



## **NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

May 19, 2020

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Ashworth, Stephanie Brown, Mike Butts, Christopher Chung, Representative George Sherrill on behalf of Secretary Copeland, Representative Kevin Corbin, Senator Rick Gunn, Mike Hawkins, Lee Nettles, Joe Pierce, Sharon Sexton

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jim Beley, Rolf Blizzard, Senator Chuck Edwards, Jonathan Fussell, Representative Holly Grange, Richard Moore, Lynn Minges, Billy Traurig

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Guy Gaster, Dana Grimstead, Bryan Gupton, Marlise Taylor, Allison Schult, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Patrice Bethea, Scott Gilmore, Brooks Luquire, Meg Jokinen, Adam Glaser

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 welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for their time. The Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35 was read aloud. Roll call was taken of board members present, quorum was met.

Kevin Corbin put forth a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting. Joe Pierce seconded the approval. All approved.

The Nominations Committee, headed by Sally Ashworth, Joe Pierce and Stephanie Brown, concluded Mike Butts will stay as chair to finish out the 2020 calendar year. This fall a nominating committee will be put together to replace the chair, vice-chair and executive committee.

#### **EDPNC UPDATE**

Chris Chung, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), provided an update to the board on COVID-19 and the relief loan program administered by Golden Leaf. International trade, while we haven't stopped marketing, it just looks different. A silver lining of the past couple months has shown just how much the economy is affected by the tourism industry and just how important tourism is to North Carolina.

#### **VISIT NC UPDATE**

Marlise Taylor, Visit North Carolina (VNC), provided an update on partner research, traveler sentiment and economic forecast.

Partners across the state have been surveyed throughout the crisis on expectations throughout the next fiscal year and how we can work together. VNC has had calls with every DMO throughout the state during this time.

VNC has partnered with Destination Analysts for ten weeks now with a weekly tracking survey of adult American travelers designed to track traveler sentiment.

VNC has been receiving quarterly forecasts from STR.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, provided an update on other Visit NC marketing objectives, including the Tourism Recovery Marketing Funding and Count on Me NC.

Allison Schult, VNC, provided an update on Cook It Forward, a campaign designed to shine the light on the culinary industry in North Carolina.

Mike Butts commented on the good practice of the staff of using solid research and not “idea du jour” as a foundation for the marketing and COVID recovery messaging programs.

#### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Senator Rick Gunn provided an update to the board on the COVID relief bill working to secure an additional \$15 million for funding. Gunn announced a bill will be seen in the senate commerce this week. HB 902 and HB 536, will be to help the restaurant industry and the nightclub, bars, distilleries, wineries and breweries to add additional outdoor seating capacity up to 50% of indoor maximum capacity.

The board was unanimous in asking Wit Tuttell, VNC, to compose a letter from the board to elected officials in support of the senate bills.

Representative Kevin Corbin provided support on the bills from the house side. Corbin provided a federal dollar spend and unemployment fund update. Representative Corbin is also working on how schools will safely open in the fall.

#### **WELCOME CENTER UPDATE**

Bryan Gupton, NC Commerce, submitted a plan to DHHS to reopen the welcome centers on June 1. South Carolina and Tennessee have already opened. Florida and Georgia remain closed. Virginia plans to open on June 1. They plan to remove brochures from the reception area throughout Phase 2, cleaning regimen, and signage will be in place. Staff will be wearing gloves and masks, and be behind plexiglass. In Phase 3, the brochures would be reintroduced.

The operators at the prison are steadily handling calls, primarily travel restrictions and have taken extra responsibility to cover COVID calls on 211.

**CLOSING**

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 18. The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 am.