



Ocracoke Township Tourism Development Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 18, 2022, 9:00 am

Meeting held virtual via Facebook Live Stream

Present (Voting): Kenny Ballance (Chair), Martha Garrish (Vice-Chair), Lisa Landrum, Jennifer Esham

OTTDA Staff: Helena Stevens, Sharon Brodisch

Hyde County Staff: Kris Noble, Corrinne Gibbs, Donny Shumate

Presenters: Theorem Advertising: Scott Scaggs, Tom Hickey, Eleanor Talley. Visit NC: Marlise Taylor. Ken DeBarth, Bob Chestnut

Call of the OTTDA Meeting to Order

Chairman Kenny Ballance called the virtual monthly OTTDA meeting to order at 9:00 am

Approval of February 18, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Martha moved to approve minutes, Lisa second. Motion passed.

Financial Discussion/Hyde County

Jeff Dippold was not in attendance; Helena read his report. 2% YTD 2021/22 collections total \$363,059 for July 1, 2021, to Feb 28, 2022 (occupancy months June 21 to Jan 22). This is an increase of \$54,914, 17.8% higher than the same months for the 20/21 fiscal year.

Current Revenue Collections and Projection

The current revenue projection through the end of the fiscal year is \$441,000. This is based on current revenues July 2021 – Feb 2022, plus 95% of prior fiscal year 20/21 actual collections for the remaining months. This current projection is \$80,000 greater than the revenue collection amount originally included in the FY 21/22 budget. Using actual YTD collections, plus 100% of the comparable remaining 20/21 months collections, this would be a total of \$445,000. This is an increase of \$84,000. Using YTD actual collections and 110% of comparable remaining months of FY 2021, the total would be \$554,000, which is \$92,000 greater than the original budgeted amount for the current FY.

Draft FY 2022/2023 OTTDA Budget Hearing

At the February meeting, the OTTDA board approved the draft budget. Helena has posted the draft budget at the Post Office, and Donny will add it to the county website. The public hearing will be held at the next OTTDA meeting on April 22.

New Business

Spring Advertising Campaign Review – Theorem Advertising Scott Scaggs

New Creative Additions



Adding to the campaign that was started last year, they have updated with some new ideas, new images, and videos. Scott showed examples of digital display banner ads. One that has been added promotes astrophotography and appreciates the night sky here. Scott presented a new collection of images to be used on social media platforms. He shared images from 3 versions of a 15-second ad for Facebook and YouTube, all geared toward extending the length of stay on the island.

Tom Hickey: Spring Campaign Media

The campaign launched on March 14 and will run through Memorial Day. About the same time frame as the Spring 20/21 campaign, which had pretty good results, they are expecting the same or better results this year. 100% digital media will be used, allowing them to find the audience and make ongoing optimizations during the campaign to ensure that performance is where they need to see it. The following media channels will be used: Paid search –the google search ads; Paid social – on Facebook and Instagram; Programmatic – targeting a specific audience with display ads and pre-roll videos. New to the campaign is YouTube since there are now videos. E-blasts will be sent to rented lists of qualified recipients. Targeted areas are NC, Virginia, and Washington DC, based on Arrivalist data.

Eleanor Talley – Public Relations

Eleanor and Helena have been pitching Ocracoke; they’ve been getting some traction and are starting to get commitments from media to come and visit, which should get coverage through the summer and fall. They will continue to work on those efforts.

- Lisa asked if we could get information from Arrivalist about when potential visitors that have waited in the Hatteras ferry line leave and don’t come over to Ocracoke. Tom will check to see if he can get this information.

STR Reports – Marlise Taylor – Visit NC Director of Research (STR=Smith Travel Research)

Visit NC used to be part of the Department of Commerce. Since 2014 they were privatized and are now part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC). EDPNC also works with business growth and retention, small business start-ups, and product export assistance. Visit NC’s mission is: *To unify and lead the state in positioning North Carolina as a preferred destination for travelers and film production and in maximizing economic stability statewide.*

They partner with the tourism entities in each of the 100 counties in NC. Most of their partners spend most of their marketing dollars in-state. Their job is to amplify the message that is being put out, and work towards bringing in out-of-state visitors. While NC has the largest share of visitors as a single state (it averages yearly between 30-40%), other states have the majority of overnight visitors, so it is important to continue to market to out of state visitors.

