



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room
300 W. Crowell Street
Monroe, NC 28112
Thursday, September 14, 2023 - 8:30 AM

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of July 13, 2023
2. Finance/Occupancy Report
3. Science Center Update
4. Dowd Center Theatre Update
5. Air Show Update

MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

REGULAR MEETING

CONFERENCE ROOM

300 W. CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112

JULY 13, 2023 – 8:30 A.M.

MINUTES

Present: Chairman Marion Holloway, Vice Chairwoman Pat Kahle (left 9:05 a.m.), Lorayn DeLuca, Gina Day, Joyce Rentschler, Ron Hinson, and MaryAnn Rasberry (arrived 8:32 a.m.)

Absent: Arpan Bhakta

Staff Present: Communications and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Communications Specialist Bradley Lucore, Finance Director Lisa Strickland, Accounting Manager Ashley Ivey, Communications and Tourism Assistant Alison Nichols, Assistant City Attorney Ashley Duncan Britt and Dowd Center Theatre Supervisor James Vesce

Staff Absent: Downtown Director Matt Black and Monroe Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike

Visitors: None

Chairman Holloway called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of July 13, 2023 to order at 8:31 a.m.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of April 13, 2023 Ms. Rasberry made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of April 13, 2023. Ms. DeLuca seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Hinson, Rasberry, Day, Kahle, DeLuca, and Rentschler

NAYS: None

Item No. 2 Finance/Occupancy Report Ms. Ivey stated that all but the last month of the year's totals are in. Collections were \$76,655 for the month of May, and the June collections will come in later this month. All in all, collections are 14% higher than last year. Staff is finally seeing the full effects of the newer hotel after Covid. The unreserved cash balance in the capital project fund is \$903,842, which is over and above anything already committed. Science Center budget numbers are still estimates until they're fully operational.

Mr. Hovanec stated that staff is trying to keep expenses down, especially with Tinker Belle. In the current year, some will be spent for insurance and some other things, but for the most part all that unspent money will come back to TDA at the end of the year.

Item No. 3 Science Center Update Mr. Hovanec explained that Ms. Fike was unable to attend the meeting today. Mr. Hovanec stated that the Science Center is open four days a week right now. There will be a grand opening at the end of September; hopefully the parking lot will be done by then. The Science Center is currently open four days a week from nine to five, but they're trying something new today staying open till seven o'clock. Staff is trying to stay open later one day a week for people who work later. Mr. Hovanec presented a recap of events and promotions the Science Center has provided for the community, all with much success. Staff has also recently announced the launch of doing birthday parties at the Science Center, and the first party is scheduled soon. Staff has gotten some really good feedback from the community. The staff at the Science Center is very dedicated and great with community interaction. They have found a niche in the homeschool community as well as the Union County moms group. Revenues show a big boost in June once school let out.

Ms. Rentschler asked if visitors can park at the library if the Science Center lot is full.

Mr. Hovanec answered yes, as it is a public parking lot, but parking at the church is discouraged.

Chairman Holloway asked when the Science Center might be open five or six days a week.

Mr. Hovanec responded that that would probably occur when the parking lot is finished. The Science Center is very dependent on weather – gloomy days bring more visitors. Staff wants to keep later hours at least one day a week to accommodate people's work schedules.

Mr. Hinson asked if the sewer situation is fixed.

Mr. Hovanec responded that it is. The company doing the parking lot crushed two pipes. They over-excavated the area and created too many piles of dirt that needed to be taken to special facilities. They wanted the City to pay, but Engineering determined the company was responsible for the problem. The company walked off the job for three weeks. They finally returned, but the project was delayed. Work resumed last week, and the parking lot just needs to be graded and paved. It is supposed to be complete by mid-August. Staff is planning the Science Center grand opening for the end of September to leave a cushion for more parking lot delays. The grand opening will be a fun night with food, drink, and music.

Ms. Raspberry stated she took her grandchildren there, and they stayed for hours and enjoyed it.

Mr. Hovanec noted that many guests spend the morning at the Science Center, go Downtown for lunch, and return to the Science Center to spend the afternoon. Staff has put out restaurant pamphlets to encourage business for them.

Chairman Holloway asked what percentage of visitors make purchases in the Science Center store.

Mr. Hovanec stated that he was not sure but that Ms. Fike would be able to answer that.

Ms. Day asked if there were any Science Center pamphlets she could put in her hotel.

