



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

Friday, May 19, 2023 9:00 am

The meeting was held virtually via Facebook Live Stream

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

OTTDA Staff: Helena Stevens, Sharon Brodisch

Avenir Bold: Scott Scaggs, Tom Hickey, Eleanor Talley

Hyde County: Randal Matthews

I. Call to Order

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

II. Approval of March 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Jennifer moved to approve, and Martha second. Motion passed.

III. Financial Discussion/Hyde County

a. FY22/23 Occupancy Tax Collection Summary

The 2% Occupancy Tax collections associated with overnight stays occurring in March 2023 were \$617 less than the collections associated with the comparable month in 2022 (\$8,398 in 2023 versus \$9,016 in 2022).

b. FY22/23 Occupancy Tax Collection Projection

For the 2 remaining months of the current fiscal year, the projected tax collections are 97% of the amounts received for the corresponding months of 2022. This is based upon the actual collections during the past 4 months, just over 97% of the amounts collected for the comparable 4 months in 2022. Currently, the total FY 2022/2023 tax collection projection is \$482,097, which is \$1,447 greater than the \$480,650 total budgeted for the fiscal year and 106% of the \$454,836 of collections during FY 2021/2022.

See the attachment for OTTDA Budget to Actual comparison as of March 31, 2023. Currently, the general ledger information for April is not available. When it is received, this comparison will be updated and redistributed.

As of March 31, 2023, the *Arrivalist* program has been budgeted at \$11,000. Because that contract was not extended, this \$11,000 will not be expended in the current fiscal year and has not been included in the FY 2023/2024 Budget. This frees up \$11,000 to be reallocated if deemed appropriate by the board for FY 2022/2023. It will also enable

\$11,000 of funds to be carried forward as accumulated excess revenues into future years.

IV. Avenir Bold - Advertising Campaign Update

Tom Hickey - Spring 2023 Campaign performance

Spring Advertising Campaign still has a few more weeks, current results are through May 14. The overall objectives of the advertising campaign are to create awareness of Ocracoke, create positive perceptions of Ocracoke, and increase intent to visit.

Website usage, year over year comparison; new users on the website were 23.8% higher at 62,598, and sessions were up 23.5% at 76,393. Impressions were up 7.2% at 19,197,140, clicks were down 25.2% at 27,787, and views were up 13.2% at 4,471,933. The Bounce rate is at 62.77%, down 18.9%. Google is the highest source of website traffic; see the attachment for a full list. 8 of the 10 highest are from the paid campaign. Sessions are up and show that the top 3 markets for new users are Washington DC, Raleigh, Durham, and Charlotte. The most used page from these users is the Visit Ocracoke NC homepage.

Tom reviewed the performance of paid search, YouTube, Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Spotify, and CausallQ. See attachment.

Eleanor Talley - Public Relations 22/23 Recap

Helena and Eleanor have contacted 130 plus Media Contacts, including editors, writers, freelance media, and social media influencers.

In-Person Outreach:

- Visit NC In-state Media Mission, Durham, NC (August 2022)
- Visit NC NY Media Mission, NYC (October 2022)
- IMM Media Marketplace, NYC (January 2023)
- Visit NC Media Marketplace, Asheville, NC (March 2023)
- STS Media Marketplace, Huntsville, AL (April 2023)

Results of Outreach:

12 Media Hosted from the UK, Germany, France, and US. 922 articles written about Ocracoke, over 16 billion media impressions, and coverage in Major Publications; Our State, The Telegraph (UK), AFAR, MSN, Southern Living, and Yahoo. Shoulder season was the focus for pitches.

V. New Business

a. FY23/24 Board Meeting Dates

Martha moved to change meeting dates to every other month, Susie second. Dates for 23/24 FYI: July 15, 2023, Sept 15, 2023, November 17, 2023, January 19, 2024, March 22, May 17, 2024; and June 21, 2024.

b. Funding of Ocracoke Events

Relating to grant funding by 3% tax board to organizations on the island that submitted funding requests for events. The board concluded that they cannot fund events with current commitments.

c. Trash Collection Contract Renewal

The board needed to vote to renew the trash collection contract. Susie moved to accept the trash contract, and Jennifer seconded. Motion approved.

d. ED Employment Contract Renewal

Executive director's employment contract needs to be renewed. Martha motioned, and Jennifer seconded). Motion approved.

