



Ocracoke Township Tourism Development Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, Feb 24, 2023, 9:00 am

Present (Voting): Martha Garrish (Vice-Chair), Susie O'Neal Rockel, Jennifer Esham

OTTDA Staff: Helena Stevens, Sharon Brodisch

Hyde County Reps: Kris Noble, Randal Mathews

Avenir Bold: Tom Hickey, Scott Scaggs

I. Call to Order

Martha Garrish called the meeting to order at 9:01 am

II. Approval of Nov 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Jennifer moved, Susie second. Motion passed

III. Advertising Update – Avenir Bold

Tom –

Tom recapped Arrivallist information for 2022. Year over year 2022 compared to 2021: total trip volume was down 12.9%, overnight trips were down 1.70%, average nights up 0.79% to 2.7 nights. Breakdown of 2022 monthly info, length of stay, and top origin DMAs included in the attached file.

Media Plan:

Spring Campaign – runs mid-March to Memorial Day

Goal – Broad reach awareness and consideration to attract new visitors

Target audience – Seekers: free thinkers, curious, imaginative, and flexible

Competition – Outer Banks, Crystal Coast, Topsail Island, Currituck

Geography – NC (excluding Hyde County), VA, and DC

Channels being utilized:

YouTube \$20,000 Spotify \$35,000 (new to program, video ads) Paid Social \$20,000 (Facebook/Instagram) Programmatic \$40,000 (display/banner ads on websites) Paid Search \$15,000 (text ads via Google)

Scott Scaggs – Creative Strategy:

Target – Seekers, focus on finding them and leading them to Ocracoke

Messaging – Authentic Ocracoke, not so predictable

Visual Style – Uncomplicated and seasoned

Images – Robert Chestnut – Avenir is using some of his photos in the ad campaign

Tagline – Miles from the Mainstream. Hints at physical difference, Ocracoke is not the same old beach destination.

(See examples of display ads in the attached file) Themes: Perfectly Imperfect, Not the Same Old Anything, You Could be Doing Less, Other Beaches are So Jealous

The current video is a one-minute version; Avenir Bold is working on a 30-second version to be utilized with YouTube and Spotify, as well as 15-second snippets that will highlight a specific Ocracoke experience.

In addition to the paid media, Eleanor Tally works on Public Relations year-round, getting connections and mentions in stories.

IV. Financial Discussion/Hyde County

a. FY22/23 Occupancy Tax Collection Projection

Year-to-date collections through Dec 31, 2022, is \$385,757, which is 8% greater than the amount collected in the same period for the 21/22 Fiscal year. Projection for the remaining months, total annual collection would be \$481,000. December collections were down slightly from the prior year's collection. This \$481,000 projection is based on 85% of last year's revenue for Jan-March, and 100% of April and May. Total expenditures through January were \$299,000, which is about 50% of the current fiscal year budget. As of the 21/22 fiscal year-end, there was \$245,000 available cash; as of January, there is \$330,000.

b. FY22/23 Proposed Budget Planning

There is a slight revision within the current budget draft; the amount for the walking map distribution is now \$4,500, and the amount for conferences adjusted to \$13,000. (Adjusted internally, not an addition to the total budget)

Helena noted that Hyde County's check request process had changed. Previously Helena would email Hyde County Finance, including documentation to submit payments to vendors. Now a check request form is completed and then uploaded with supporting documentation to a Google drive which will be submitted weekly as opposed to individually.

Jeff noted that the new Hyde County Finance system site would be up and running soon, ultimately to view transactions/balances in real time.

V. New Business

a. Welcome Center

OCBA is not continuing to rent the space in Community Square. Rudy Austin suggested/offered to use some of the space in the Working Waterman's Museum as a place to put rack cards, etc., which would include the Walking Map. Notice will be given to all businesses that this is available.

VI. Old Business

a. Island Inn Update – Ken DeBarth

Ken gave a comprehensive presentation (see attached handouts) about the OPS Island Inn Project, which included: An overview of the entire project, the financial history to date, plans and drawings, including budget estimates, Fundraising strategies, and their mortgage plan. There are also public meetings planned, the first of which will be March 14, 2023, where information will be distributed, and the public can ask questions about the project. The public restroom project is moving forward. OPS is partnering with OCBA, and they have contracted with Landmark Design and Construction as their general contractor.