Mr. Hovanec answered that staff just had some made and that he would get them to the hotels.

Mr. Hovanec also noted that staff will be changing the traveling exhibits in January. The Darden exhibit will be relocated to another spot in the center, and a new exhibit will be displayed for four to six months.

Item No. 4 Dowd Center Theatre Update Mr. Hovanec stated that many exciting acts have recently been announced and gave kudos to Mr. Vesce for booking and promoting those. There are several national acts coming to Monroe over the next few months. The plan is to bring in some big acts and several smaller/cultural acts to supplement those.

Mr. Vesce said that staff has made a huge step in creating a season at the Dowd and is hopeful that a year from now there will be a season where subscribers can pick and choose events. Nationwide, the theater is seeing lower attendance numbers due to the pandemic and more at-home entertainment options being available, so theaters everywhere are having to navigate that reality. 111 people came to see “E.T.” at the Dowd, which was a good turnout. Staff has been thinking about movie choices and realizes that ‘80’s and ‘90’s movies seem to be the right niche for the audience. The movies bring in people and expose them to the theater, so they are worth doing even at a small loss. The rental schedule has been stabilized with the symphony and two “in-house” companies, Lanti Performing Arts and Acting Out Studios, and those have about seven or eight shows per year. Lanti shows bring about 400 people. Ticketed events take time to set up and book – it took a year to get Ruben Studdard finalized. Upcoming shows include Lee Greenwood, Spin Doctors, and the “Newgrass” group AJ Lee and Blue Summit. Staff would prefer to announce the entire season at once, but most artists want exclusive promotions for their events. So once the artists are announced individually, staff can present the entire season. Staff has been working with the Arts Council and would like to develop an arts consortium with Union County groups for outreach and communication among different organizations for the purpose of growing and encouraging young artists.

Mr. Hovanec added that the theater needs people to buy tickets.

Mr. Vesce said that the theater has 560 seats, and there aren’t enough people in Monroe buying tickets to fill that many. Staff is trying to market to areas outside Monroe.

Mr. Hovanec agreed and added that educating people about the theater is essential to helping people to develop appreciation for the arts in community.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle added that changing behaviors is also key. People don’t know about the theater because they haven’t always had it, and it takes time. There is an audience in western Union County that needs to be drawn in.

Mr. Hovanec exhorted board members to spread the word and be ambassadors for the theater. Especially important is developing relationships between the City and the Downtown restaurants and merchants. If the theater has more customers, they will have more customers.

Ms. Raspberry reminded the Board that the consultants said this process would take three to five years.

Mr. Vesce stated that national acts run \$20-35,000, not including transportation, hotels, etc. for the entire group. If every seat in the theater is sold at \$59/ticket, that grosses only \$28,000. People complain about paying \$25 for a ticket. The theater is taking a hit on these big acts in the hope of getting attention for the theater. Many artists don’t want one venue charging more than others, so sometimes they will dictate ticket charges.

Mr. Hovanec told the group that staff continues to have discussions about staffing needs and the budget.

Ms. Rentschler asked if there were any need for volunteers.

Mr. Vesce said that there will be in about six months; in the meantime, he is working to stabilize the existing part-time staff.

Item No. 5 Air Show Update Mr. Hovanec announced that planning has begun in earnest for the 2023 air show. Posters have been printed. Tora! Tora! Tora! is coming this year, so the poster centers around Pearl Harbor. Staff will be doing a program again this year under Mr. Lucore's lead. Staff is selling ads to offset the costs. Staff has started sending out contracts to performers. The military may bring two A-10's, which would be a huge draw. There will be another hangar built at the airport before the show, which occurs this year on November 11-12. Ticket prices remain the same as last year. Staff has contracted with an individual to bring in sponsorships. The air show isn't done to make money, but all efforts are made to keep costs down as much as possible.

Item No. 6 Other Chairman Holloway discussed his trip to Washington, DC for the Good Jobs, Great Cities award.

Mr. Hovanec announced the sale of Tinker Belle to Military Aviation Museum in Virginia. They sent mechanics down to work on Tinker Belle, and she will fly off on Saturday to her new home. All are invited to the cookout/sendoff. Military Aviation Museum will be happy to bring her back down for rides at a later date; they have been great to work with.

