



Ocracoke Tourism Development Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2021, 9:00 am

Attendees:

Board: Amy Howard, Daphne Bennink, Lisa Landrum, Martha Garrish, Jen Mongan (remotely)

Non-Board:

Helena Stevens, Jeff Dippold, Sharon Brodisch, Kris Noble; Corrinne Gibbs, Ken DeBarth; Kenny Balance, Theorem Advertising Staff: Scott Scaggs, Stephanie Perri, Tom Hickey, Mary Webster, Eleanor Talley

I. Call to Order

Chair Amy Howard called the monthly OTTDA meeting to order at 9:05 am

II. Approval of June 18, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Amy made one change: correct today's meeting date from September 17 to September 24. Daphne moved to approve minutes; Second by Martha. Motion passed.

III. Financial Discussion/Hyde County

a. Current Revenue Collections and Projection – Jeff reported that for the first two months of the current fiscal year, OTTDA 2% collections are \$155,628, increasing \$22,530 from the prior year. He projected \$387,000 annual collections based on the actual two-month amounts plus 90% of receipts on a month-by-month basis for the remaining months of the last fiscal year. The budget for this fiscal year was based on \$361,500 outright collections. This increase in collections could provide the board with additional flexibility should additional funding opportunities be considered. Move to accept the financial report by Lisa, second Martha. Motion approved.

IV. Advertising Update -Theorem Advertising

Introduction to the team and their roles with OTTDA contract:

Scott Scaggs – Founder of Theorem, art direction, and design

Stephanie Perri – Account Representative

Mary Webster – Copywriting, upfront strategy

Tom Hickey – Media Lead-oversees paid media budget

Eleanor Talley- Public Relations support

Recap of Spring campaign – Scott Scaggs: Theorem created the revised Ocracoke logo, which appears across all campaign assets, a paid social campaign on



Facebook/Instagram, animated and static paid online ads, prospect emails on specific topics such as outdoor adventures, what to pack, things that set Ocracoke apart. Additional assets include the new visitocracokenc.com website, a Fall 2020 Safe Travel video, Spring 2021 island video, an airport column wrap at New Bern airport, the asset brochure, and a branded newsletter template.

PR Update – Eleanor Talley:

Developed a targeted email media outreach list of top 100 state/regional/national media outlets. Short and long lead time pitching to extend shoulder seasons.

Her focus is press trip recruitment and in-state media outreach. She will attend the Visit NC In-State Media Mission in October on behalf of Ocracoke. She is also working with Helena on crisis communication for the website.

Paid Media Budget/Arrivalist - Tom Hickey

Spring paid media campaign (Mid-March to Mid-May 2021)

- \$10,000 for a paid search to Google, \$25,000 for paid social media advertising on Facebook/Instagram, Display ads across multiple websites at \$30,000, and four custom email marketing campaigns to travelers interested in beach vacations at \$10,000, for a total of \$75,000
- Campaign Metrics: 17,635,595 impressions to the targeted group, 67,962 clicks for a .4% click-through rate (4 times the industry average)

Website – significant increase in website traffic during the paid advertising campaign, as well as new users.

Arrivalist – all comparisons are 2021 vs. 2019. Both day and overnight trips are down slightly. The same day, one night, 2-3 night, 4-5 night stays are down, 6-9 night, and ten plus nights are higher.

Visitation from NC is 37.2% of all 2021 visits. 50.9% are day trips, for overnights average nightly stay is 1.5 nights, with an average of 204 miles traveled.

Visitation from VA is 20.3 of all 2021 visits. 64% are day trips; for overnights, the average nightly stay is 1.1 nights, with an average of 239.9 miles traveled.

Old Business

Parking lot – Martha reported that the lot is open and in use. Amy asked if buses are permitted in the lot as there is a "no busses beyond this point" sign after the lot, which may need to be moved if busses are not allowed to park there.