Due to an increase in the interest rate on the mortgage for the Island Inn, OPS will be seeking \$20,190 (up from \$17,641) for OTTDA's portion of the mortgage payment. The amounts to be requested for the British Cemetery Celebration and the Fig Festival are expected to be similar to last year, \$4,800 and \$2,601, respectively.

b. Potential Tram Stop at Springer's Point

The tram stop project has been placed on hold to be revisited for 2024.

c. Lighthouse parking lot contract

OTTDA needs to sign a new contract with Jesse Spencer. He would still like to receive the original amount he requested for payment. Martha asked for suggestions for anyone interested in partnering to fund the parking lot to make up that difference. Susie suggested Friends of the Lighthouse.

d. Safety Campaign flyer

A copy of the flyer was distributed. They are being distributed with the Walking Maps, to local businesses and ferries.

VII. Executive Director Report

Walking maps have been received. 90,000 were produced. They are being delivered as requested in 20 box increments from One Boat and stored at the OTTDA office. Angie Hatfield, whom OTTDA has contracted for distribution, is using Mail Chimp to contact our usual recipients to ensure they get the requested amount. Maps have been distributed to all of the NC Welcome Centers. A digital version of the map was created, and a link was sent to all businesses to share with their specific customers/guests. Kathryn Waldrop helped Helena get this map completed. Some new mentions in the content were that Ocracoke is on the NC Scenic Highway, as well as information on the 200th anniversary of the lighthouse.

Helena and Eleanor Talley have been working on Public Relations, they have created a "pitch sheet" that has been/will be used at conferences and presentations. Helena and Kathryn Waldrop have been organizing itineraries for visiting writers. Jacqui Agate was on Ocracoke Feb 7-9 writing an article for the UK Telegraph that will be published in late Feb. 2023. The itineraries are an immersive experience for

the journalist and are funded through the Public Relations portion of the Advertising budget. Jackie's itinerary included but was not limited to the Lighthouse, a boat experience with Captain Rob, and eating at local restaurants.

The 2023 Visit NC Travel Guide is out; Visit NC distributes these at conferences and events they attend throughout the year. Ocracoke has a 2-page spread in the guide, which includes photography, specifically highlighting the Lighthouse and Springer's Point. We are hosting another group of journalists April 26-28 from Germany and Austria, whose trip includes Hyde, Dare, and Carteret Counties. They will have a similar itinerary to the Feb trip.

Helena presented to the Visit NC staff for their 2024 Travel Guide.

Last night, a collaboration of Visit NC, the Outer Banks, Currituck County, and Ocracoke for the launch of Season 3 of the TV show – The Outer Banks - went out on Twitter. Giving the real version as opposed to the fictional one.

A group of French writers will be visiting in June. They plan to write a 10-page feature on the Outer Banks region and are interested in shipwrecks, wild horses, lighthouses, and seafood.

Regarding other PR, Eleanor added that they are also speaking with many independent writers and that Ocracoke is trending well.

Conference updates: IMM follow-up. This was an opportunity to pitch stories about Ocracoke to 25 journalists from different regional and national publications.

Upcoming conferences include Visit NC Tourism Conference, March 6-9, STS Domestic Showcase (Southeast Conference), April 16-20, and Washington DC Media Mission in late August.

Helena is on the Lighthouse Anniversary committee; events are still being worked on for events in May and throughout the summer months.

Helena is working on the New Bern airport column wrap redesign, which will dovetail off the new ideas from Avenir Bold.

A blog area is being added to the website; there is a budget for local writers to contribute content.

VIII. Public Input/Questions/Comments

Candy Gaskill asked some questions concerning funding for the Island Inn project, and Martha responded.

IX. Next Meeting Date – March 24, 2023, at 9:00 am. (changed from March 17)

X. Adjourn

Susie moved to adjourn, Jennifer second. The meeting adjourned at 10:42 am.

FY22/23 Board Meeting Dates:

March 24, 2023

May 19, 2023