Mr. Hovanec said that there is work going on in Downtown apartments with plans for a restaurant there. The deli across the street from the theater is open, a coffee/pastry shop is coming, and Main Street Bistro is under new ownership. The Alleyway Project is still having issues; staff is hopeful it will be open in September. So much was found unexpectedly when the site was dug up, and it has caused many delays. The splash pad is open and is a big hit. The police departments is done, and the ribbon cutting/grand opening will be in mid-August.

Ms. Rentschler reminded the group that the Art Walk is the second weekend in October in conjunction with the juried art show.

Ms. DeLuca made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Rasberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Hinson, Rasberry, Day, DeLuca, and Rentschler

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

ATTEST:

Marion Holloway, Chairman

DRAFT

**CITY OF MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA
HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX COLLECTIONS HISTORY**

Month	Collections										Total from	Inception
	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	
July	\$28,654.11	\$43,035.55	\$50,935.50	\$57,757.87	\$49,237.75	\$52,555.67	\$50,502.69	36,361.82	\$58,632.48	\$77,203.59	\$71,311.91	
August	30,116.04	36,977.80	48,845.23	56,430.47	53,328.43	53,326.15	56,119.30	33,717.52	\$57,897.52	\$72,112.89	\$0.00	
September	26,188.56	36,170.00	43,971.63	52,501.28	49,280.40	57,322.54	54,601.79	36,333.99	\$57,646.95	\$67,860.45	\$0.00	
October	32,977.87	39,730.02	50,450.31	62,852.14	54,883.77	61,478.56	58,576.63	47,918.88	\$60,324.82	\$72,465.20	\$0.00	
November	28,593.65	36,201.55	44,935.28	53,718.49	52,159.03	52,344.58	44,677.93	33,689.77	\$62,776.88	\$69,846.82	\$0.00	
December	24,367.81	29,698.95	37,857.15	42,905.99	43,020.41	41,248.49	35,855.88	30,608.58	\$55,627.44	\$58,041.30	\$0.00	
January	28,568.49	33,174.57	47,446.36	49,314.76	44,917.89	45,790.70	37,998.34	34,555.26	\$47,425.62	\$57,371.07	\$0.00	
February	31,618.26	43,506.47	49,690.07	50,786.19	49,090.46	50,174.09	41,074.64	35,790.58	\$55,074.93	\$64,640.72	\$0.00	
March	35,351.64	45,588.42	54,238.06	58,370.59	58,151.91	55,628.08	44,213.52	49,982.86	\$68,473.24	\$78,446.59	\$0.00	
April	33,561.95	44,006.59	56,185.32	54,463.65	55,541.22	52,298.83	24,603.84	54,315.36	\$72,023.49	\$69,155.17	\$0.00	
May	33,436.34	46,174.97	55,415.35	59,183.07	56,465.45	58,606.08	30,748.09	57,003.16	\$72,299.75	\$76,655.92	\$0.00	
June	37,334.32	46,835.97	56,036.83	53,968.10	56,273.88	54,481.57	36,285.75	57,435.41	\$72,729.08	\$74,197.82	\$0.00	
Penalties/Interest	2.00	130.10	40.29									
Total Collections	\$370,771.04	\$481,230.96	\$596,047.38	\$652,252.60	\$622,350.60	\$635,255.34	\$515,258.40	\$507,713.19	\$740,932.20	\$837,997.54	\$71,311.91	
Distribution of Collections												
Administrative Fee	\$11,123.13	\$14,436.93	\$17,881.42	\$16,522.53	\$16,415.73	\$16,352.55	\$15,152.58	\$15,077.13	\$17,409.32	\$18,379.98	\$2,139.36	\$436,330.41
Operating (2/3)	\$119,882.64	\$273,630.07	\$385,443.97	\$423,820.05	\$403,956.58	\$412,601.86	\$333,403.88	\$328,424.04	\$482,348.59	\$546,411.71	\$46,115.04	\$4,707,199.76
Capital (1/3)	\$239,765.27	\$193,163.96	\$192,721.99	\$211,910.02	\$201,978.29	\$206,300.93	\$166,701.94	\$164,212.02	\$241,174.29	\$273,205.85	\$23,057.52	\$4,016,514.83
	\$370,771.04	\$481,230.96	\$596,047.38	\$652,252.60	\$622,350.60	\$635,255.34	\$515,258.40	\$507,713.19	\$740,932.20	\$837,997.54	\$71,311.91	\$9,160,045.00

Operating Fund Activity:

