



**Ocracoke Township Tourism Development Authority
Board Meeting Minutes**

Friday, Nov18, 2022, 9:00 am

The meeting was held virtually via Facebook Live Stream

Present (Voting): Kenny Ballance (Chair), Martha Garrish (Vice-Chair), Susie O'Neal Rockel, Lisa Landrum, Jennifer Esham (remote)

OTTDA Staff: Helena Stevens, Sharon Brodisch

Hyde County Reps: Kris Noble, Randal Mathews

Avenir Bold: Scott Scaggs, Tom Hickey

I. Call to Order

Chair Kenny Ballance called the meeting to order at 9:00 am

II. Approval of Sept 16, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Martha moved, Lisa second. Motion passed

III. Advertising Update – Avenir Bold

Tom –

Timeline for Spring Advertising Campaign. Jan-Feb working on strategy and plan to be approved by OTTDA. Launch campaign mid-March, running through the end of May. Comprehensive recap in June, including metrics achieved, whether the campaign was successful, and optimization suggestions moving forward.

Media Mix is similar to prior years, especially with the use of videos. The video launch content on YouTube last spring was successful; this year, the new video footage will be used in this year's advertising campaign.

Scott Scaggs introduced the new video. The theme is "Surrender to the Island," with a slower pace of action and a local voiceover.

IV. Financial Discussion/Hyde County

a. FY22/23 Occupancy Tax Collection Projection

Year-to-date collections through Sept 30, 2022, is \$267,664, which is \$29,115 greater than the amount collected in the same period for the 21/22 Fiscal year. Overall, OT collections continue to increase year over year. Using this 1st 3 months' actual collections, projecting 100% of prior year actual collections for the remaining months, total annual collection would be \$483,951, which is \$3,071 great than the current fiscal year budget, which is \$480,650. Using 1st 3 months actual collections and projecting 105% of last year's remaining months collections, total would be \$494,765, which is \$14,115 higher than budget. Using 1st 3 months collections plus 110% of last year's remaining months collection, the total would be \$505,579, \$24,929 greater than budget

b. FY22/23 Proposed Budget Planning

The budget committee met on Nov. 8; a preliminary draft will be sent for internal review before the next meeting. The final FY budget needs to be determined by mid-Feb 2023.

V. New Business

a. Restroom Project

Martha, to clarify info posted on Facebook that says OTTDA agreed to take over the Restroom project. This was just a suggestion that was made but was never discussed/voted on by the board. Lisa added that there was nothing voted on at tri board meeting concerning restrooms.

Susie stated that she thought there was to be a project manager to take over this restroom project. Helena said that OCBA had been granted funds to for the restroom project, but an administrator and team are needed to move forward.

b. 2023 Walking Map

Helena reported that the walking map sign-up form was put out last week, and has had a good response. The deadline is today. Helena is working with Kathryn Waldrop on content, and has received two quotes for printing and production. The goal is to have map in hand mid-January. Distribution: all local businesses will receive maps. The TDA has contracted with OBX Distribution to distribute the remaining walking maps and asset brochures to all the Welcome centers. She has been contracted/paid for this fiscal year, will be contracted for next fiscal year. Since a free listing has been offered to all businesses, we are getting listings that were not offered before that aren't closely associated with visitors, so will have to make room on the already congested map. We will integrate some of the content from asset brochure to the walking map. Helena has identified someone who will distribute to the ferry offices regularly. OTTDA stickers will be added to maps, and the map will be added to the website.

Kenny added items:

He spoke with Justin at Tideland will be doing an inventory of the Christmas lights. The installation will start Monday after Thanksgiving. We purchased 5 new lights, Dolphins, and Christmas trees. There are currently a total of 30; someone will need to request 5 new per year until they are all replaced. They will also put up wreaths for the Lighthouse and Community Center.

Kenny contacted Lee Leighty about the possibility of a tram stop on Loop Road. She sounded positive, but it is a board decision. She would like to contact some of the residents on Loop Road. Per her request, he sent her pictures of other tram stops. After their board meeting, she will get back to him about what they suggest.

Randall advised that he got \$30,000 for repairs to the Community Center. To be used to fix up the outside, some painting, and outside clean up. With this dollar amount, it is not necessary to get bids for contractors. He will continue to request funds.

VI. Old Business

a. Tri-Board Meeting Follow up

There was a meeting held Wed to discuss the future of OCBA. Susie reported that she attended the meeting. There were 14 people at the meeting. Interest in continuing OCBA, more toward the Civic side, and events. They are looking for new board members. They will need to hire someone to deal with events. They seem to be moving in a positive direction. They are planning to hold another meeting.

Randall added that thanks to Connie, she currently coordinates events. They need an administrator and will need committees once members are in place. Helena asked about contributors and dues. Susie reported that there is no place to sign up as a civic member on the website. They discussed using some of the events as fundraisers. Next meeting, they will vote on officers.

b. Island Inn Update – Ken DeBarth

OPS had a general membership meeting, and all incumbent officers and trustees were reelected. The meeting was taped and can be viewed on Facebook Live. The mortgage note on the Island Inn property is an owner-financed 5-year balloon, which will come due mid-May 2023. OPS is working on a plan to allow them to permanently fund the mortgage, which will require continuing financial support from OTTDA and 3 percent occupancy tax boards. This will include an increase in the yearly ask due to a higher (5% versus 3%) interest rate, raising the monthly payment from \$2940 to \$3440 monthly (approximately). The payoff on the balloon is \$528,050. They originally financed \$620,000. For this project, we have received grants of \$72,000 and individual donations of \$37,500. They have spent \$192,500 on the project so far. The difference has come from OPS-restricted reserve funds they have for historical preservation. Primarily the Beverage request. They made money at the Fig Festival. That money will reimburse the funds taken out of the reserve for Island Inn project. As well as repair and maintenance of the museum. The gift shop and member dues pay the museum and staff.

