

## **Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Advisory Board Meeting**

Courtyard by Marriot Chapel Hill

Tuesday, February 18, 2026

8:00 – 9:30 AM

- I. Call to Order– DR Bryan, Chair
- II. Introductions– DR Bryan, Chair
- III. Approval of Minutes- DR Bryan, Chair
- IV. Special Presentation – Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategies. Overview of focus groups assessing the current state of Tourism in Orange County and future priorities.
- V. Executive Director’s Report– Laurie Paolicelli
- VI. America 250 Planning Update
- VII. Community Updates– Board Members
- VIII. New Business– DR Bryan, Chair
- IX. Adjournment (Next meeting: March 18, 2026)

## **Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Advisory Board Meeting**

Blue Hill Event Center, 200 S Elliott Rd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

8:00 – 9:30 AM

### **Board Members Present:**

Theodore Nollert, Craig Lloyd, Lisa Kaylie, Karen DeHart, Matt Hughes, Creston Woods- Vice Chair, Fred Joiner, Ben Marklin, David Putnam, Jon Hartman-Brown

### **Not Present:**

Donald “D.R.” Bryan – Chair, Allison Reid, Heidi Werner Dawson, Meredith Saybe, Sally Greene

### **Staff Attendance:**

Laurie Paolicelli, Hannah Hemphill, Katie Murray

### **Guests:**

Valerie Schwartz

### **Call to Order**

Creston Woods, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:14 AM.

Lisa Kaylie introduced herself and Extraordinary Ventures. The board met at the Blue Hill Event Center and Kaylie discussed their other facilities including a laundry facility, mail distribution center, and the thrift store previously managed by Community Works. Extraordinary Ventures is working on renovating the thrift store to be suitable for IDD employment with plans for a soft opening at the end of January.

### **Round Table Introductions**

Creston Woods introduced the new board members, Theo Nollert (Town of Chapel Hill Town Council) and Fred Joiner (Town of Carrboro Town Council).

### **Approval of Minutes**

Creston Woods requested a motion to approve the November 19, 2025 meeting minutes. Matt Hughes moved, and Craig Lloyd seconded. With all in favor the November minutes were approved as submitted.

### **Executive Directors Report**

#### **Visitors Bureau Fundamentals Presentation**

Laurie introduced Valerie Schwartz who has been working on a book for America 250, *A Gathering of Voices*.

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Laurie presented on the history and origins of Visitors Bureaus, as well as today's industry which included comparing the three Convention and Visitor's Bureaus (CVBs) in the Research Triangle – Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Orange County Visitors Bureau. The Orange County Visitors Bureau was funded in 1992 by the Orange County's occupancy tax. We have a budget of 2.5 million and a staff of six.

Today's priorities include position Orange County as a desirable tourism destination through search engine optimization, algorithms, and a digital presence. We try to work with all the different groups to coordinate tourism initiatives.

Tourism in Orange County is generating \$300 million annually. We are working on building a new base by broadening "product," which means shifting to put money into marketing and creating events, attractions, and more things for people to do.

Laurie shared some of the new assets created by the ad agency, including ads featuring The Cave, Med Deli, Al's Burger Shack, the arts, world-class eats, and the Ackland Art Museum. These ads are meant to promote the funky and "weird" spirit of Chapel Hill.

Craig Lloyd asked if Raleigh and Durham CVB's are solely relying on Occupancy Tax or if they have other funding sources. Raleigh gets funded through Occupancy Tax and tourism industry tax from hotels. Durham has an allocation of occupancy tax and they also allocate funds to future development.

Paolicelli shifted the conversation to America 250 and the role the Visitors Bureau is playing. The Visitors Bureau received a grant from the State of North Carolina to create a book, *A Gathering of Voices from Orange County: How Our Community Has Changed Since the Bicentennial*. The Visitors Bureau is working on details to roll out the book.

Val Schwartz gave a reading of an excerpt about the Native America history of Orange County. Laurie asked Katie to share what the OC Arts Commission will be doing for America 250. Katie currently has a piloted event coordinator but the funding for a large-scale summer event was not approved. The Town of Hillsborough has some funding allocated for America 250, but not the staff or expertise. They have come up with a proposal to allow them to have a festival on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the Festival on the Eno in Durham has been cancelled, which has created a gap for artists who rely on festivals for income. The Orange County Arts Commission is currently waiting to hear back regarding approval of their proposal.