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue*	Operating Expense	Capital Fund Transfer Out	ncrease/(Decrease in Net Assets	Fund Balance
2004	172,430	249	114,830	57,351	57,351
2005	245,420	49,354	163,613	32,453	89,804
2006	268,539	70,628	176,514	21,397	111,201
2007	292,730	69,590	191,873	31,267	142,468
2008	319,940	79,519	210,593	29,828	172,296
2009	327,232	85,108	217,376	24,748	197,044
2010	286,292	105,147	190,079	(8,934)	188,110
2011	306,323	141,300	199,809	(34,786)	153,324
2012	338,380	218,328	214,473	(94,421)	58,903
2013	366,349	157,025	223,162	(13,839)	45,064
2014	389,562	132,144	239,765	17,653	62,717
2015	505,323	229,769	193,164	82,390	145,107
2016	603,262	324,214	192,722	86,326	231,433
2017	677,786	243,750	211,910	222,126	453,559
2018	634,804	270,913	201,978	161,913	615,472
2019	643,745	257,345	206,301	180,099	795,571
2020	599,412	270,236	166,702	162,473	958,044
2021	501,615	385,603	164,212	(48,200)	909,844
2022	732,524	459,705	241,174	31,645	941,489

Fund Balance as of June 30, 2022

\$941,489

* Includes total occupancy tax collection less administrative fee plus interest earnings and revenue for The Tinker Belle.

Capital Fund Activity:

Revenue	\$4,016,514.83
Proceeds from 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Science Center	\$3,651,935.65
Interest Earned Trustee Account for 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds	\$84,497.15
Investment Earnings	110,578.81
Donations/Sponsorships	440,233.25
Grants	100,000.00
Expenses:	
Professional Fees for Civic Center	86,838
Monroe Park Master Plan and Site Assessment	23,058
Air Museum Advance Planning	19,240
Purchase "The Tinker Belle"	150,000
Capital Improvement to interior of "The Tinker Belle"	18,500
Storage Building	8,175
Tourism Study	7,500
Snow Machine	6,129
Tinker Belle Navigational Equipment	1,480
Center Theater Property	248,273
Tinker Belle Engine Purchase	80,046
Tinker Belle Tail Wheel	5,151
Purchase of Property Adjacent to Center Theater	260,497
Purchase of 318 E. Franklin Street Property	449,875
Capital Improvements to Science Center Building	3,866,342
Architectural/Engineering Services/Exhibits Consulting - Science Center	669,225
Fund Raising Services - Science Center	100,439
Capitalized Equipment/Exhibits - Science Center	526,014
Center Theater Expansion - Consulting Services	62,000
Branding Initiative/Website Design	33,830
2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Issuance Costs - Science Center	84,256
2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Debt Service & Annual Admin Fees	583,082
ERP Project	3,220
NC DNCR Grant Capital Equipment Expenses	99,346

Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund

as of Aug 23, 2023

\$1,011,243.32**Portion of Cash Balance Currently Committed in Projects:**

Projects:	
Branding Initiative	\$ -
Monroe Science Center Building	7,702.44
Center Theatre Expansion	-
Science Center Exhibits	<u>50,865.87</u>
	\$ <u>58,568.31</u>

Unreserved Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund \$952,675.01

(\$0.00)

Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund Operating Activity FY 2024		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Occupancy Tax	213,723	\$ -
	Investment Earnings	7,060	-
	Total	220,783	-
Expenses:	Debt Service - Principal & Interest	255,785	(30,448)
	Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees	880	-
	Total	256,665	(30,448)
Net Income (Loss)		(35,882)	30,448

The Tinker Belle Operating Activity FY 2024		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Show Appearance Fees	0	\$ -
	Walk-Through/Merchandise Sales	0	-
	Total	-	-
Expenses:	Repair & Maintenance - Equipment	25,000	-
	Hangar Lease/Rental	19,212	3,522
	Travel	6,500	2,284
	Fuel	20,000	-
	Insurance	12,460	-
	Contracted Services - Warriors & Warbirds	10,000	-
	Merchandise for Resale	3,000	-
	Marketing & Promotions	17,275	-
	Printing	2,500	-
	Total	115,947	5,806
Net Income (Loss)		(115,947)	(5,806)

Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2024		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Admission Fees	350,000	\$ 44,934
	Gift Shop Sales	-	\$ 6,515
	Birthday Party Packages	10,000	\$ 1,993
	Misc Annual Membership	5,000	\$ -
	Rent Science Center Facility	10,000	-
	Total	375,000	53,442
Expenses:	Salaries & Benefits	258,574	49,295
	Bank Service Charges	2,500	1,589
	Technical Contracted Services	8,500	-
	Repairs & Maintenance - Buildings & Equipment	9,000	170
	Software License & Support	15,502	15,502
	Repairs & Maintenance - Copiers	100	319
	Property Damage/Wellness & Clinic Cost	3,248	3,248
	Marketing & Promotions/Printing	25,000	-
	General Supplies	3,000	-
	Small Equipment	500	-
	PC's Peripherals	0	-
	Utilities & Telecommunications	22,049	4,711
	Items for Resale - Giftshop	30,000	9,852
	Subscriptions & Publications	0	-
	Other Operating Expense & Cost Allocations	2,500	(250)
	Total	380,473	84,436
Net Income (Loss)		(5,473)	(30,994)



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority
VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager
DATE: September 14, 2023
FROM: Peter Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director
SUBJECT: Science Center Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The TDA will be presented an update on science center attendance numbers and programming.

REVIEW

June through August we have offered lots of different promotions, programming and extra educational activities to draw people into the center. We have found most successful but all have been good learning opportunities to listen to what the community wants.

We had one of our highest attendance days in July, hitting capacity around 11am in the morning. With school going back in, we will turn our focus to more early learning and homeschool opportunities during the week and regular programming on Saturdays. Tuesdays, we will start booking larger quantity school groups (50-100).

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.

Attachment(s):



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: September 14, 2023

FROM: Pete Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director

SUBJECT: Dowd Center Theatre Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The TDA will be presented an update on events for the Dowd Center Theatre.

REVIEW

Please find attached the Fall 2023 Dowd Center Theatre calendar of upcoming events.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.

DOWD CENTER THEATRE
Fall 2023 Schedule

Ticketed Event	Rental	Movie	Special Event
July 7	E.T. the Extra Terrestrial		
July 14	Top Gun		
July 15	Mama Mia		
July 21	Dirty Dancing		
July 22	Star Wars		
July 29	REV ON: The Foreigner Experience		
Aug 1	Charlotte Pipe & Foundry		
August 11	Tell Me Lies: The Fleetwood Mac Experience		
August 12	Viva Las Vegas		
August 18	The Princess Bride		
August 19	The Dark Knight		
August 26	Lee Greenwood		
Sept 14	Kiwanis Club		
Sept 16	Union Symphony		
Sept 18	SPCC Board Retreat		
Sept 29	Spin Doctors		
Sept 30	AJ Lee & Blue Summit		
Oct 6	New WORLD New Voices Juried Art Show		
Oct 7	Ruben Studdard		
Oct 13 & 14	Art Walk		
Oct 14	Union Symphony Tailgate Concert		
Oct 26-28	Halloween Horror Week		
Oct 29 - Nov 4	DCT Presents: The Move (La mudanza)		
Nov 7-11	Acting Out Studios TBD		
Nov 12-17	Lanti Performing Arts: Peter Pan Jr.		
Nov 26	The Embers		
Dec 1 & 2	Union County Playmakers and the DCT Present A Charlie Brown's Christmas		
Dec 3	Havilah Dance Presents: Nutcracker Sweets		
Dec 7	Police Training		
Dec 8	Noel & Maria: Home For The Holidays		
Dec 14	Police Training/Ceremony		
Dec 16 & 17	SOP Seeds of Praise Presents: Bible Stories		



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: September 14, 2023

FROM: Peter Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director

SUBJECT: Air Show Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The TDA will be presented an update on Warbirds Over Monroe Air Show plans.

REVIEW

The annual Warbirds Over Monroe Air Show is scheduled to take place on November 11-12 at the Charlotte- Monroe Executive Airport. The air show serves as the largest event in Union County, drawing upwards of 50,000 people over the duration of the event, and the Monroe Tourism Development Authority is its largest sponsor. There will be more than 40 aircraft contracted to attend and perform as well as an expanded re-enactor area, kids' area and several static aircraft displays. Tora! Tora! Tora!, a division of the Commemorative Air Force which re-enacts Pearl Harbor, will be returning to the air show this year as the featured act. Staff is contracting with television, radio, newspapers, billboards and social media to advertise the event.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.

Attachment(s):