



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD MEETING MINUTES

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, August 29, 2023, 10:30 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Rolf Blizzard, Chris Chung, Sen. Dave Craven, Denny Edwards, Shannon Gilligan, James Meacham, Rep. Charles Miller, Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Rep. Ray Pickett, Andrew Schmidt

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kimberly Albritton, Jim Beley, Arthur Fisher, Steven Pasquantonio, Sec. Mabelle Sanders, Vivek Tandon, Greg Walter, Sen. Bobby Hanig

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Katie Bailey, Suzanne Brown, Ashton English, Hamilton Galloway, Guy Gaster, Veda Gilbert, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Marlise Taylor, Wit Tuttle, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Graham Whitaker, Cyndi Tomblin

Rolf Blizzard, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am. The meeting was held in-person and remotely.

WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Roll call was taken of board members present. Blizzard reminded members of the Ethics Statement, in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. Blizzard asked for approval of the February meeting minutes. James Meacham made the motion to approve, seconded by Denny Edwards; the minutes were unanimously approved.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

Kara Weishaar, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – Key legislative priorities are occupancy tax legislation, with concerns regarding school calendar. At the November meeting, they'll discuss legislative priorities for 2024.

Lynn Minges, NC Restaurant & Lodging Association – Gave status update for NCRLA \$5 million workforce development grant. Pace Communications in Greensboro selected as marketing firm for the campaign "Now Serving Careers." Minges also noted the industry is having a big problem statewide with crime, with many sites noting they may have to close.

Andrew Schmidt, NC Travel Industry Association – Watching school start dates and occupancy tax issues. Leadership Conference is Nov. 15-16 in Raleigh.

James Meacham, Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina – Would like to see consistency for occupancy tax remittance regarding short-term rentals. Airbnb/VRBO have agreements but not so for Booking.com. If occupancy tax isn't collected, neither are state or local

taxes. [Discussion regarding short term rentals and tax compliance ensued. The discussion revealed a number of complexities regarding the short term rental industry, who the industry is and what are the various components as well as regulatory regime differences amongst the key players.](#)

Graham Whitaker, NC Hospitality Alliance – Primary focus is on school calendar. Sent letter to each of the 16 school systems who disregarded school start legislation, expressing NCHA’s displeasure.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Sen. Dave Craven said General Assembly is hoping to wrap-up the budget when it reconvenes Sept. 12. Acknowledged the discussed problem with crime but noted there should be solutions determined before putting money behind it.

Rep. Ray Pickett noted ~~a there~~ need to “put ~~the~~ teeth” [into the law regarding with respect to consequences for disobeying the law. This included school calendar disregarding school calendar start and vacation rental taxes inconsistency.](#) In addition to workforce housing, child care is a huge issue.

EDPNC UPDATE

Chris Chung, EDPNC – Acknowledged concerns for workforce infrastructure issues discussed, noting they need to be addressed but don’t have easy solutions. There’s an awareness now at the elected officials-level that wasn’t there previously.

GUEST SPEAKER

Hamilton Galloway, Oxford Economics, “Short-Term Vacation Rentals and the Housing Market” – ~~He~~ discussed findings from a study that sought to better understand the extent short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) play in housing costs. [The study was an attempt to determine drivers in escalating home costs across the nation and specifically discover the impact of the growth in the short term rental business, and described their impact.](#) As this was the second time Oxford Economics has done this study, Galloway compared the results of the two studies. He concluded with key takeaways and then addressed questions.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Marlise Taylor presented information on the recently released 2022 County Level Expenditures. She noted the positive news that urban areas noted robust gains, although not quite back to pre-pandemic levels. Taylor also provided YTD reports. Scott Peacock showcased Visit NC’s planned fall marketing campaign; updated statistics on traffic on VisitNC.com; ad awareness; and fall color activation. Wit Tuttell provided an overview of PR’s media missions and press trips. Guy Gaster’s NC Film Office update noted production has halted everywhere due to industry strikes. The recent expansion of Dark Horse Studios in Wilmington is the largest private investment in the industry in more than 15 years. The Film Office is doing research by contacting film industry representatives with questions about their production thoughts and

activities. Heidi Walters provided updates on international missions and tradeshow; updates coming for Outdoor NC; and eSports. She also highlighted the Tourism Exchange, a free option for any tourism-related business that does online booking and help drive international visitation.

COMMERCE UPDATE

No report provided.

WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

Bryan Gupton noted traffic to the NC Welcome Centers has been flat. I-95 South is expected to reopen by December. There is a problem with homelessness, especially in Charlotte.

CLOSING

Rolf Blizzard asked if there was any other business to discuss; none was noted.

The next board meeting will be November 14. Starting then, meetings will start at 10 am.

James Meacham made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Sen. Dave Craven.

Meeting adjourned at 12:33 pm.