Jon Hartman-Brown asked why the Festival on the Eno was cancelled. Katie answered that there are some internal issues, but that it's a very successful festival.

Laurie Paolicelli updated that the Savannah Bananas have been sold out. UNC is still trying to sell some of their suites.

## **Finance Report**

Matt Hughes gave an overview of the budget, stating the VB is currently 69% expended as of December. Most of the spending is on sales and marketing, at \$1.08 million or 84% of the budget. The Arts Commission has spent 383k, at about half of the budget. Outside agency grants are processed at quarterly. The Bureau

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appropriated \$30k from the Funds Balance and the Fund Balance remains at 8%. The Occupancy Tax revenues are projected to be flat, due to federal travel cuts and the Siena Hotel being closed.

**Community Update**

Craig Lloyd discussed the potential issue of the protests on Churton St in Hillsborough. He asked if there's any study that can compare previous years and see if there's a detriment to businesses. Laurie will look into it.

**Meeting Adjourned**

Creston Woods called for a motion to adjourn. Matt Hughes moved and Theo Nollert seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 AM.

**Next meeting:** February 18, 2026 at the Courtyard Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill/Orange County Year To Date Budget	Line Item	January 2026	Year to Date Including funds encumbered	Annual Budget	Percent of Budget Used
Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
-	Town of Chapel Hill	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200,000.00	-
-	Town of Carrboro	\$ -	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00	100%
-	Occupancy Tax	\$ 138,979.62	\$ 1,341,057.06	\$ 2,380,729.00	56%
-	Appropriated Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 692,008.00	-
-	Interest	\$ -	\$ 7,719.00	\$ 17,000.00	45%
-	Grant Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,976.00	-
-	Arts Commission Revenue	\$ -	\$ 99,900.67	\$ 259,984.00	38%
-	Total Revenues	\$ 138,979.62	\$ 1,455,876.73	\$ 3,562,897.00	41%
Visitors Bureau Expenditures	-	-	-	-	-
Overhead	-	-	-	-	-
-	General Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 239,000.00	-
-	County Administrative Fee	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 105,611.00	-
-	Overhead Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 344,611.00	-
Salaries and Benefits	-	-	-	-	-
-	Salaries and Benefits Total	\$ 83,184.54	\$ 416,372.71	\$ 705,349.00	59%
Business Operations	-	-	-	-	-
-	Travel	\$ -	\$ 10,152.10	\$ 12,600.00	81%
-	Mileage	\$ 422.66	\$ 1,270.01	\$ 2,500.00	51%
-	Postage	\$ 366.72	\$ 2,324.73	\$ 3,000.00	77%
-	Freight	\$ -	\$ 1,932.47	\$ 4,000.00	48%
-	Building Rent	\$ 12,073.00	\$ 120,480.36	\$ 170,962.00	70%
-	Printing	\$ 109.50	\$ 1,156.50	\$ 3,300.00	35%
-	Dues	\$ 330.00	\$ 3,085.25	\$ 18,887.00	16%
-	Subscriptions	\$ 352.87	\$ 10,249.04	\$ 31,101.00	33%
-	Department Supplies	\$ 345.67	\$ 22,748.15	\$ 30,000.00	76%
-	Office Supplies	\$ -	\$ 285.21	\$ 600.00	48%
-	Contract Services	\$ 3,059.30	\$ 30,711.62	\$ 30,712.00	100%
-	Electricity	\$ -	\$ 2,269.45	\$ 6,000.00	38%
-	Strategic Alliances	\$ -	\$ 4,950.00	\$ 10,800.00	46%
-	Building Improvements	\$ -	\$ 1,679.34	\$ 1,679.34	100%
-	Business Operations Total	\$ 17,059.72	\$ 211,614.89	\$ 324,462.00	65%
Sales and Marketing	-	-	-	-	-
-	Advertising	\$ 55,885.95	\$ 944,743.56	\$ 991,540.00	95%
-	Promotions	\$ 1,666.66	\$ 119,618.10	\$ 168,351.00	71%
-	America 250	\$ 851.38	\$ 976.38	\$ 5,976.00	16%
-	Trade Shows	\$ -	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 7,400.00	61%
-	Sales Travel	\$ 276.00	\$ 1,049.36	\$ 2,200.00	48%
-	Research	\$ -	\$ 12,037.50	\$ 15,000.00	80%
-	Publications	\$ 3,141.12	\$ 88,892.82	\$ 100,100.00	89%
-	Sales and Marketing Total	\$ 61,821.11	\$ 1,171,817.72	\$ 1,290,567.00	91%
Total Visitor Bureau Expenditures	-	\$ 162,065.37	\$ 1,801,484.66	\$ 2,322,057.34	78%
Arts Commission Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-
-	Salary/Benefits	\$ 41,547.64	\$ 192,100.82	\$ 403,541.00	48%
-	Travel	\$ 12.00	\$ 2,417.00	\$ 2,250.00	107%
-	Training/Development	\$ -	\$ 413.32	\$ 450.00	92%
-	Mileage	\$ 440.86	\$ 1,127.49	\$ 1,500.00	75%
-	Postage	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 100.00	0%
-	Building Rent - 71390	\$ -	\$ 9,677.67	\$ 116,527.00	8%
-	Duplicating	\$ -	\$ 174.78	\$ -	#DIV/0!
-	Printing	\$ 163.00	\$ 306.72	\$ 3,275.00	9%
-	Advertising	\$ -	\$ 5,258.90	\$ 12,500.00	42%
-	Dues	\$ -	\$ 400.00	\$ 450.00	89%
-	Dept. Supplies	\$ 69.98	\$ 5,672.99	\$ 6,000.00	95%
-	Dept Supplies - 71390	\$ -	\$ 664.77	\$ 6,433.00	10%
-	Office Supplies	\$ -	\$ 858.63	\$ 1,000.00	86%
-	Office Operations - 71390	\$ -	\$ 3,216.31	\$ 10,000.00	32%
-	Contract Services	\$ 5,833.33	\$ 106,153.69	\$ 113,539.00	93%
-	Program Expense	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 20,625.47	\$ 22,969.00	90%
-	State Arts Grant	\$ -	\$ 49,525.00	\$ 49,525.00	100%
-	Local Arts Grant	\$ -	\$ 28,800.00	\$ 28,800.00	100%
-	Overhead	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 32,264.00	-
-	Capital Under \$500	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200.00	-
-	It Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,795.00	-
-	Furnishings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 650.00	-
Total Arts Commission Expenditures	-	\$ 49,566.81	\$ 427,393.56	\$ 814,768.00	52%
Outside Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
-	Historical Foundation	\$ 7,312.50	\$ 14,625.00	\$ 29,250.00	50%
-	Historical Hillsborough Commission	\$ 2,700.00	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 10,800.00	50%
-	Alliance for Historic Hillsborough	\$ -	\$ 2,250.00	\$ 4,500.00	50%
Total Outside Agencies	-	\$ 10,012.50	\$ 22,275.00	\$ 44,550.00	50%
Total Expenditures	-	\$ 221,644.68	\$ 2,251,153.22	\$ 3,525,986.34	64%

# Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Sales Report

Fiscal Year 2025-2026

January 2026

-	Current Month	Year to Date	Year Over Year
Confirmed Bookings	3	25	20
Number of Room Nights	95	1611	1601
Estimated Spending	\$51,834	\$697,910	\$632,169
Leads Generated	15	96	77

## Leads:

- Kitchens/ Patel Wedding. Aug 2026. 40 room nights
- Spring Advisory Board Meeting. March 2027. 537 room nights. 4 day meeting for 169
- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Board Meeting. October 2026. 94 room nights. Breakfast for 30 for 3 days
- Clinical Research CRIO User Conference. May 2026. 399 room nights. 3 day meeting for 250
- Southern Regional Meeting. February 2027. 130 room nights. 3 day meeting for 225
- IIE UNC Fulbright Institutional Training. March 2026. 60 room nights. 2 day meeting for 60
- Team Building Event. May 2026. 70 room nights. 3 day meeting for 35
- 2026 Polycondensation Conference. September 2026. 700 room nights
- ITGA Annual Conference. June 2027. 1200 room nights.
- 26 ARP Executive Committee Meeting. March 2026. 38 room nights. 3 day meeting for 16
- NC Healthy Start Group-Based Education Boot Camps. March 2026. 100 room nights. 3 day meeting for 50
- Sea Grant Coastal Conference. November 2026. 120 room nights. 3 day meeting for 350
- 2027 COOLJC Women's Conference. October 2027. 923 room nights. 7 day conference for 650
- Plexus Capital Annual Meeting. May 2026. 15 room nights. 2 day meeting for 9
- She Tris. October 2026. 25 room nights.

