



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room
300 W. Crowell Street
Monroe, NC 28112
Thursday, February 8, 2024 - 8:30 AM

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of December 14, 2023
2. Finance/Occupancy Report
3. Science Center Update
4. Dowd Center Theatre Update

MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

REGULAR MEETING

CONFERENCE ROOM

300 W. CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112

DECEMBER 14, 2023 – 8:30 A.M.

MINUTES

Present: Vice Chairwoman Pat Kahle, Mayor Robert Burns (arr. 8:32), Lorayn DeLuca, Gina Day, Joyce Rentschler (arr. 8:32), Ron Hinson, and MaryAnn Rasberry

Absent: Arpan Bhakta

Staff Present: Communications and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Monroe Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike, Communications Specialist Bradley Lucore, Accounting Manager Ashley Ivey, Communications and Tourism Assistant Alison Nichols, Senior Staff Attorney Terry Sholar, and Assistant to the City Manager Lisa Hollowell

Staff Absent: City Manager Mark Watson, Downtown Director Matt Black, Dowd Center Theatre Supervisor James Vesce, and Finance Director Lisa Strickland

Visitors: None

Vice Chairwoman Kahle called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of December 14, 2023 to order at 8:30 a.m.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of September 14, 2023 Mr. Hinson made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of September 14, 2023. Ms. Rasberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Burns arrived, and Vice Chairwoman Kahle facilitated introductions of all the board members.

Item No. 2 Finance/Occupancy Report Ms. Ivey stated collections through October were over \$78,388, which is the second highest collection amount in history. Numbers are in line with collections from last year, so they are still strong. The operating fund balance as of June 30 is \$921,490. The unreserved cash balance in the capital project fund is \$1,023,679, which is over and above anything already committed.

Mr. Hovanec asked if that total reflects the \$112,000 from the sale of the Tinker Belle.

Ms. Ivey replied that she believes it does not.

Mr. Hovanec noted that the fund would then be about \$100,000 higher.

Ms. Ivey concluded her presentation, saying that there is nothing unexpected at this point in the year.

Item No. 3 Audit Presentation Ms. Ivey introduced Elsa Swenson with Martin Starnes & Associates via Zoom to present highlights of the 2023 audit. Board members were given hard copies of the presentation as well. Ms. Swenson noted that there was an unmodified opinion with no deficiencies and a cooperative staff. Total revenues for the year were \$941,000, which is an increase of 28% due to a large turnout at the air show and science center revenues. Expenditures were \$993,000, which is an increase of 41% due to science center operation, COLA raises, and repairs for the Tinker Belle. The total fund balance is \$921,000, which is a decrease of 20% due to increases in expenditures. The available fund balance is \$795,000, which has decreased by \$46,000 from last year.

Mr. Hovanec pointed out that these numbers are last year's and that next year's numbers will be way different with the sale of the Tinker Belle reflected. This is presented for general awareness.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle noted her appreciation to Ms. Ivey for another great audit.

Item No. 4 Tinker Belle Fund Reallocation Mr. Hovanec reminded the board that the Tinker Belle was sold in June and that staff had budgeted almost \$100,000 for her operating expenses for the year. If the board takes no action at this time, that money will be rolled into the operating budget. However, staff is asking the board to reallocate some of that money to be used for the redevelopment of the City of Monroe website, including the addition of a tourism site and the overhaul of the Dowd Center Theatre and Monroe Science Center sites. Staff has been in contact with a company called Civic Plus and is asking for \$40,000 from the money allocated to the Tinker Belle operations to be used for this project. This would be strong destination marketing through this website.

Mayor Burns asked if this website would be for the entire City or just for tourism.

Mr. Hovanec responded that it would be for both: It would be all-encompassing for the City with a large tourism/venue component.

Mayor Burns asked if there is marketing and maintenance money allocated for this.

Mr. Hovanec answered affirmatively and referred to the Civic Plus proposal which reflects a full year of hosting and maintenance. He noted that the City has a website currently that is just adequate and that this new website would elevate the City's presence and allow better interaction with the public.

Ms. Day noted that this would be extremely beneficial for visitors as she sees hotel guests struggling to navigate the City's current website. It would also be great to keep the Downtown site updated with restaurant and venue information.

Mayor Burns asked who would keep track of that.

Mr. Hovanec replied that Mr. Black from Downtown would do some of it, but the Tourism/Communications office would handle 90% of maintenance and be the gatekeeper of everything on the website to ensure brand identity and conformity. The current website is seven years old, but the

Tourism/Communications office has grown and needs a website that can keep up with the advances in the City.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle asked for a motion to approve the reallocation of \$40,000 from the Tinker Belle Maintenance and Fuel line items to the Marketing and Promotions line item. Mr. Hinson made a motion to approve, and Ms. Day seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

Mr. Hovanec noted that this would be about a six-month transition to the new website.

Item No. 5 Dowd Center Theatre Update Mr. Hovanec noted that Mr. Vesce was unable to attend the meeting. The theater has been busy with end-of-year activities including the Lee Greenwood concert, statewide NC police training, and an event with SPCC. There has been good momentum, and staff is planning the season for next year. Fall is typically the busiest season, while spring and summer are a bit slower. Staff is learning to recognize what audiences here want and trying to reach out to areas of the community that aren't coming to the theater. There are still some minor staffing issues, but the events are going really well.

