



**Convention & Visitors Bureau
Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Aberdeen Area**

**Board Meeting
Thursday, August 11, 2022**

Members present: Tom Pashley, Kelly Miller, George Little, Matt Hausser, Bonnie McPeake, Frank Quis, Natalie Dean-Hawkins, Andy Hofmann, Warren Lewis, Linda Parsons, Caroline Xiong

Not present: Wayne Vest,

Staff present: Phil Werz, Donna Garner

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Chairman Pashley.

Chairman Pashley entertained a motion to approve the May 12, 2022, minutes. Member Miller made the motion to approve the minutes, Member McPeake seconded it, and the motion passed.

Financial Report-Andy Hofmann

Room Tax Collections:

The CVB concluded the 2021-22 FY with total collections of slightly more than \$3 million. This is the first time collections have surpassed the \$3 million mark and comes one (1) year after the CVB surpassed \$2 million for the first time. The year-over-year increase was 39.1%.

Expenditures:

We ended the month of June in a positive and strong financial position of +\$106,000. Please note not one budget line exceeded annual budget determinations. Once Finance closes the books on the 2021-22 FY, about \$400,000 will go to the fund balance. Lease, OPEB and retirement numbers are yet to be figured into the final numbers. Overall, an historic and exceptional year.

Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet):

Also, you were provided a copy of the Balance Sheet/Statement of Financial Position as of August 8, 2022. The balance sheet showed \$2.4 million in total assets, \$622,000 in total liabilities, for a total fund balance of a little more than \$1.8 million.

Chairman Pashley and the board congratulated the CVB staff on a job well done. He then entertained a motion to approve the Financial Report. Member Little made the motion, Member Lewis seconded it, and the motion passed.

President & CEO Report-Phil Werz

Phil started his presentation with a slide showing the Room Occupancy Collections for the last 6 years. For the 2021-22 fiscal year we recorded the first ever \$3 million year in collections. This represents a 39.1% increase from the previous fiscal year. All twelve months set a new record for each month. April and May were the #1 and #2 all-time high months in the 35-year history, beating out the month of June 2014, when the back-to-back U.S. Opens were held here.

The STR reports for the three of the last 3 three fiscal years shows that our hotel occupancy percentages have increased from 51.2% in 2019-2020 to 64.5% in 2021.22. Also, the average daily rate has increased substantially from \$118.30 to \$162.70, during the same period. These factors greatly impact our increase in collections. Also, in comparing the counties that we typically follow in occupancy rates, Phil's next slide shows that other counties are rebounding well and "catching" up to us in terms of occupancy since coming out of the pandemic.

Phil gave an update on the Donald Ross coin initiative. The CVB gave a total of \$10,000 to the Tufts Archives, which was comprised of \$1,900 that they sold and a check for \$8,100 that we donated from proceeds of coins we sold. The coins continue to be used as a prize for completion of the Pour Tour passport promotion. All 96 competitors of the US Adaptive Open received a coin. Also, Heidi Walters, with VisitNC, took some to the 150th Open in the UK, and CCNC purchased 40 for their Royal Dornach tournament they do. We've had great regional and national media coverage with golf publications.

The Pour Tour launched on April 1st and so far we've had 409 passports redeemed. 62% have been from outside the destination. We will be partnering with the new Sandhills Trolley Company. They will be doing a "Brews Cruise" which will incorporate several of the places in the Pour Tour passport. Also, several short-term rentals have reached out and gotten passports to give out to their renters. As of now this will be an ongoing program.

Some key metrics from Media One from the 2021-22 fiscal year were that overall website traffic was up 31.3%, organic traffic is up 23.2% and average sessions were up 92%. Destination guides requests were up 24.7%. Top clicks from ads came from DC, Charlotte, NYC, NC markets and Tidewater area of VA.

Phil announced that he has chosen Ashley Baker to fill the position of Destination Services Manager. She is in the MCLI program at the Chamber, has a degree in hotel/restaurant management. She once owned the Inn at the Bryant House and is most recently the Executive Director at Linden Lodge. She taught hospitality at Sandhills Community College, been a Moore County resident since 2007 and has visited all 50 states. She will start with the CVB on September 1st. As Phil went over the aspects of what he envisions Ashley's duties to be, discussion ensued regarding sales leads that Beverly provided when she was here, and how things are evolving, as we move forward.

Next Phil discussed the Skynav 360 project. He showed a quick demonstration of the portal and how it works. It's basically an aerial map of the destination that we populate and manage the areas of interest. It's a cool marketing tool that we will continue to improve upon, to help promote our destination.

We have a new partnership with Golf Pride and Ship Sticks that will run from September 12-October 2, 2022. It will coincide with the President's Cup in Charlotte September 22nd-25th. It's an enter to win promotion which will help grow our data collection. It will be 3 night/4 rounds golf package with exclusive Golf Pride grip experience and the clubs will be shipped using Ship Sticks.

We are looking at sending out a survey to our email database regarding the destination and what we can do to improve the visitor experience. Phil sent out a copy of the proposed survey prior to today's meeting to get feedback from the board. Discussion ensued regarding the length of the survey and what

the expected return rate is. It was decided that we should maybe do a separate path for previous visitors, versus people who haven't visited before. The marketing committee will get together and work on narrowing down the survey, before it's sent out.

Finally, Phil showed a short video, of an idea that he hopes to incorporate here in Moore County, after the success the Pour Tour has had. The video is about Block Island, Rhode Island and blown glass orbs, that a couple makes, and then hide around the island. Visitors come and look for them as collector items. He hopes to work with the area potteries and/or Starworks, to make some type of item we could do this with here. 2023 has been designated the Year of the Trail, so we hope to be able to do this, as part of that initiative.

Board Member Reports

Member Parsons began by saying that the Moore County Chamber of Commerce was named the 7th largest chamber in the triad region. It's based on the number of members; and we continue to grow with a 95% retention rate. They have been really focusing on workforce development initiatives in partnership with Natalie Hawkins and Partners in Progress. They are also delving into childcare issues for the community. She has found that we are probably the only Chamber in the area that is looking at this issue. So, they are tackling more in-depth issues, than the typical socials that they have in the past.

Member Hawkins announced that their Board met and approved a name change for her organization which will be effective, at the beginning of next year. The new name will be Moore County Economic Development Partnership. They have worked with Moore County Schools and Sandhills Community College on an employer survey. It is being analyzed now, and hopefully it will bring out really good information from employers on what they need and their feelings on the business climate in Moore County. She stated there are several confidential projects she's currently working on.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

New Business

Chairman Pashley brought up an idea, which some information was sent out to the board prior, to today's meeting, regarding a grant program for the towns, to support local festivals. He mentioned the 5 pillars, from the strategic marketing plan that Chris Cavanaugh developed for us. One of which was celebrating small towns, so the thinking is to give them an opportunity to request a grant, from our fund balance, after we had such a record-breaking year in collections. This would be a one-year program, to show what we could do, in the future, if the room occupancy tax rate is increased. There would be specific criteria set, that they would need to meet, to qualify for the grant. The floor was opened for questions and discussion. Much discussion ensued and Member Hausser was the only member that voiced opposition to the plan. It was decided to work on a proposed grant application, and revisit this topic at the next meeting, which is scheduled for October 20, 2022.

With no further business, Chairman Pashley adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Hofmann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Andy Hofmann, Secretary/Treasurer