



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD MEETING MINUTES

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, November 14, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Kimberly Albritton, Rolf Blizzard, Chris Chung, Denny Edwards, Shannon Gilligan, Sen. Bobby Hanig, James Meacham, Rep. Charles Miller (office), Steven Pasquantonio, Rep. Ray Pickett, Andrew Schmidt, Vivek Tandon, Greg Walter

MEMBERS ABSENT: ,Jim Beley, Sen. Dave Craven, Arthur Fisher, Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Sec. Mabelle Sanders

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Katie Bailey, Suzanne Brown, Ashton English, Jennifer Ford, Guy Gaster, Veda Gilbert, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Madeline King (Rep. Miller), Chris Mackey, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Ed Stiles (Rep. Hanig), Marlise Taylor, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Graham Whitaker, Margaret Young

Rolf Blizzard, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:00 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 August meeting minutes. Denny Edwards made the motion to approve, seconded by James Meacham; the minutes were unanimously approved.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

Denny Edwards, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – At recent meeting, NCTTC approved its legislative priorities for 2024, emphasis will be continuing funding for tourism and promotion, ensuring entire state is complying with local occupancy tax laws and supporting the existing school calendar law.

Andrew Schmidt, NC Travel Industry Association – Annual conference this week, with its first ever Public Policy dinner. This is Schmidt's last meeting as NCTIA president, as new person will be coming in.

James Meacham, Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina – In partnership with NCTIA, had a meeting with NC Dept. of Revenue regarding short-term rental taxation policy, specifically booking.com issue. Concern about discrepancies between booking platforms. Focused on data to support no consistency with occupancy tax collection and would like NCDOR to provide educational support regarding the tax collection.

Graham Whitaker, NC Hospitality Alliance – Dealing locally with inter-local funds and police focus on downtown safety. Wrapping up year-end.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Rep. Ray Pickett said he's received a lot of inquiries about changing the formula for occupancy tax. He suggested gathering stakeholders to have a conversation around the first of the year before the General Assembly gets involved.

Blizzard noted that the model guidelines for occupancy tax collection was set-up in the 1990s. He noted tourists, in addition to paying occupancy tax, pay sales taxes, which state and local governments do have a say in how those funds are spent.

EDPNC UPDATE

Chris Chung noted the EDPNC is about halfway through three-year period of non-recurring funding by the General Assembly for tourism promotion and business marketing, with it ending mid-2025. The support of the General Assembly and governor is appreciated, as investments continue its work. Chung mentioned the EDPNC has commissioned an employee engagement survey and is starting to see the results regarding employee motivation and additional insights. The results may lead to actions regarding employee retention.

GUEST SPEAKER

Chris Mackey, NC Restaurant & Lodging Assn. – Provided an overview and update to NCRLA's Serving Careers campaign, including fundamentals and highlights. The campaign is slated to run through May 2024; after that, NCRLA will decide where the program goes for it to continue in some fashion afterward.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Marlise Taylor presented updates on the latest tourism research for the state. She reviewed the initial results of the recent North Carolina Retirement & Travel Study.

Scott Peacock showcased Visit NC's newly launched winter marketing campaign and provided an update on the Fall Color campaign, notably the one done in New York City. He mentioned initial discussions to redesign both VisitNC.com and Partners.VisitNC.com. Peacock also spoke about PR's recent media mission in New York City. In addition, he said Visit NC is working with NCRLA and Google for a free webinar on Nov. 30 that will help hotels and restaurants update/make better their listing on Google.

Guy Gaster, NC Film Office, said production is gearing back up with the writers' and actors' unions coming to an agreement with studios; filming in NC in 2024 is expected to be very busy. He mentioned how Cinespace has taken over EUE/Screen Gems, with the new entity becoming Cinespace Wilmington. Dark Horse Studios has broken ground on 40,000 sq. ft. of new stage space that should be available late 2024. Gaster also mentioned an added value aspect, by working with those productions who receive NC Film & Entertainment Grant funding, will have

the Film NC logo; in some cases where film tourism might be applicable, there will be links to a related article on VisitNC.com.

Heidi Walters provided updates on international marketing; the new Destination Immersion program, which is replacing TRAC; Retire NC; Civil War Trails program; and Outdoor NC, including five partner stewardship workshops and a new Guide Summit.

COMMERCE UPDATE

No report provided.

WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

Bryan Gupton said traffic has been relatively flat. The new site for the I-95 South center is coming along, with hopes to open in March 2024. Phone calls to the Visit NC toll-free number are up.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rolf Blizzard made the motion to nominate Lee Nettles as the new chair of the NCTTB. James Meacham seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

CLOSING

The board meeting dates for 2024 haven't been announced yet.

Steve Pasquantonio made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Denny Edwards. The motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.