



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
November 17, 2020

Travel and Tourism Board Meeting November 17, 10:30 a.m.

- **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Ashworth, Jim Beley, Mike Butts, Rolf Blizzard, Christopher Chung, Senator Chuck Edwards, Denny Edwards, Representative Holly Grange, Mike Hawkins, Lee Nettles, Steven Pasquantonio, Sharon Sexton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stephanie Brown, Anthony Copeland, Representative Kevin Corbin, Jonathan Fussell, Senator Rick Gunn, Lynn Minges, Joe Pierce, Bob Steinburg

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Kristie Agner, Colin Campbell, Guy Gaster, Bryan Gupton, Laura Leslie, Kathy Prickett, Marlise Taylor, Cyndi Tomblin, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Brooks Luquire, Allison Schult.

Steven Pasquantonio introduced himself. He is a new member of the board appointed by the Governor about 2 months ago. He and his brother own a restaurant in Topsail.

Mike Butts, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:34 am. Due to COVID-19 the meeting was done remotely.

WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Butts read aloud the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. Roll call was taken of board members present; quorum was met. Mike asked for approval of the May and August meeting minutes. Denny Edwards made the motion to approve, seconded by Sally Ashworth; and the minutes were unanimously approved.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Denny Edwards, Lee Nettles and Sally Ashworth. The need was to fill the role of the chairman. The committee with staff discussed the possibility of nominating someone to serve for the next year but the hope moving forward was to give someone the opportunity to serve for two years. This would provide continuity for staff and help provide strategic insight moving forward. Reminding the board that this is an advisory board and not a policy making board. The committee also discussed having second chair with the thought they could fill the role of chairman if necessary. The bylaws don't allow for a second chair so there will not be a second chair. The committee recommended Rolf Blizzard to serve as chairman for one year. Lee Nettles made a motion to approve, seconded by Mike Hawkins; and the nomination was unanimously approved. Butts noted that Lee Nettles was identified as a person for consideration to replace Rolf should Rolf be unable to fulfill the duties for any reason.

EDPNC UPDATE

Chris Chung, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), congratulated both Rolf and Lee and noted they are also part of the EDPNC board of directors. Provided update on business recruitment and expansion activity. There is still a healthy degree of activity. Activity remains good with recruitment and expansion having 178 deals which represents 41,000 potential jobs, 10 billion in potential new investment if we win those 178 deals. Pratt and Whitney was a recent win in Asheville, a major manufacturer of air plane engines which represents 800 new jobs and 650 million in new investment.

Legislature and Governor approved about 1 million dollars of business-related recovery marketing for EDPNC. A new campaign will roll out in the next 6 weeks targeting existing in-state employers to help educate them on EDPNC as a resource to aid in their recovery. It falls under CARES act funding requirements.

Kicking off a series of recovery round tables by prosperity zone starting next week through mid-December.

Lastly, working with commerce on budget planning for the next fiscal year including exploring how to grow the Business Link North Carolina team to proactively target some of the most impacted tourism businesses.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Marlise Taylor, Visit North Carolina (VNC), provided an update on wave 2 of resident sentiment, COVID-19 sentiment, and impact of COVID-19 on total spending and lodging analysis.

Allison Schult, VNC, provided an update on Count On Me NC campaign including media plan parameters, paid media strategy, rolling media launch, paid digital media, overall performance by channel, out of home, website performance, public relations, and brand partnerships.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, shared an update on the spending and participation in the Visit NC Marketing Credit Program and the EDPNC Recovery Grant with NCTIA. Review of impact on residents and travelers and awareness and effectiveness of Count On Me NC.

Guy Gaster, VNC, shared a Film NC update including direct in-state spending, total job opportunities, grants pending and awarded. Filming has resumed in the state in a safe manner.

Heidi Walters, VNC, shared update on Partner and Industry Relations including international, sports and retire virtual tradeshow and events as well as Outdoor NC.

Denny Edwards asked Marlise a question on statistics of the number of hotels permanently closing their doors. VNC does not have those statistics but collects STR data and works with tourism economics.

Sally Ashworth asked if anyone heard about the Governor looking to limit the number of people in restaurants again. This led to some discussion on Governor's Executive Order for number of people in restaurants, indoor and outdoor gatherings.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Representative Holly Grange thanked everyone for the privilege to serve on the board and applauded the work everyone has done on Count On Me NC. There will be two vacancies on the board as she and Representative Corbin will be leaving. Representative Corbin sends his regards.

WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

Bryan Gupton, NC Commerce, provided an update on welcome centers and visitors services. Traffic is about 12% down when you adjust for last year's closures but steady. Welcome Center managers are having their annual meeting on a virtual platform. Visitors continue to find a new environment when they visit the Welcome Centers with COVID-19 safety protocols in place. Improvements are being made including maximizing displays, improving technology and connectivity/speed. New brochures are coming in including one from the Oyster Trail. Thanked Mike Butts for his service on the board.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, thanked Mike Butts for his service. Mike Butts expressed it was an honor to serve on the board.

CLOSING

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 23. The meeting was adjourned at 11:48