



Board Meeting Minutes from July 18, 2024

Sussex County West Administrative Complex

In attendance: Anne Angel, Scott Anthony (Board Co-Chairperson), Mike Dunmyer, Carol Everhart, Ben Gray, Bonnie Hall (Past Chair), Matt Parker (Board Chairperson), Bill Pfaff, Betsy Reamer, Patrick Ruhl, Alison Schuch, Fred Thompson, Kevin Thompson, Scott Thomas, Lauren Weaver, Jessica Welch

Absent: Terry Carson, Drew DiFonzo, Kevin Evans, Maggie Lingo, Fred Mast, Kristin Miller, Linda Price, Jo Schmeiser

1. Call to Order time: 9:31am by Matt P.

2. Welcome and Introductions: Matt P. welcomed everyone and those in attendance introduced themselves through alphabetical roll call. Quorum confirmed by Scott T.

3. Approval of the April 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion by: Scott A., **Seconded by:** Bonnie H., **Passed by** the Board.

4. Committee Reports

- **Policies & Procedures** – Presented by Ben G.

The committee last met on July 17th and has started to focus on potential SDT Bylaw changes respective to the Short-Term Rental / Realtor Sussex Community

as a result of HB 168 passing the State Legislature and becoming effective starting January 1, 2025. Those potential changes include: adding realtor representatives / organizations to the Board. What would that look like? At large members? Voting? Non-voting advisory? How will it impact SDT's voting structure? The committee will continue to discuss and present recommendations at the October Board Meeting for board vote. The committee also continues to work on its goal of succession planning and currently working on the Executive Director process and tools.

- **Finance** – Presented by Scott A.

Notes from Fred M.:

1. The PAT Revenue for the 4th quarter was up \$8,261 from this same quarter last year (5.02% increase). For the year, the PAT Revenue was down \$230,900 from last year (14.17% decrease), and \$251,915 lower than the budgeted amount for the year. The PAT Revenue for this past year, while down compared to the last 2 fiscal years, was still higher than any previous year, besides the last two.
2. Included in the Grant Income account is \$130,110.53 that has been received from the EDA Grant, less the \$11,563.20 that was for the City of Seaford. Because this is a reimbursement type grant, this is reimbursing eligible grant expenses that have already been spent - SDT isn't holding these funds for later use.
3. At 6/30/24, there was \$401,164 in the checking account. \$4,727.41 of this is reserved for the Culinary Coast campaign. There also is \$168,819 in SDT's reserve (money market) account. The Edward Jones investment account that was opened this spring with \$25,000, had a value of \$25,153 at yearend. The books will reflect a balance of \$25,142, since this is the current cost basis at 6/30/24.

Finance Committee Meeting Notes (from 7/16 Meeting):

1. Even with the reduction in FY 2024 income, SDT remained within budget. \$250K less brought in, however overall loss was only \$115K on total expenses.
2. Education expenses- Page #6: +390% increase caused by Destinations International Annual Conference and April CDME courses in Washington DC. Both were not included in the original budget.
3. Overall Administration Expense Down 1.88%
4. Research- Page #7: +120.50% increase due to adding the Smith Travel / STR Competitive Set Reporting subscription.
5. Misc. Income- Page #5: +1854.02% Error because of wrong coding for a 4th Quarter payment from RBDB Chamber of Commerce. This charge is being adjusted to Co-Op Revenue.

6. Print Marketing Collateral- Page #7: +50.86% due to mid-year Marketing Committee adjustment to print and distribute additional Visitor Guides.
7. After the July Board Meeting the Finance Committee will submit a NEW FY 2025 Proposed Budget to the Board for a vote, considering the adjustment from the 8% STR legislation estimate and the actual (lower) 4.5% STR tax rate that ended up in HB 168 that PASSED.

Motion to approve the 4th Quarter Financial Statements by Bill P., **Seconded** by Lauren W., **Passed** by the Board.

- **Investment** – Presented by Matt P.
SDT's Edward Jones Account currently has a balance of \$25,153.
- **Marketing** – Presented by Bonnie H.

Bonnie outlined and called out highlights of SDT's Fourth Quarter Marketing Report that was shared and posted in the Boardroom.

Lauren W. requested that future reports modify the format to grid-style to better illustrate social media data.

Bonnie referenced the SDT Media Coverage Report, powered by SDT's subscription to Muck Rack. SDT's advertising value equivalency (AVE) this quarter was \$406,537 with 43.9 million unique visits per month to the publications cited in the report.

SDT launched its Tourism Ambassador Program in June and to date has 42 participants that have completed or taking the free, online course.

- **Advocacy** – HB 168 Passed! The advocacy committee will plan on meeting in August or September.

Preliminary Strategic Plan Outcomes and FY 2025 Committee Goals: Matt P. requested that each committee chairperson submit **strategic plan**

accomplishments to him by September 13, 2024 and submit FY 2025 Committee Goals by September 20, 2024.

5. DTO Update – Presented by Jessica W.

- DTO is conducting a Sports Impact Study and will hold a TBA Press Event
- A new (second) round is opening to apply for the Sports Capital Investment Fund Grant (\$10 million). There will be a webinar next Thursday 7/25 and applications are due on August 1, 2024.
- Updated Delaware Value of Tourism economic impact reports will be shared soon.
- Welcome bags are being prepared for guests at select hotels who are attending the Phish Concert.

6. SDT 2024 Awards Luncheon: Friday December 13, 2024 at the Lighthouse Cove Event Center / Hyatt Dewey Beach.

Matt P. asked the Board to consider potential speakers and share with Scott T.

7. SDT Funding Applications are due from all applicant chambers of commerce by COB Friday August 9, 2024. Scott T. will prepare and share a schedule of review meetings with each chamber that will take place in late August.

8. Other Business / Announcements

- Lauren W. announced the opening of the new BFACC Visitor Center in Dagsboro and the start of the Senior Softball World Series in Roxana on July 29, 2024.
- Carol E. shared that business at area grocery stores is up 30% compared to last year indicating the more visitors are dining in than out.

9. Next Board Meeting is on October 17, 2024 from 9:30am - 11:30am. Scott T. will send calendar invites for all future Board Meeting through July 2025.

10. Meeting Adjourned at 10:59am