Partnerships help them almost triple their advertising budget:

Media Spending

Visit NC media budget:	\$3,996,741
Partner Investment:	\$2,137,579
Final Budget	\$6,134,320

Media Partnerships

Visit NC:	\$320,000
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Media Partners:

\$5,583,834

Total Value

\$12,038,154

Visit NC is a research-based program. They have a lot of KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) in place to measure and track results. She shared KPI's for Visitor spending, # of Consumer Inquiries, and Tier 1 and 2 Co-op Partners.

They offer a co-op program; OTTDA participates in this with Arrivalist program. 70 counties participate in this program.

Visit NC programs include: Advertising, Public Relations, Group Travel, Sports Event Marketing, Industry Leadership, International Marketing, VisitNC.com, Tourism Development, Retire NC Program, Research, Community Outreach, Social Media Outreach, Film, and Publications.

The NC Visitor Centers and the Call Center have remained with the Department of Commerce but Visit NC does work closely with them.

2021 Recap: Marlise shared research on trends and projections for 2020/21, top in and out of state origin markets, visitor spending. Much of this information is available in real time, or near real time, online on the Visit NC Community Profile Dashboard. A Visitor Economy Index, which includes information on lodging room nights sold/revenues generated, is also available to view as a month-to-month total, for the past 12 months.

DMO Opportunities and Research Partner Programs. Visit NC will formally introduce its new partner opportunities at its conference this weekend. DMOs can subscribe to data; DMOs and local hotels and motels can participate in data collection that will then give them information on what is going on with hotels and motels in Ocracoke. For Ocracoke hotels to participate, STR would require a minimum of 4 hotels out of the 10 listed to participate and more than one owner owning 70% of the rooms. The cost is \$950/year for monthly reporting.

They also work with Air DNA and Key data for Vacation Rental data. There is currently one business on the island that utilizes this. This reporting also shows future booking data. The cost is about \$7500/year for reports but maybe discounted through Visit NC. Other research partner programs; they will continue their partnership with Arrivalist, they also work with Zartico Visitor Insights and use them as their destination management dashboard internally, but also have create a co-op that would provide counties static monthly reports; and MMGY Custom Traveler Segment Profile, this is a nationwide study, that could provide custom reports.

Old Business

Island Inn Update

Ken DeBarth reported that the Outer Banks Community Foundation had granted OPS \$15,000 towards their roofing project. At their last meeting, the OPS board of directors approved a contract with Landmark Building & Design to be the general contractor for this project. They anticipate Landmark choosing a subcontractor to complete the work, and they hope it will start soon. Ken and Tom Paul were invited to a meeting with Sara Teaster and a state agency representative looking into affordable housing. They made a presentation seeking their opinion on converting the Island Inn park landscape into affordable housing. They had a sketch that would involve making 16 sleeping units available on the property. Ken pointed out that it is not in OPS's mission but a problem they recognize. Their mission is to preserve historic structures, so they declined to participate. The sketch did not include a septic system, so the whole area would have been parking areas and buildings. The gazebo was given to OPS, and they took it in hopes they could get the school shop classes to help fix it up. Since then, there have been a few



storms, and it has deteriorated. There are no longer shop classes at the school, so the board decided to dispose of it. They will make a public offer to give to whoever will come and get it; otherwise, it will get knocked down. OCBA will take over the restroom phase of the Island Inn project. OCBA will request Occupancy tax monies to invest in it, and they are currently researching the structures and funding for the structure and septic. Ken and Bob Chestnut met with Bob Kornegay, attorney and OPS board member, who has written a draft agreement to be presented to both boards to vote on to accept. Ken thinks they are looking at prebuilt structures instead of the original plan of stick-built buildings.