## Definites:

- Best Buy Hall of Fame. \$36,056. Carolina Inn
- Appreciation Dinner. \$10,260. Sheraton
- Plexus Capital Annual Meeting. \$5,518. Graduate

## Lost:

- 2027 COOLJC Women's Conference. Too large for any OC venue
- Kuhn/ Murphy Wedding. Booked at Rizzo
- State Farm Leadership Meeting. Booked at Umstead
- IIE UNC Fulbright Institutional Training. Canceled
- Team Building Event. Over graduation weekend
- Clinical Research CRIO User Conference. Booked in Raleigh

## Other Notable Sales Activity:

- Preliminary planning work on the ITGA Conference

## Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau

### Communications and Social Media Report

January 2026

2025-2026

#### Key Publications Produced

Bureau received 15,000 copies of the **2026-2027 Official Visitors Map** in house on January 21. We produced **What's Open in January** and the **Weekly Events** list for Welcome Center for Walk-in visitors. Sent copy for **24-25 Annual Report** to designer on January 23. **Orange County Visitors Guide** promotion in Local Reporter. Pix Walsh designing **Memorial Day flyer** for event.

#### Online Campaigns, Social Media and Bureau Promotions

**New Leisure campaign** with striking photography ads reviewed (both print and social options for upcoming use). Continue to run itinerary short clips on social media. **Social media video reels** produced from the following content creators including lindaeatsworld on H&H Bagels January 14, Visit Chapel Hill on H&H Bagels on January 16, Heart of Weddings, Barn of Chapel Hill and Visit Chapel Hill on January 21; Chapel Hill Magazine with Visit Chapel Hill on University Place Dining on January 28. Tina Fuller providing ongoing updates for **Savannah Bananas** landing page for Visit Chapel Hill website. Pix Walsh working on welcome icons for upcoming **Savannah Bananas event**. Moving forward with ensuring Visit Chapel Hill is ADA compliant.

#### Social and Website Highlights

##### January Social Media Highlights

Platform	Previous Month End	Current Month End	Increase or Decrease	Number of Posts
Facebook	28,923	29,215	292	16
Bluesky	485	496	11	7
Instagram	9,690	9,750	60	3
Pinterest	609	609	0	2
YouTube	364	367	3	1
Threads	1,582	1,579	-3	1
LinkedIn	332	332	0	0

##### Website Analytics by Month

<b>2025-2026</b>	July	August	September	October	November	December
Sessions	34,337	40,870	51,602	57,793	43,235	40,862
Requests for Literature	39	54	45	62	39	54

New Newsletter Subscriptions	26	25	43	50	30	40
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2025-2026	January	February	March	April	May	June
Sessions	38,089					
Requests for Literature	70					
New Newsletter Subscriptions	15					

### Work with VisitNC and Travel Writers

Registered for **Travel Guide Roadshow Zoom Call** to highlight Orange County to VisitNC staff for inclusion in the 2027 NC Travel Guide and for content on VisitNC website and social media. Hosted **Southbound Magazine Editor** Kevin Benefield with itinerary on for January 7-8 visit for story on central North Carolina including locations in Hillsborough and Chapel Hill.

### Travel Media Assistance

**Sent information to Daily Tar Heel writers for stories on** 6-month follow-up after Chantal and Black History Month. **MSN.com** interested in romantic hotels for Valentine's Day weekend; **PrideJourneys.com** requesting info for 2026 directory. Sent story and photo to **Citizen Times** on new visitors guide. **Influencers/Content Creators** to consider who are interested in a partnership Visit Chapel Hill - Florida-based couple Codie & Drew, LA production company with Hudson Ard, Juliana & Trey from American Travel Archives from Florida, Greenville, SC content creator Victoria Lambert and Mexico-based creator Karina Henry.

### Stories and Media Mentions

Select media stories appearing in January includes **World Atlas** website mentions Carrboro as top town to retire in North Carolina; **USAToday** 10 Best includes Morehead Planetarium among top US planetariums to vote on; **Local Reporter** includes Laurie Paolicelli Orange Slice Columns throughout the month; **NCweddings** website has a detailed blog on Top Chapel Hill wedding venues; **decorhint.com** has featured story on Charm of Hillsborough for a Day Trip.

### Press Releases and Blog Posts

January **blogs** published include Why Winter is the Perfect Time to Visit Chapel Hill & Orange County; Our Love List for Valentine's Day in Chapel Hill and Orange County; Puppy Love Meets Superbowl Sunday in Hillsborough.