

Currituck County Tourism Advisory Board Minutes of Meeting January 12, 2015

The Tourism Advisory Board met on Monday, January 12, 2015, 5:00 p.m. at the Historic Currituck Courthouse. The following members were present: Leslie Daughtry, Mike Martine, Ted Jagucki, Jay Bender, Wanda Beasley, Tameron Kugler, and Dan Scanlon. The following members were absent: Paul O'Neal, Janice Farr, and Daniel Pennington. Guests included Russ Haddad, Judy Vassar, Stuart Chamberlain, Greg Schwarga, Michele Ellis, and Kaye Beasley

- Item 1: **Call to Order** – Leslie Daughtry, Chairman, called the meeting to order.
- Item 2: **Approval of Agenda:** Jay Bender made a motion to approve the agenda and Ted Jagucki seconded the motion. All approved.
- Item 3: **Approval of November 2014 Minutes** – November minutes not attached. All approved. Leslie Daughtry said to send any changes send to Tameron.
- Item 5: **Public Comment** – There was no public comment.
- Item 6: **Dan Scanlon – Currituck County Occupancy Tax**

Dan discussed the 2-year budget cycle which county departments are currently working on and how the Tourism Advisory Board fits into the development of the Tourism budget.

The Tourism Development Authority (TDA) is composed of the County Commissioners. Dan Scanlon serves as Finance Director and Tameron Kugler serves as an ex-officio member. The TDA oversees the budget, but does not have the time, experience, or expertise to manage all budget decisions and relies on the Tourism Advisory Board to serve in that advisory capacity.

Dan explained that Occupancy Tax is divided into two categories: Tourism Related and Promotions. The Travel & Tourism Department receives funding from the Promotions allocation. The remainder of the occupancy tax goes to the county to be used for tourism related expenses. The county anticipates \$10 million in occupancy tax and the Tourism Department will receive approximately \$3.3 million. The remainder goes to the County for Tourism Related expenses. There is no requirement where the funds go nor a geographical designation.

- Dan shared the current Tourism Budget and pointed out that it is:

19% Personnel

14% Operations
64% Promotions
3% Capital Outlay

Tourism Related expenditures include facilities, beach nourishment, etc. The Board of Commissioners (TDA) decides how that money is spent. For example, it can be used for EMS, the Sherriff's Department, Parks, Whalehead, Lifeguards, Rural Center improvements, etc.

Dan shared a spreadsheet reviewing occupancy tax budgeting. Currently there is a fund balance of \$4.5 million. In 2012 the county borrowed \$6 million at 2% interest to purchase the S.O.B. Water System for Corolla. The water system was badly needed for Corolla. The money is being paid back. Tour operators pay an annual fee, which generates approximately \$30,000/year. \$75,000 goes to Economic Development (Peter Bishop), \$20,000 to the Airport, and \$200,000 to Whalehead for marketing. Capital expenditures include the north beach ramp, bath houses, and signage for Connect Corolla. Contracted services include cleaning, moving, and facilities. Funds are budgeted to add infrastructure improvements for the Rural Center. Funds are also budgeted for enhancing water access and adding a Board Walk in Corolla.

Dan provided an update on Connect Corolla and the bike paths. There is a problem with the 13' rise for the connection from Historic Corolla Park to the beach. It overlooks Corolla Light homes and invades privacy.

Dan discussed the change in the \$800,000 annually given to Whalehead. \$200,000 will be given to Travel & Tourism for marketing Whalehead and \$600,000 will go to Whalehead for operations. Some of the operation expenses in the near future will include removal of the current sign and gate house. Landscaping will be improved.

Dan reported that the Commerce Park is almost complete and the scope is increasing to include sports, airport, Rural Center, etc.

The Board of Commissioners will be asked to re-consider allowing alcohol to be served at county properties for tourism-sponsored event. The county is currently limited in types of groups we can host because we cannot serve alcohol.

A discussion followed. TAB members could see the value of having a signature county event and discussed ideas.

Item 8: **Director's Report:**

Review Proposed Marketing Plan for 2016-2017

Tameron Kugler, Director, reviewed the proposed Marketing Plan for 2016-2017 and highlighted some of the promo plans.