- Question from Lisa, is OPS moving back to the building being a visitor's center? Ken answered that the plan always was for Island Inn to be a visitor center. The restrooms are separate from the visitor center.
- Question from Martha about the roof: Did you say that the roof project also includes some dormers? Is that still the plan. Ken's answer, the dormer on the side facing the lighthouse, has to come off to be historically accurate. The roof project consists of taking off the existing tar shingles, taking off the dormer mentioned above, which will get the building back to the original profile, and replacing the roofing boards with plywood. All of the fascia and soffit will be replaced to an architecturally accurate style. The roof will be sealed with snow seal until they have access to cedar shakes.

Teknum Update

OTTTDA board members previously agreed to fund \$25,000 for this project. Helena followed up with Randal Matthews, who advised that the county will need to pursue additional funding to get the project off the ground.

Joint 2022/2023 Occupancy Tax Grant Funding request

Bob Chestnut, representing the 3% Occupancy tax board. The request period has ended; the 3% board will meet on Thursday, April 7, at 6:00 pm to make grant decisions. TDA will schedule a time to meet.

Bench Project Update

Martha reported that the project would start as soon as the permit is received from DOT. Chris said she finished the application; she will print and sign it today and send it. Since the original permission came from the previous owners, Martha spoke with the new owners of the Pony Island Motel to see if they are okay with the (2) benches scheduled to be placed on their property. They are fine with that.

Trash Receptacles as Enhancement

The committee met; they approved a trash can design. Helena shared the picture of the design. It will have a container on the side with pet wasted bags. There will be some signage saying sponsored by OTTTDA.

A bid proposal and contract for trash pickup contract work were presented. Martha suggested an adjustment in dates for pickup months based on the separation of fiscal years. There was a motion by Martha, second by Jennifer, motion passed to accept the contract as written with proposed changes.

Board member vacancy

Kenny said that at the next Hyde County Commissioner's meeting, Susie Rockell will be appointed to the OTTTDA board, starting in May.



Helena still has not gotten any applicants, so has not hired an administrative assistant, but has secured some people to help with some projects.

Executive Director Report

Helena will be attending the Visit NC conference this weekend on behalf of OTTDA. She has been doing ongoing PR work with Eleanor Tally. NC Tripping and Afar magazine writers are going to visit Ocracoke in early April. Nat Geo is coming in May. Helena is setting up itineraries including overnight stays for these folks based on their specific interests. We should get some write-ups on the island from these, this will be the first time we have hosted since Dorian. Helena and Eleanor will also meet with the media at the Visit NC conference media roundtables. The focus is to pull more visitors for the shoulder seasons. There is also a NY media mission, Ocracoke was selected to attend this by Visit NC. This presents a great opportunity to meet with writers/editors from large publishing companies (some examples – Meredith, Hearst – some of their publications are Southern Living, Parents Magazine, Afar, Travel & Leisure)

Helena gave a presentation to the North Carolina Travel Guide about Ocracoke earlier this month. The Instagram problem has been resolved, we had to create a new Instagram account.

Public Input/Questions/Comments

Online comments: Pony Island responded that they would participate in the programs offered by Visit NC.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is on April 22, 2022, at 9:00 am.

Adjourn

- Prior to adjournment, Lisa asked about OTTDA funding the walking map. OTTDA did provide \$7,500 for 2022 map reprinting. There is a request for the next fiscal year for the 2023 map, as well as video and info to go to lodging guests. One Boat guide has a database of things to do and is working to partner with local hotels so that information can be distributed to hotels/lodging guests. To do that there is some back-end programming involved on One Boat's side. This cost will not be passed along to the lodging owners.

This will be put on the agenda for next month.

Martha moved to adjourn, Lisa second. The meeting adjourned at 10:12 am

FY21/22 remaining Board Meeting Dates

April 22, 2022

May 20, 2022

June 17, 2022