



**NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
August 18, 2020

Travel and Tourism Board Meeting August 18, 10:30 a.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sally Ashworth, Mike Butts, Rolf Blizzard, Christopher Chung, Bryan Gupton on behalf of Secretary Copeland, Senator Chuck Edwards, Denny Edwards, Representative Holly Grange, Mike Hawkins, Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Sharon Sexton

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jim Beley, Stephanie Brown, Anthony Copeland, Representative Kevin Corbin, Jonathan Fussell, Senator Rick Gunn, Richard Moore, Joe Pierce

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Annie Baggett, Russ Bradley, Johnelle Causwell, Colin Campbell, Isabella Villa-Garcia, Guy Gaster, Sophie Kasakove, Kathy Prickett, Marlise Taylor, Cyndi Tomblin, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Scott Gilmore, Brooks Luquire, Meg Jokinen, Hailey Weddington, Paul Woolverton

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. Jim Beley, Jonathan Fussell and Joe Pierce gave their proxy to Mike Butts. Wit noted that Billy Traurig has left the Travel and Tourism Coalition. Rolf Blizzard has taken over as the chair of the Travel and Tourism Coalition. Denny Edwards has been appointed as the at large position for the Travel and Tourism Coalition.

May minutes approval was delayed and will be voted on in November.

Lee Nettles asked about Ethics Statement and how it pertains to the future discussion on credit program for the benefit of DMOs. Mike Butts postponed discussion of it until the topic is discussed. Wit Tuttell noted T&T board is an advisory board not a policy board and based on previous discussions stated that their opinions were valid to give to the Secretary. Tuttell added that he would check with Commerce's legal team. Sally Ashworth, Mike Butts and Lee Nettles stated they would recuse themselves from voting on such matters if it violated the ethics statement.

**EDPNC UPDATE**

Chris Chung, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), presented the salesforce dashboard and provided an update on business recruitment and expansion. The state is not back to where it was in March due in part to the uncertainty of COVID-19. While there have been some job announcements in NC during this time, EDPNC is off pace of their targets. They set aggressive targets and have not adjusted, nor plan to adjust them at this time due to COVID-19. EDPNC is close to their

target in jobs and outpacing investments due to a couple large capital investments. EDPNC is 20-30% below in new projects deal flow activity in the first three months of pandemic but doing slightly better now. One point of encouragement is in the last 6 -7 weeks the state is seeing the resumption of clients doing their field work and traveling for meetings.

There was some discussion on individual states mandatory 14-day quarantine for travel and potential exemption for business travel.

#### **VISIT NC UPDATE**

Marlise Taylor, Visit North Carolina (VNC), provided an update on COVID-19 impact on tourism in NC, lodging forecast, traveler sentiment and research projects.

As a result of the pandemic U.S. Travel Association working with Tourism Economics have been tracking travel spending losses at US and state levels. It is estimated that NC has lost \$6.8 billion in travel spending from March 1- August 1. It is estimated the state tax losses of visitor spending total \$235 million and local tax losses total about \$142 million. Weekly travel spending is still down more than 40% from the same time last year.

VNC has been receiving quarterly lodging forecast from STR. Shared historical annual lodging performance and forecast as well as monthly vacation rental home data from Key Data.

VNC has partnered with Destination Analysts for 22 weeks now with a weekly tracking survey of adult American travelers designed to track traveler sentiment.

VNC is continuing to work with our vendor on a second wave of the Resident sentiment study, which will go into the field mid-September with plans for a third wave later in the fall.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, provided an update on other Visit NC marketing objectives, including the Tourism Recovery Marketing Funding, Count On Me NC, and 2020-2021 Budget.

Heidi Walters, VNC, shared new Outdoor NC campaign, a partnership with EDPNC's Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, VNC, and Leave No Trace Ethics for Outdoor Recreation.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, shared the details of the Tourism Marketing Credit Program. Mike Butts, Chairman, named those who worked on a committee created to assist in outlining the Tourism Marketing Credit Program: Jim Beley, Rolf Blizzard, Lee Nettles, Mike Butts, VNC Staff, and EDPNC attorney.

The board discussed the Tourism Marketing Credit Program. Lynn Minges and Denny Edwards commented on the timing of the program. It was concluded due to the perimeters in place on the funding, the programs must run by December 30, 2020 unless Congress extends the date.

Lynn Minges, North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association, made a motion to accept the program proposal as presented. Denny Edwards seconded the motion. All approved.

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Senator Chuck Edwards was able to help secure the tourism recovery funding. Excited to be reappointed to the board for another two years. Involved in a legislative update regarding the 2020 census, noted 43% of households have not completed the census. Requested everyone to remind people to complete the census.

Lynn Minges, North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association, provided a status update on their continued work with members of legislature on possible relief for the hospitality industry and their call of action out to Governor Cooper asking for assistance with the restrictive limitations placed on event space, hotels, and event venues.

Representative Holly Grange spoke to the storm damage from Hurricane Isaias and extensive damage to Brunswick county.

## **WELCOME CENTER UPDATE**

Bryan Gupton, NC Commerce, reported all welcome centers are all open June 1, 2020, except for Charlotte which opened right after 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Visitors are still coming in but at about 25% off the normal rate. Following DHHS protocols. Call Center is in operation after a brief closure and are routing Visit NC calls to 1-26 West welcome center. NC and SC are the number one states of origin for visitors.

Wit Tuttell, VNC, thanked the welcome center and call center team for helping spread the Count On Me message. Senator Gunn and Representative Grange will be rolling off the board. Presented Representative Grange with her plaque.

Representative Holly Grange expressed it was an honor serving on the board.

## **CLOSING**

The next board meeting is scheduled for November 17. The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 am.