VI. Old Business

a. Island Inn Update – Ken DeBarth

The mortgage for Island Inn has been refinanced through individual investors. A grant from Outer Banks Community Foundation money is being used to replace the soffit and fascia. OPS received \$100,00 from 3% tax that will be used for the roof, with any residual funds used for the siding on the Route 12 side of the building. The Landscaping committee team has done a lot of work, and they are funding their own projects. There has been a meter installed, trenches will be dug to get electricity and water to various areas on the property. The restrooms will be stick built, and the crew should start in September. OPS will be having the Working Watermen's Festival on Oct 21. It will be a one-day event on OPS museum grounds.

b. 2023 Lighthouse Parking Lot Contract - Parking Lot Renewal Terms

Martha stated that there is a 5% increase this year. Jesse Spencer would like to sign a one-year lease, and in that year, OTTDA can discuss how things will go in the future. The increase is due to what will be a busier year, with the Lighthouse's 200th anniversary and parking for repairs being done to the lighthouse. When the original contract was made, he asked to have help with alternate funding and wants OTTDA to continue to do so. \$33,000 was budgeted for the parking lot, so this increase is only \$75.00 for this year.

Lisa moved to renew the contract with a 5% increase, and Martha seconded. Motion approved.

C. (Kenny added during meeting) Tram Stop at Springer's Point

Kenny spoke with Lee Leidy from Coastal Land Trust. Coastal Land Trust does not favor a tram stop at Springer's Point. Kenny explained that OTTDA was willing to take on setting up a stop in future years. That this didn't meet the requirements about what they are about. Kenny explained that OTTDA was willing to take on setting up stop in future years. It is promoted as a place to go without easy access/parking. There could be alternate options. The board will continue to look at other options.

VII. Executive Director Report

Marketing

Project management - Weekly status calls with Avenir Bold Ad Agency staff

Projects:

1. The FY22/23 advertising Campaign kicked off on March 20, 2023, with 3 weeks remaining.
2. Coordinating FY23/24 OTTDA/Avenir Bold Contract.
3. New Bern Airport Wrap Design
The existing Ocracoke wrap is still intact. New creative will be installed in July 2023.
4. Public Relations
 - a. Planned/hosted German and Austrian journalists on Ocracoke from April 26 – 28.
 - b. Planned/hosted itinerary for Caroline and Craig Makepeace from www.thisisraleigh.com from April 2-6.
 - c. Hosted and coordinated with Scott Mason (WRAL Tar Heel Traveler) to do Ocracoke stories 5/16 – 5/18 due to VisitNC Conference Media Mission.
 - d. Hosting journalist from *Le Figaro*, the oldest national newspaper in France (circulation of 26 million) May 30-June 1, who will produce a 10-page feature (print and online) on the Outer Banks region, including Ocracoke and Currituck.
5. VisitOcracokeNC.com Website
 - a. Updating the website with new photography.
 - b. Working on resources to add content to a “Blog” section.
 - c. Ongoing updating of website copy
6. Photography / Online Content
 - a. Organized photography shoot with Chris Davis Photography April 11-13 2023.
7. 2023 Ocracoke Walking Map & Directory –
 - a. OneBoat reprinted 30,000 maps for \$5,406.00. New maps arrived on 5/15/23.
 - b. Coordinating delivery to ferry offices and local businesses.
 - c. Dare Brochure Distributors Contract will be renewed for FY23/24.
8. FY2023-24 Budget
 - a. FY23/24 Budget Ordinance has been signed and filed with Hyde County.
9. Trade Show Attendance/Media Follow-Up
 - a. 2023 Southeast Tourism Society Domestic Showcase - Huntsville, Alabama — April 17-20, 2023
 - b. Washington D.C. Media Mission ~ August 2023. Ocracoke is one of four partners invited to participate in this trip to meet with staffers, editors, and freelancers. The cost is \$2,000 (including travel expenses)
 - c. ESTO – August 19-23, 2023 – US Travel Association Conference

Other Activities

- Updating VisitNC Database with Ocracoke attractions and events
- Ferry Division Letter of Support - Maritime Administration's US Marine Highway Program
- Check OTTDA mailbox
- Receive/review/submit vendor invoices to Hyde County Finance Office for processing.
- Respond to TDA phone calls/information requests
- Respond to info@visitocracokenc.com emails
- Wrote ferry division letter of support for Maritime Administration. • Work with Kathryn Waldrop to manage content for the VisitOcracokeNC social media pages.
- Worked on Board report.
- Serving on Ocracoke Light Station 200th anniversary committee. The event will take place May 18, 2023 at 1 pm.
- Coordinating with legal services re: Parking Lot Contract
- Coordinating with Hyde County on FY21/22 Audit
- Classification of expenses relating to budgetary accounting.
- Coordinating with advertising agency to create an Ocracoke pitch sheet.

VII. Public Input/Questions/Comments

No comments

VIII. Next Meeting Date – July 14, 2023, at 9:00 am.

IX. Adjourn

Kenny moved to adjourn, and Lisa seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

FY23/24 Board Meeting Dates:

July 14, 2023

Sept 15, 2023

November 16, 2023

January 19, 2024

March 22, 2024

May 17, 2024

June 21, 2024