Ms. Rentschler noted that Lee Greenwood was great and so are most of the events at the theater.

Ms. Raspberry said that the Union County Playmakers put on "Frosty" and had 667 people to see it.

Mr. Hovanec explained that staff is balancing its own productions with private events. There are currently three full-time staff members, and more staff is needed.

Mayor Burns asked if a breakdown of costs was available.

Mr. Hovanec directed Mr. Burns to the website, where all fees are posted.

Ms. Raspberry asked if the theater broke even on Lee Greenwood.

Mr. Hovanec responded that he is not sure, but it will be close as the concert sold out. Monroe audiences will not pay the ticket prices that Charlotte audiences will.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle noted that the theater has a great mix of local productions and big-name events.

Ms. Rentschler expressed hope that over time the Monroe population will allow the theater to raise ticket prices.

Mr. Hovanec explained that the Playmakers weren't charged. The City does not make any money from them, and the theater is tied up for several days, but it adds to the quality of life for the community.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle stated that as the process moves along, the more everyone learns. The theater is a gem in the community, and every event is an opportunity to present the City in a positive light.

Mr. Hovanec agreed, saying that people are coming downtown for theater events, which drives businesses. The theater still has a good relationship with the Playmakers and symphony.

Mayor Burns asked if there were any ideas for multipurpose events like conventions.

Mr. Hovanec answered that the theater and City do get events. For example, the Southeast Convention of Air Shows is coming to Monroe and using the theater and the science center for conference days. There is a balance to be struck between valuing community partnerships that don't pay like the one with the Playmakers and the theater needing to create revenue.

Item No. 6 Science Center Update Mr. Hovanec announced that the science center is coming up on the one-year anniversary of its soft opening.

Ms. Fike showed the Board an admission tracking spreadsheet, noting that Tuesdays, when the science center is open only to school groups, are very successful. Currently the science center is selling gift cards for Christmas and offering BOGO days for different groups as staff determines the needs of the community. In celebration of the first anniversary of the science center, January 11 will be an event for donors, and January 13 will be a free admission day for the public.

Mr. Hovanec said that staff will be bringing in new exhibits after March 1 and shifting existing exhibits around.

Ms. DeLuca asked if there was any chance of collaborating with Discovery Place.

Mr. Hovanec responded that DP's exhibits are way too expensive for the science center's budget, and Ms. Fike added that their exhibits take more space than the science center has.

Ms. Rentschler asked if staff still tracked where visitors came from.

Ms. Fike presented a visitor zip code report on the screen.

Mr. Hovanec presented the group reservations spreadsheet on the screen and noted a lot of connections with school groups, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining a dedicated day for school groups.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle complimented Ms. Fike on the science center's social media presence.

Ms. Fike noted that a lot of people who went to see "Frosty" at the theater came to the science center before or after the performance, so those theater performances drove science center admissions.

Mr. Hovanec invited the Board to put January 11 on their calendars for the science center donor celebration. The parking lot is complete, which is very exciting, and the islands will be landscaped in the spring.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle stated that Monroe Rotary would like to have a conversation about using space by the parking lot for a park.

Ms. Raspberry asked if the proposed dog park was still a possibility.

Mr. Hovanec answered that the dog park is off the table as Council decided not to move forward with it.

Item No. 7 Air Show Update Mr. Hovanec reminded the Board that the air show took place over Veterans Day weekend. Saturday was rainy, so attendance and revenue were down by about 25%, but overall numbers for that day were much better than anticipated. The air show is within acceptable loss parameters. The Hampton Inn and the Fairfield Inn were full: People came in for multiple days and spent money in the City. All planes were able to fly both days. The show faced a lot of obstacles with airport construction and the current cost of goods. Most importantly, there were no incidents. Staff is moving forward with plans for next year's air show.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle noted that air show revenue loss does not reflect the tax revenue gained from air show visitors.

Ms. DeLuca asked if there was a plan for the Morgan Windsor Alley.

Mr. Hovanec answered that staff is still trying to iron it out with seating, food trucks, and businesses nearby. In the meantime, the MW Alley is very visually appealing.

Mayor Burns asked if there will be any more sculptures.

Mr. Hovanec responded that there would not.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle said that she has seen a lot of pictures of the MW Alley on social media.

Ms. DeLuca asked if there would be a grand opening.

Mr. Hovanec answered yes but that he is not sure when that will take place. He then thanked Ms. DeLuca for her years of service on the Board, noting that her term has ended. Sheila Crunkleton has re-applied to fill the spot. Ms. Raspberry and Ms. Day are up for council approval for re-appointment.

