



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

**Board Meeting
Thursday, February 16, 2023**

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

Not present: Kelly Miller, Wayne Vest

Staff present: Phil Werz, Donna Garner

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Chairman Pashley.

Chairman Pashley entertained a motion to approve the December 15, 2022 minutes. Member Parsons made the motion to approve the minutes, Member McPeake seconded it, and the motion passed.

Financial Report-Andy Hofmann

Room Tax Collections:

Despite the December power outage that left lodging partners in the dark for several days, the CVB still maintained a momentum in hotel occupancy tax collections and is currently pacing 7.8% ahead of pace compared to the first six months of 2022-23 fiscal year. December collections were relatively flat, but up 1.2% compared to the same month last year. This marks 22 straight months of all-time high collections.

Expenditures:

We ended the month of December \$35,000 to the positive side of YTD budget. The December financial report does not reflect the \$200,000 budget amendment approved by the board and subsequently the county commissioners. Based on the expenditures associated with that budget amendment, the added expenditures are committed to numerous Year of the Trail projects and PR, a spring familiarization tour and replenishing previously unbudgeted funds for the Moore Miracles for the Holidays campaign. Overall, CVB financials are very strong as we are pacing towards a \$3.1 million collections FY on a budget of \$2.6 million.

Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet):

Also, you were provided a copy of the Balance Sheet/Statement of Financial Position as of February 8, 2023. The balance sheet showed \$2.6 million in total assets, \$955,000 in total liabilities, for a total fund balance of a little more than \$1.7 million.

Chairman Pashley entertained a motion to approve the Financial Report. Member Lewis made the motion, Member Hofmann seconded it, and the motion passed.

President & CEO Report-Phil Werz

For July through December, our room occupancy collections are \$1,570,161. The month of December was up 1.2% over last year, and we are 7.8% ahead of last FY. At this rate, we are pacing toward a \$3.1 million fiscal year. Our current budget, after the \$200,000 budget amendment approved at the last board meeting, is \$2.6 million.

Occupancy for 2022 is 65.3% overall, and our average daily rate is 172.58, which is up 14%. Our short term rental inventory for Moore County, as a whole is 650, which is up 50.1%. The Village of Pinehurst has the most at 418, and Southern Pines has 147. Revenue from short-term rentals from December 2021-December 2022 was \$24.3 million, which is up 46%. All these factors are why we are seeing such record breaking collections month after month.

Our Pinecone Pathways campaign is scheduled to launch on March 20th, the first day of Spring. We have partnered with Starworks in Star, NC, to make 100 glass pinecones, using a special mold which we purchased. We will hide 10 pinecones per week, for 10 weeks, on different trails throughout the county. Each one will have a tag attached, with a QR code, so when someone finds them, they can scan the code and it will take them to a page that explains the program. Clues will be given and additional clues may be given with a purchase from certain local businesses.

The Sandhills Storytrails program will begin on April 11th. The first one is going to be placed at Nick's Creek. It will have 13 stations, with Pooh cutouts painted by Dan. Each station will have a QR code, that can be scanned to hear the story that Dan has written and narrated. Two additional trails will be revealed in June and September.

Phil stated that the plaques for the Carthage Digital Video Trail have been ordered. A media event/unveiling is scheduled for May 12th, in Carthage. It will be held in the parking lot behind the vacant Fidelity Bank building, where 2 of the murals are located. There will be plaques placed at each of the 5 murals, that have a QR code, that you can scan, to take you to a video describing the story behind the mural.

We continue our Sandhills Pour Tout and Sandhills Wine Trail Passports. We have people bringing in completed passports still every week. Now we have partnered with Sandhills Trolley Company, to give away buy one get one certificates, as a prize option.

Ashley has been working on an idea, that will expand on the Candor Peach Festival, which is scheduled for July 13-15, 2023. We are planning several peachy ideas for a "Peach Week", which will be July 13th-22nd. These include having several restaurants to serve a peach dish on their menu, Farm Tours, a 5K Run, a blues festival, peach themed movie at the Sunrise Theatre, a peach ice cream social at Weymouth, a Southern Pines Brewing Company Peach Brew at a select event, a peach ice cream night at the Sandhills Bogey's game on July 16th, among others.

The CVB is going to be joining the NC Sports Association, and our membership will officially begin on July 1, 2023. The membership will provide access to sports tourism leads, many networking opportunities, and to be able to attend designated trade shows. We are working on fact sheets, a microsite and video. There is a real sports tourism boom in NC. Phil cited several sites we have here in Moore County that are great opportunities for sports tourism: Ransdell Aberdeen Sports Complex, the Sports Complex at Hillcrest Park, and there is a proposed expansion of the Sandy Ramey Keith Park in Vass.

Phil reported on an event he attended in Rockingham a few weeks ago, at the racetrack, which was called Moonshine and Motorsports Trail. This event was attended by several key figures in the racing industry, as well as the governor. There has been a lot of improvements made to the racetrack at Rockingham, including repaving, new suites, seating and more. They are hoping to pitch to Nascar to bring a Busch series race back to Rockingham, in the future.

One last item Phil mentioned was that he wants to designate money in the 2023-24 fiscal year budget for a new website. He stated that the current website template is outdated and it's difficult to make changes and updates to it. With a new website we can incorporate new technologies, streamline navigation, and improve access to video/social feeds. In discussion regarding the budget for next fiscal year, the board gave Phil the go ahead to prepare the budget based on \$3.1 million. Phil also stated that the volunteer lunches for the US Kids golf tournament, which was discussed at the last meeting, will be added into the 2023-24 budget.

Phil then introduced Katie Wyatt, Executive Director of Weymouth, to give a presentation to the board, of some of the projects and ideas that they have for improvement and expansion. She gave some history of Weymouth and how the organization is operated. The upkeep of the grounds and gardens is done solely by volunteers, with supervision from a recently hired property management director. In 2022, Weymouth celebrated their 100th anniversary, with the goal to have 100 events during the year, which they did. They also celebrated their centennial through a \$1.1 million fundraising and awareness-building campaign. They met this goal as well. Their board of directors have already talked about and made some preliminary plans for an outdoor amphitheater, the idea of which has also been discussed by our board. If we are able to get the room occupancy tax increase, as has been discussed in great length, this is just the type of project that we hope to be able to help become a reality. At the end of Katie's presentation, Phil proposed the idea of reforming the Tourism Product Development Committee. Member Lewis stated he would like to be named to the committee, if we do reinstate it, but nothing was formally decided at this time. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the money we currently have in our fund balance and how much more is likely to roll over into it at the end of this fiscal year. It was discussed to go ahead and use some of our fund balance to begin a grant program, to help fund ideas such as this one at Weymouth. It was decided to hold a special work session on March 20, 2023, at 1:00 to discuss this topic in greater detail.

Board Member Reports

Member Hawkins stated that she is pleased to announce that a new business is going to be opening in Aberdeen. Bulldog Pipe, a Missouri based, veteran owned business, that makes the orange plastic pipe that utility lines are put into underground, will open a second location here in Moore County. They plan to employ 26 full time positions at an average annual salary of \$50,675, with expectations of growing to 55 full time employees over the next 5 years.


Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

There was no new business, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:46.

Respectfully submitted,


Andy Hofmann, Secretary/Treasurer