. Meacham is working with representative on several events for September 2011 including the multi-state Fishers of Men fishing tournament, NC Harley Owners group, BB&T United Way 5K state championship and three other state and multi-state crappie tournaments coming up in 2011-12. Meacham and Trexler are also meeting with Cabarrus County on a possible gymnastic tournament that would use both Rowan and Cabarrus county facilities and hotels.

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Meacham reported that the Joint Marketing Committee spent two hours in the planning session earlier this week. The data from the planning session will be presented to the full board in December.

Meacham announced that Dave Redden has asked for a few minutes of the board's time to discuss some negative impact that an online story in the Salisbury Post has had on the Holiday Inn this past week. Redden reviewed an incident that occurred this week in regard to discharge of a firearm by one of Single Action Shooting Society's North Carolina State Cowboy Shoot competitors accidentally in his hotel room. No one was injured and the police ruled the incident an accident. Later that evening Redden noticed the online story and placed a call to the editor, Ms. Cook. Cook passed him along to Scott Jenkins. Redden explained to Jenkins that he thought the wording of the online story would have a negative impact on tourism. Jenkins disagreed with Redden. Redden said that a long-term stay guest at his property was lost due to the story which frightened the guest and led to her checking out of the property to a loss of \$2500 in potential business. Redden said that the Post should have used the opportunity to run a positive story on this unique group and focus on the positive fact that the group was meeting here in Salisbury.

Meacham stated that several weeks ago a similar story incident occurred when the body of the homeless gentleman was found on the street behind the Chick-filA and Comfort Suites on Arlington Street. The online Post story initially title was "Body found at Comfort Suites". Meacham noted that he received a call from the Comfort Suite representatives asking for assistance with that incident. Meacham and Mark Lewis contacted the editor of the Post, Ms. Cook and the story verbiage was changed to focus on street names verses proximity to businesses.

Tourism was the only sector of the local economy to grow in 2009 and Rowan County was one of 6 counties in the state that grew, a story which was not featured prominently in the Post. Meacham said that staff will continue to work toward a better relationship with the local media.

**Salisbury Historic Trolley Update:**

Meacham reported that Melissa Murguz has done a phenomenal job with the Trolleys and the in particular the Haunted Trolley Tours that were ran every Friday and Saturday night in October. Many tours were sold out bringing in visitors from Greensboro, Charlotte, Wake Forest and areas. Some visitors stayed overnight to take the tour and spent the day in the area visiting other attractions. Haunted Trolley Tours generated over \$4000 and could have made more if the Trolleys could have served more riders.

In October the Trolleys generated about \$10,000 in deposits. Meacham said that many people asked for a Holiday Tour however staff was not able to get commitments from tour participants for the entire season on such short notice. A holiday tour is a goal staff will work on for next year.

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Meacham went on to say that staff has been searching for a Trolley replacement for the current F&M Trolley and hopes to secure a replacement in the next four to five months. The F&M Trolley would then be used as spare parts to continue to maintain and repair the R&B Trolley. Staff will continue to work on this task and is working with the City on the possibility of the City purchasing the Trolley through their vehicle purchase fund and leasing the vehicle to Salisbury Historic Trolleys. The group is searching for a slightly larger Trolley that could hold more people. Wedding rentals for the coming spring are up dramatically over last year.

**Tourism Industry Master Plan:**

Meacham said that it is hoped that within the next 30-45 days the steer committee will be developed to start to work on the beginnings of the Master Plan. Both TDA Boards have committed to the plan and staff has spoken to members of both boards about serving on the committee.

**Salisbury Tourism Cultural Development Commission:**

Meacham said that Mark Lewis apologizes that he could not attend today. He reports that the Destination Development Committee is continuing to work on the wayfinding signage plan and are focusing on the East Innes Street corridor, Jake Alexander Blvd, and Brenner Avenue in phase one of the program.

**New Business:**

Meacham reports that Rowan Cabarrus Community College has reached out to both Cabarrus County CVB and Salisbury-Rowan County CVB and is hosting a listening session. Dr. Phil Cameron from the college is looking at how the college can play a role in destination development and sustainable tourism especially in regard to workforce development. Individuals from hotels, Concord Mills, wineries, sites, attractions, dining, people that manage and hire employees. Patterson Farms employs over 300, Lazy 5 Ranch employs 100 people, and there are many hospitality and tourism jobs in both counties. The session will look at what workforce skills are needed, technology, marketing, how people integrate etc...

Meacham said this was a wonderful opportunity for hospitality industry partners to come together to help gather data and work with the college on some important economic and workforce goals. The session will take place on Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> from 8 am – 10 am at the Research Campus in Kannapolis.

Millie Cress recognized Karen Windate from the Turn of the Century Bed & Breakfast and thanked her for her interest and for attending today's meeting.

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Motion: Dave Redden made the motion to adjourn.  
Second: Steve Hall  
Motion: Approved

**Next Meeting Date:**

The next regular scheduled meeting of the TDA Board will be held on Wednesday, December 8, 2010 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