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

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

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

ATTEST:

Pat Kahle, Vice Chairwoman

Alison H. Nichols

MTDA/12-14-23

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

<u>Month</u>	<u>Collections</u>										<u>Total from</u>	<u>Inception</u>
	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>FY2016</u>	<u>FY2017</u>	<u>FY2018</u>	<u>FY2019</u>	<u>FY2020</u>	<u>FY2021</u>	<u>FY2022</u>	<u>FY2023</u>	<u>FY2024</u>	
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	\$70,250.44	
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	\$70,961.74	
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	\$78,388.15	
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	\$66,133.93	
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	\$61,688.92	
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	\$77,373.44	\$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	\$836,924.39	\$418,735.09	
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	\$17,296.09	\$12,562.05	\$445,669.22
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	\$546,418.86	\$270,782.02	\$4,931,873.90
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	\$273,209.43	\$135,391.01	\$4,128,851.90
	\$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	\$836,924.39	\$418,735.09	\$9,506,395.03

Operating Fund Activity:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Revenue*</u>	<u>Operating Expense</u>	<u>Capital Fund Transfer Out</u>	<u>ncrease/(Decrease in Net Assets</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
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
2023	973,576	720,369	273,209	(20,003)	921,486

Fund Balance as of June 30, 2023

\$921,486

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

Capital Fund Activity:

Revenue	\$4,128,851.90
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	107,084.93
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	540,491
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 January 25, 2024**\$1,105,609.45**Portion of Cash Balance Currently Committed in Projects:**

Projects:	
Branding Initiative	\$ -
Monroe Science Center Building	4,208.56
Center Theatre Expansion	-
Science Center Exhibits	36,388.81
	<u>\$ 40,597.37</u>

Unreserved Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund \$1,065,012.08**(\$0.00)**

Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund Operating Activity FY 2024

		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Occupancy Tax	213,723	\$ 115,445
	Sales of TinkerBelle	0	112,500
	Investment Earnings	7,060	8,735
	Total	220,783	236,680
Expenses:	Debt Service - Principal & Interest	255,785	30,783
	Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees	880	1,056
	Total	256,665	31,839
Net Income (Loss)		(35,882)	204,841

Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2024

		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Admission Fees	350,000	\$ 89,665
	Gift Shop Sales	-	\$ 16,684
	Birthday Party Packages	10,000	\$ 6,940
	Misc Annual Membership	5,000	\$ -
	Rent Science Center Facility	10,000	-
	Total	375,000	113,289
Expenses:	Salaries & Benefits	447,529	194,936
	Bank Service Charges	2,500	3,652
	Technical Contracted Services	11,757	5,847
	Repairs & Maintenance - Buildings & Equipment	11,670	2,196
	Software License & Support	15,502	15,502
	Repairs & Maintenance - Copiers	100	447
	Property Damage/Wellness & Clinic Cost	3,248	3,248
	Marketing & Promotions/Printing	25,000	2,549
	Training and Travel Exp	2,000	889
	General Supplies	3,000	3,191
	Small Equipment	500	1,689
	PC's Peripherals	0	-
	Utilities & Telecommunications	22,049	15,862
	Items for Resale - Giftshop	31,266	9,852
	Organizational Dues	10,000	420
	Subscriptions & Publications	0	517
	Special Events	7,000	435
	Other Operating Expense & Cost Allocations	5,521	4,328
	Total	598,643	265,560
Net Income (Loss)		(223,643)	(152,272)



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: February 8, 2024

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

In January, we celebrated our one-year birthday with a party to thank our donors and a community day. We hosted over 150 people at the supporter celebration and over 650 people on our free admission community day. Our average daily attendance is slowly growing as well as our advance sales. From February to May we have over 1300 guests scheduled to come from school group visits.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.

Attachment(s):

STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: February 8, 2024

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

Current Movie Calendar: *Frozen* 1/27; *The Goonies* 2/10; *Black Panther* 2/17; *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* 3/9; *The Wizard of Oz* 3/23; *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* 4/6.

Previous Bookings: Sept. 16 & Oct. 14 *Union Symphony*; Sept. 29 *Spin Doctors*, Sept. 30 *AJ Lee & Blue Summit*, Oct. 7 *Ruben Studdard*; Oct. 6-19 *UCCAC Juried Art Show*; Nov. 8-11 *Lanti Performing Arts Presents Peter Pan Jr.*; Nov. 16-19 *Acting Out Studios Presents Footloose*; Nov. 26 *The Embers feat. Craig Woolard*; Dec. 2 *Union County Playmakers Present Frosty The Snowman*; Dec. 3 *Havilah Dance Presents Nutcracker Sweets*; Dec. 8 *Noel & Maria: Home For The Holidays*; Dec. 9 *Lee Greenwood*; Dec. 16 *SOP Presents Bible Stories*

Current Bookings: January 10-13 *Lanti Performing Arts Presents Anastasia*; Feb 1 *Economic Development Groundhog Day*; Feb. 9 *The Ryan Cureton Exhibit*; Feb. 3 *Union Symphony*; Feb. 15 *UCL presents Black Is The Color*; Feb. 23 *Jazz, Jive & Jam: A Black History Month Joint*; March 2 *Stephen Freeman As Elvis*; March 13 & 14 *UCCAC Presents Cat In The Hat*; March 15 *The Malpass Brothers*; April 12-13 *Downtown Monroe Art Walk*; April 17-19 *The Shakespeare Time-Traveling Speakeasy*

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.