



**Board Meeting Minutes**  
January 6, 2020 @ 9:00 A.M.  
Lightship Realty Conference Room

Location: Lightship Realty, 49 Lighthouse Road, Ocracoke, NC 27960

Attendees (Board): Amy Howard, Chair, Daphne Bennink, Vice-Chair, Martha Garrish, Greg Honeycutt (via phone),

Absent (Board) Lisa Landrum

Attendees (Non-Board): Helena Stevens, Jeff Dippold, Connie Leinbach, Tom Pahl

Handouts: Agenda  
Letter from Ann Ehringhaus dated October 28, 2019

Amy Howard called the meeting to order at 9:00am, January 6, 2020.

Approval of October 28, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Martha motioned to approve October 28, 2019 minutes. Daphne seconded the motion. All in favor, no one opposes, minutes passed.

The purpose of the meeting is for the OTDA board to review the list of considerations Chris Cavanaugh provided as a result of the workshop in December 2019 and responsibilities the OTDA chooses to take on. Martha Garrish confirmed that OCBA will retain ownership of the Ocracoke Island Walking Map and July 4 events after the separation. Blackbeard's Pirate's Jamboree has not yet been decided upon.

The February 11 OTDA Board meeting can be devoted to working with both the 3% Occupancy Tax Board and OCBA to discuss and determine roles and responsibilities. The 3% Occupancy Tax Board needs to be included too, because OTDA will need to rely on those funds too.

**VisitOcracokenc.com Website**

In order to maintain as much continuity as possible, a sharing arrangement can be discussed between the OCBA and OTDA regarding the website, but OTDA needs to assume ownership of the website if they are going to market the island. The VisitOcracokeNC.com URL is the intellectual property of the OCBA.

Martha - The OCBA requests a memorandum of understanding the OTDA that the visitocracokenc.com website will remain the same through December 2020 in order to honor the arrangements with their contributors who have paid for the walking map and website promotion.

Review of Chris Cavanaugh's checklist of items that need to be considered by OTOTDA in the separation between OCBA and OTOTDA:



Tom Pahl - The OTDA needs to separate itself from OCBA's mistakes made over the last year and create a new brand that is responsive to the needs and wants of the Ocracoke community as well as to the perceived wants of the target market. Greg agreed that OTDA members were frustrated with the OCBA and the marketing process that led to the separation. Martha disagreed with Tom and felt that the marketing program contributed to 2019 being a financially successful year, albeit Hurricane Dorian's landfall on September 6.

OTDA recognizes and acknowledges the criticisms about the Element Advertising program and is taking them into consideration. The focus now is to make plans for the transition and the EA contract is in place until June 30, 2020.

#### Discussion of the transition from OCBA and logistics Involved

1. Review bylaws to determine if any require alteration in light of the transition of destination marketing responsibilities from the OCBA to the OTDA. (skipped)
2. Determine OTDA staffing needs and financial capability of the OTDA to hire staff. Identify any job descriptions associated with destination marketing responsibilities and rewrite as needed for hiring under the OTDA umbrella.

A director, administrative assistant and accountant are needed. Jeff Dippold said that a part-time bookkeeping position will be enough for OTDA accounting needs. Event coordination is not needed since OTDA will not be managing events.

3. Apply for a federal tax identification number. **Jeff Dippold to research**
4. Establish wages and salaries for OTDA positions and determine how payroll will be handled.

Wages and salaries will be discussed in more detail later. OTDA will need to determine how employment positions will be posted and finalize employee benefits, allowing enough time for the transition, in anticipation of the contract with the OCBA ending on June 30, 2020.

5. Determine benefits to be provided to OTDA staff and identify an external benefits provider. The discussion of benefits should include how travel will be reimbursed and how mobile telephone charges will be expensed or reimbursed.

Current benefits for the Executive Director were discussed. OCBA pays for the Directors health benefits, which includes health, vision and dental. **Action item: Jeff Dippold to provide a health benefit analysis to the OTDA for the next meeting.**

OTDA's current budget is roughly \$330,000 and can be used to fund visitor enhancements and marketing and help promote the OCBA sponsored events.

11. Determine the ownership of any assets that (a) have been paid for by the OTDA and are used by the OCBA, and/or (2) will be transitioned from the OCBA to the OTDA. This includes any intellectual property assets, including trademarks, website URLs, and email addresses.

If OTDA assumes marketing responsibilities for Ocracoke, it would make sense for OTDA to acquire the brand related intellectual property, pending OCBA's approval. There will need to be a solid connection between the OTDA and OCBA and an agreement regarding usage of the brand. Anything OTDA owned must be available to all businesses and should be provided free of cost.

Question: Could OTDA have a separate page where all businesses are advertised?

A potential solution could be that OCBA get grant money to provide basic listings at no charge, and up charge for a bigger listing. Helena pointed out that the issue is that the nurtured visitocracokenc.com brand offers businesses more exposure due to its promotion over the last 3 years.

Daphne said it would be to OTDA's advantage to focus on the island as an asset, not individual businesses. The sticking point will be the connection of the website to the walking map where it does involve individual businesses. A suggestion was made to link to the old ocracokevillage.com website, which Helena confirmed was not renewed when the website switched to visitocracokenc.com

Helena suggested that Wick Smith from BizTools One come and speak regarding possibilities with the visitocracokenc.com website and incorporation of the individual listings within the overall scope during the transition between the OCBA and OTDA.