Island Inn Update – Ken DeBarth discussed the progress of the Island Inn project. He reported that the next phase is a new roof which will cost about \$110,000. OPS has been applying for grants to cover the cost of this. The other issue for this project is finding a contractor. A discussion was held about utilizing property to house a building/trailer for visitors and/or TDA office space, as the current office space lease is up in April 2022 but still may be up for renewal. Discussion about alternatives for office space was tabled to be added to next month's agenda.



Amy had to leave at this point, so Daphne took over as Chair

Bench Project Update – Martha had set up a date with Michael Kalna, but it was canceled because there was no crew to build them. They are scheduled to meet next week. Martha asked if NPS is still going to provide their own bench as previously agreed; Kris said Dave Hallac has said he will and they will put their own on the lighthouse property

Admin job posting – Helena will repost the Administrative Assistant position.

Executive Director Report

Theorem reviewed many of the topics in the E.D. Report. In addition:

Videography/photography projects are complete. An additional shoot was added and will be posted to social media and the website.

Working with Gary Mitchell with some local videos, an example is a "Welcome to Ocracoke" video where individuals from the island welcome our visitors.

The asset brochure has been printed and received; the production costs were less than expected due to the layout. They are being distributed to welcome centers, and other visitor stops around NC. Helena has been updating the distribution list and their contacts.

Social media update: A Pinterest Professional site has been created. Helena and Kathryn Waldrop meet weekly to schedule content and review analytics.

Working on the Eblast with Theorem for Fall.

The wrap for New Bern airport is in production with a graphics company.

Facebook question: Does anyone monitor questions on the website? Yes, Helena said there is a place to send an email with questions, and then she responds.

New Business

- a. **Howard Street Repair** – a request was submitted by Allison Serafin (read by Helena as Allison was unable to attend the meeting) on behalf of the property owners on Howard Street for funds of \$19,150 to make repairs on Howard Street; as Howard Street is considered a tourist attraction to many. A discussion was had about how funding repairs to a private road would set a precedent for funding road maintenance from homeowners on many of the other private roads on the island. A verbal poll of board members indicated that members would be hesitant to fund for that reason, or at the most a partial amount. Jeff indicated that the fund that this would need to be pulled from the budget would only have about \$15,000 available for the rest of the fiscal year.

Facebook Comments: Jen Mongan (as a board member) I do not think Howard Street repairs should be a TDA responsibility.

Lida Jones – Widgeon Woods is another private road that needs work.



Another question – Why is the county not more involved with the repair of roads? How are private roads designated vs. other non-private roads? *Helena asked Kris to answer: Kris – NC counties are not required per NC General Assembly or typically do not do road maintenance. The county doesn't have a budget nor a funding source for it.

Lida Jones: The island is at capacity. The need for advertisement is not needed now. I want suggestions on how we can improve the unpaved roads. This should be a high priority

Karen Falk Sawyer: You start a go fund me, and it will happen...

Lida Jones: We already, as homeowners, do what is suggested. We need help.

Gary Curry: Does the state statute allow for TDA funds to pay for private road repairs? In my home area, we can only spend TDA funds on marketing due to state statute.

Daphne's response: could qualify it as visitor enhancement as we use Howard Street in our campaign, so it could potentially be funded there. Perhaps a future discussion?

b. New Board Members/Chair & Vice Chair Selection

Tabled/will be on October meeting agenda

Welcome to Kenny Balance and Jennifer Esham, new board members

Thank you, and best wishes to Amy Howard and Daphne Bennink cycling off the board.

c. FY21/22 Budget Committee

Tabled/will be on October meeting agenda

Public Input/Questions/Comments – none other than previously responded to Facebook questions.

Next meeting – October 22, 2021, 9:00 am

Adjourn

Martha moved to adjourn, Lisa second. The meeting adjourned at **10:37 am**

FY21/22 remaining Board Meeting Dates

October 22, 2021

November 19, 2021

December 17, 2021

January 21, 2022

February 18, 2022

March 18, 2022

April 22, 2022

May 20, 2022

June 17, 2022