

Town of Swansboro
Board of Commissioners & TDA
December 9, 2024, Joint Special Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners in attendance: Mayor Pro Tem William Justice, Commissioner Jeffrey Conaway, Commissioner Pat Turner, Commissioner Joseph Brown, and Commissioner Douglas Eckendorf. The board had 1 vacancy.

TDA members in attendance: Commissioner Joe Brown, Michael Diehl, Preston Patterson, Linda Thornley. Jack Harnatkiewicz & Randy Swanson were absent.

Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Pledge

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm. Mayor Pro Tem Justice led the Pledge of Allegiance. The purpose of the meeting will be for review and discussion on the rules and policies that govern Tourism Development Authorities. Anthony Prinz, Jacksonville Tourism Development Authority City Staff Liaison was in attendance to provide details and answer questions.

Anthony Prinz introduced himself, sharing his experience in the tourism development authority (TDA) business, which he had been a part of for almost four years. He reviewed how Jacksonville and nearby areas like Swansboro worked together, benefiting from shared tourism and travel. He also mentioned the importance of working with the county and other local groups to share costs and promote the area.

Mr. Prinz then went over his PowerPoint, herein attached, explaining the differences in how the occupancy tax worked in Jacksonville, Swansboro, and Onslow County. He described how the occupancy tax was collected and shared that Jacksonville and Swansboro followed newer laws, while Onslow County had more flexibility in how they used the tax money. He also brought attention to challenges with third-party rentals like Airbnb's and explained how both collecting and spending occupancy taxes were controlled by specific rules. Additionally he reviewed the tourism development authority membership requirements.

A discussion was held on tourism funding, focusing on budget limits, transparency, and the impact of economic conditions on revenues. It was clarified that allowances for tourism-related expenditures and marketing expenses were covered through occupancy tax revenue. The allocation of funds to events like those by the Seaside Arts Council and Tunnel 2 Towers was debated, emphasizing the need to track economic impact, such as hotel bookings. Concerns were raised about organizations missing application deadlines, leading to suggestions for better outreach and data collection. The balance between strict paperwork requirements and the overall success of events was also discussed, recognizing that some organizers excel at execution but struggle with formalities.

The conversation highlighted the importance of efficient marketing management and strategic partnerships while maintaining responsible spending. Jacksonville's tourism strategy was noted as a successful model, and collaboration with Visit NC, the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association, and Onslow County was encouraged. Limited awareness of additional funding sources led to suggestions for improved communication between agencies.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Conaway, seconded by Commissioner Brown, the meeting adjourned at 5:16 pm.