The Rural Center will be rebranded with a new name and logo, CCRC, to portray it as a fun place to go. A rack card is being developed. Plans for activities to draw people into the CCRC include educational programs such as the SEAL Program, family oriented events, Girl Scout and Boy Scout events, archery, casting for fish on the pond, Wild Horse education, evening family movies in the covered arena, and more. Activities will start in June.

TAB members agree that it is a good idea and Dare County doesn't offer any similar events. There was a question about the new name because CCRC doesn't really say what the Rural Center is. Promotional ideas included using billboard advertising, placing visuals such as a wagon at the entrance. Members agree that the mainland is open "all season" and needs ongoing events. Billboard advertising can be very effective. It was noted that the new Welcome Center billboard located ½ mile before the Center was installed last March and visitor count increased 38%. Tameron reported that new billboards had gone up in Grandy promoting Mackay's Island and the Rural Center.

Rural Center/HJCAS/Airport/Mackay's Island

Russ Haddad presented a review of the current status of the airport and plans for the future. Projects for improvement include new pumps for the fuel farm, new fire exits, and improved lighting for the runway. A new southern taxi way is planned for 2016. Russ also discussed events that would include movies, a fly-in vintage aircraft day, remote controlled airplane day, and other annual events. He also discussed plans for group packages such as hunting and fishing packages. August is aviation month and plans are being developed for a special event.

Tameron discussed the Historic Jarvisburg Colored School and the attention it has received since the completion of renovation. The challenge is staffing and bathroom facilities. The plan is to add a separate bathroom facility with a small information area that would not require staffing. The school is a very important part of Currituck's history and should draw visitors.

Tameron discussed Mackay's Island and the fact that it is underutilized. It is beautiful and a unique part of the county. Plans are being developed to promote it, focusing on eco-tourism.

Plans for a hotel feasibility study are underway and funds are set aside for it.

Tameron announced that the Moyock Welcome Center will be re-landscaped. The Currituck Master gardeners are developing the plan and will use native plants throughout the design. Plaques will be used for identification of the plants.

Janice Farr and Ted Jagucki will attend the Governor's Conference with Tameron.

Application for Support of Funds

The Master Gardeners are holding their annual Flower Show in the Spring, which draws people from Hampton Roads, as well as locals. They have requested \$2,000. Discussion followed regarding past support and whether they should again receive full support. Motion was made by Ted Jagucki and seconded by Wanda Beasley to accept the Master Gardeners request of \$2,000. All approved.

New Welcome Center Sign

Tameron presented the drawing of the proposed new Welcome Center Sign. \$75,000 was already budgeted for the sign and it will cost \$71,000 (coming in under budget). The sign has been approved by the Planning Department and conforms to the Sign Ordinance. It will be all brick with a light house that really lights up, have a carved goose, a symbolic bridge, and is reflective of the whole county. Discussion followed.

Motion was made by Ted Jagucki and seconded by Jay Bender to approve the sign as drawn. All approved.

Buy Local Currituck Campaign

The Buy Local Currituck Campaign continues to be successful with more people participating in the contest. Fourth Quarter was a banner quarter with 654 entries and more than \$82,000 in sales receipts collected. It does have an economic impact.

Merchandise

Retail sales grew 30% last year. Smaller and less expensive items such as shot glasses will be added to the inventory this year.

Marketing Plan

Stuart Chamberlain presented an update to the proposed Marketing Plan. Advertising plans may include a \$90,000 ad in Real Simple Magazine, which

reaches our target market. Digital pay-per-click has been dropped and other resources are being used.

Item 9: **Board Members' Report**

None

Item 10: **Other Business**

Tameron Kugler invited Board members to participate in budget and marketing planning. Members were interested and it was decided to meet at BJ's Café for a working luncheon meeting. Date to be determined.

The next Tourism Advisory Board Meeting will be held in the Conference Room of the Historic Currituck Courthouse on a date to be determined.

Item 11: Meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Leslie Daughtry, Chairman

Tameron Kugler, Secretary