Question: Would an RFP (Request for Proposal) process be necessary if the OTDA decided to contract with a different advertising agency in the future? **Tom Pahl said he would investigate.**

Discussion took place about the direction of the marketing and what vendor will be used in the future. The outcome depends on OTDA expenses (website, staff, etc.) and how much money is available for advertising.

Greg suggested getting back to utilizing resources in Eastern NC, Greenville, Rocky Mount or Tarboro with TV and *Our State* Magazine print ads. He thinks the Executive Director can research and execute advertising in house. Amy said word of mouth also draws people to the island as well. The 2% tax was developed to bring tourist to Ocracoke in the shoulder season (March, April, May, end of August, September, October and November). The way we are currently marketing needs to be re-examined.

\$110,000 of advertising dollars has been dedicated to advertising with Element Advertising.

High season is a non-issue. Shoulder seasons is what OTDA can improve and protect. If changes are going to be made with advertising, decisions need to be made soon.

Reducing the amount of the Element Advertising contract and using left over money to focus on a new branding strategy was discussed. The current branding lacks the "vibe" of Ocracoke. Daphne suggested hiring a local photographer or potentially Daniel Pullen, who understands the vibe of the island. She said the photography has

been the weak link and suggested that a list of photos needed be generated and put out to local photographers to submit. Chris Hannant took the photos and video currently on the visitocracokenc.com website, who lives in Manteo, NC.

Does OTDA need to solicit bids since there are not any current contracts in place? Is it necessary for the OTDA to solicit bids. For example, could a certain amount be rolled over to Element. **Tom Pahl said he would investigate what dollar amount is necessary for OTDA to enter into a contract without having to solicit bids.**

13. Decide whether a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is needed between the OTDA and the 3% tax advisory board or Hyde County government that recognizes the OTDA is the official destination marketing organization for Ocracoke.

These items are going to be difficult to resolve until a meeting takes place between 3% and OCBA and OTDA in February. It is important to maintain continuity of the website to maintain the integrity of the brand.

Plan a closed working session with representatives from 2%, 3% Occupancy Tax boards and OCBA by end of January that will have the budget and say where monies will go for salaries, photography, advertising and events. **Create bullet points items, of who's going to take ownership of what and where money will come from, so each board can plan and budget appropriately.** Pirate Jamboree, Walking Map, Events (one line item for purpose of this meeting). OTDA will not take on events. OCBA will take on events, with sponsorship of 3% OT funding.

Hire an attorney to take care of all the legalities. **Greg to ask Jay Willis about legal work for OTDA.**

OTDA board members who will be a part of the January meeting:

- Martha Garrish (OTDA/OCBA)
- Daphne Bennink (OTDA)
- Bob Chestnut (3% OT Board/OCBA)
- Jeff Dippold (Bookkeeper).

OTDA budget is \$330,000 per year, and OTDA will still need 3% money to accomplish goals.

Daphne is available January 30, or 31 or the week prior. Daphne will contact Bob Chestnut to find out his availability to represent the 3% OT Board.

14. Establish what the “doing business as” (dba) identity is for the OTDA as the official destination marketing organization for Ocracoke. This is the brand under which the OTDA will present itself to visitors. The options include continuing to use Ocracoke OTDA or an identity like Visit Ocracoke.

That needs to be formally decided upon between OCBA and OTDA. If OCBA agrees to hand that over to OTDA, then OTDA will be DBA VisitOcracokeNC. If not, another course will need to be taken.

18. Establish policies and processes for how OTDA grant funding decisions will be made in a strategic and transparent manner.

This can be addressed later once funding is determined. Funding might change due to storm.

19. Develop a plan for OTDA office space and a visitor center.

Daphne - The Island Inn project, post-Dorian, doesn't fit into the OTDA mission to enhance Ocracoke visitation and isn't responsible spending. Daphne will not vote for the \$18,000 in the next budget cycle. It is assumed that the OTDA will be funding the Island Inn project annually. The value of the land itself and not having outsiders build on the property was brought up. OPS needs OTDA funding to keep the property.

Acquiring a physical space to house administrative staff is critical, more so than a visitor center. Many options were discussed: Daycare building, Teach's Hole, building on Captain Ben's lot, The vision and historical aspects of Ocracoke need to be considered. That is what Ocracoke is advertised as – a historic village. An opposing view was that there is not anything to salvage. Building something new in the spirit and the style of the previous building.

The advantages and disadvantages of a potential purchase of various properties on the island were discussed: Teach's Hole, building on the Captain Ben's lot, property that was formerly Secret Garden. Bathrooms, handicap access, office space, storage and retail space. OTDA should explore available options. It was Ultimately it was decided not to pursue a purchase of Teach's Hole. Greg suggested they keep an active discussion going. All agreed they didn't want to go into something that was flooded. Storage space is a must. Getting a quote on a modular unit would make sense since so making vacant lots are becoming available. Only a bathroom is needed.

**Martha will ask about the cost and availability of leasing Albert Styron's Store.** Edward's was also brought up as another option to put a modular structure for office space. Community Square spaces are not of interest.

Question: What residual monies are available from OCBA's budget?

\$55,000 is available of un-used funds previously allocated to OCBA from OTDA.

**Set meeting dates for the coming year.**

January 30 or 31 – date/time/location TBD

February 11, 2020 9:00 am @ Community Center

March 10, 2020 9:00 am @ Lightship Realty

**Adjourn**

Daphne motioned to adjourn; Daphne seconded.

Meeting adjourned 12:37 pm

/hrs