The board has contracted with a grant-writing organization called Heath Communications. They are developing a plan, which includes applying to Save America's Treasure, a federal grant program. Their minimum award is \$125,000, but local funds must match any award.

Ken and Andrea finished a final report for the Outer Banks Community Foundation for their last grant, which funded a portion of Phase 1 of the Island Inn roof project. They can now submit the grant application for the next cycle. They have requested another \$50,000, which will complete that project. They will also apply to the Canon foundation. OPS hired a $\frac{3}{4}$ time

assistant administrator/gift shop manager/volunteer coordinator, Ann Becker. She will help with the OPS website re: the giftshop. She also has grant-writing experience.

OPS is considering hiring a website designer specifically for the Island Inn Project. They are revisiting changing the name of the project.

Sometime within the next few weeks, they will plant 24 fig trees.

Ken expressed his/board's concern that, since the OTTDA, 3% boards are year to year asks for mortgage payment, they would like to know as far in advance as possible if either board intends not to fund OPS Island Inn project. They could potentially sell the property for more than what is owed. Susie asked about the OPS reserve fund, and whether that could be used towards the mortgage payment. (The Beverage fund) Ken explained that the wording is that it is to be used for preservation and restoration of historic structures on Ocracoke. OPS would prefer not to use the Beverage funds towards the mortgage.

c. Safety Campaign for Visitors

The ideas were collated and sent to Avenir Bold; they are on their way to layout, should have something back from them by next week. Slides with Ocracoke imagery that speak to each of those concerns will be incorporated into our social media and printed for businesses to distribute. Also, it will be sent with maps and to ferry terminals.

VII. Executive Director Report

Helena is collating a list of local business email/contact information that was outdated. She got that up to date. Connie helped with that. Outer Banks Distributing is taking our maps to Tyrell Visitor Center, the Outer Banks Visitor Center in Manteo, the Dismal Swamp, Currituck Visitor Centers in Moyock and Corolla, campgrounds, and hotels up the beach. Tina has a warehouse, so when we get the maps printed, she will get 20-25 boxes from the printer. She goes weekly or more often if needed to distribute.

Everyone saw the completed video; Chris Hannant will edit it into 30 and 15-second time frames so we can use it on social media channels. It will be put out before the Spring advertising campaign's start and used there.

Helena and Kathryn Waldrop are pursuing people who produce content about Ocracoke on social media and asking if we can use their content to get some variety.

Regarding public relations:

Eleanor Talley represented Ocracoke at the Raleigh Media Mission, a meet and greet with regional writers and influencers in conjunction with Visit NC. Helena attended the NY Media Mission in October, meeting with writers associated with NY publishing houses. They were both successful visits and we got some good leads. Visit NC came to Ocracoke to do the TRAC session in mid-October, but there was a small turnout. Helena gave the Visit NC staff an itinerary to reacquaint them with Ocracoke, which was very successful. We as a community have the opportunity to

participate in programs that Visit NC offers, one of which is where individual businesses fill out a form related to their business, similar to what is completed for the walking map. Helena can upload these to the Visit NC website, which will be publicized under the business category. We can also add our events.

Social media stats continue to increase.

EWN Airport Marketing. They are renovating; we need to provide content for column wrap; Helena will work with Avenir on that.

Budget – Helena is working with the budget committee on the budget preparation for the next fiscal year.

Staffing – Admin is no longer with us. Sharon Brodisch will still do meeting minutes. Lisa asked if we should advertise for admin. Helena will hire/outsource as needed.

Lisa advised that because of Helena’s trip to the NY Media mission, Ocracoke ended up on the Coastal Living Instagram feed. They have an Ocracoke video on their Instagram page and got a huge response; it has come up multiple times.

Helena will attend the IMM – International Media Marketplace in January in New York.

There is a vetting process where you have appointments before the conference.

She will also attend the Visit NC 365 in March; the registration deadline is the end of January.

IMM – Eleanor Talley stated she is excited that Helena will attend International Media Market, an international meeting of travel writers and influencers that meets once a year in New York in January. The group that puts it on brings in high-quality traveler writers from around the country and worldwide. Eleanor has attended for many years and has made great long-term contacts there. It is well attended by NC partners.

VIII. **Public Input/Questions/Comments**

Via Facebook: Connie Leinbach, regarding the OCBA meeting said – yes, it was positive. Good recap. Sue. The next meeting date hasn’t been set. Hopefully, in December.

IX. **Next Meeting Date** – Jan 20, 2023, at 9:00 am.

X. **Adjourn**

Martha moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 10:33 am.

FY22/23 Board Meeting Dates:

January 20, 2023

March 17, 2023

May 19, 2023