



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
August 31, 2021

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting August 31, 10:30 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Kimberly Albritton, Jim Beley, Rolf Blizzard, Mike Butts, Chris Chung, Dennis Edwards, Rep. Bobby Hanig, Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Steve Pasquantonio, Rep. Ray Pickett, Vivek Tandon

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jonathan Fussell, Sec. Machel Baker Sanders, Tamara Daniels, Sen. Chuck Edwards, Sharon Sexton, Sen. Bob Steinburg

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Demp Bradford, Vince Chelena, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Mary Huntley, Brooks Luquire, Kara Weishaar, Wit Tuttell, Guy Gaster, Allison Schult, Heidi Walters, Marlise Taylor, Kathy Prickett, Andre Nabors, Nick Parker, Suzanne Brown, Margo Metzger, Dana Grimstead

Rolf Blizzard, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am. Due to COVID-19 the meeting was done remotely.

WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Blizzard read aloud the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. Roll call was taken of board members present; quorum was met. Blizzard asked for approval for modification of the Agenda. Mike Butts made motion to approve; Lynn Minges seconded.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

Legislative Update

Rep. Ray Pickett addressed plans to explore further the “alcohol shortage,” which is hurting restaurants, and which the ABC Board is investigating the problems. The budget is taking top priority in the House. Rep. Bobby Hanig provided additional input to the other industry updates as they were addressed.

NC Restaurant & Lodging Association

Lynn Minges explained ramping up efforts for the NC Restaurant Workers Relief Fund. Through the program, NCRLA raised about \$1.5 million and gave grants to nearly 3,000 people. In addition, due to the program, NCRLA began dialogue with about 20,000 displaced workers that it hopes to continue. She noted the industry is still down 37,900 workers and cumulatively down \$4.7 billion in taxable sales. Minges also looked at the reasons for labor shortage, noting many found jobs elsewhere or had childcare issues. She then explained how NCRLA is addressing the worker shortage, such as creating a hospitality job board, offering free-of-charge tourism and hospitality positions; working with community college and high school programs

and training; and immigration reform and guest worker visas. Minges noted NCRLA was pleased that the ABC Permit Extension Bill passed. Work is still being done on other hospitality-related legislation.

NC Travel & Tourism Coalition

Dennis Edwards reported the Coalition met yesterday (Monday) and had several productive discussions. NCTTC is very pleased and supportive of a number of tourism industry budget items in both the House and Senate budgets.

NC Travel Industry Association

Lee Nettles shared details of a new program between NCTIA and the NC Tourism Education Foundation for the Hotel Employment Initiative, a \$200,000 pilot project currently in the House budget. The initiative is designed to run in Mecklenburg and five neighboring counties, with the goal of recruiting more than 10,000 students into hospitality industry careers. The three-step program involves recruitment, working with social services agencies and high schools; training, with a six-week paid program for students at Piedmont Community College and on-the-job training; and encouragement/retention, with potential for promotions, mentorship and financial planning assistance. If the Hotel Employment Initiative project comes to fruition, there's hope for it to move statewide.

Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina

No update.

NC Sports Leadership Council

Demp Bradford noted the sports market is bouncing back. It's monitoring SB 688, the Sports Wagering Bill; HB 133, the creation of the NC Golf Council; and HB 945, creation of the Esports Incentive Program. He concluded the Council appreciates everything everyone does. Rep. Bobby Hanig added the House does have the NC Golf Council creation as a policy provision in its budget.

EDPNC

Chris Chung confirmed the workforce labor shortage is affecting industries across the state, and has been for a long time. He suggested possibly cross-pollinating ideas with the hospitality industry for ideas on how to get communities into the workforce; creating awareness can fuel interest. The EDPNC appreciates both the House and Senate having business marketing funds included in their respective budgets. Each chose to include \$10 million in their versions of the budget.

Visit NC

Wit Tuttell looked at tourism funding in various instances., along with Visit NC's marketing plans. He voiced his appreciation to the board and the groups participating in today's board meeting for the work they have done on Visit NC's behalf. Visit NC is working with NCDHHS

for the “Bringing Summer Back” marketing campaign, a shift from Count On Me NC, tying it in with film tourism. Tuttell wrapped up with a review of achievements of other departments.

Marlise Taylor examined the latest Year-to-Date 2021 research. NC Film Office’s Guy Gaster gave an update on film productions, noting filming is taking place in all eight of the state’s Prosperity Zones.

Welcome Center Update – NC Commerce

Bryan Gupton said Welcome Centers have been very busy. I-95 South will be closed in December for 10-15 months; looking at options to temporarily relocate during that time. Call Center is also handling calls to 211 (United Way information and referral service), which mostly addressed food bank queries. Gupton noted Call Center Supervisor Teresa Smith is retiring in December.

CLOSING COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Blizzard thanked Mike Butts and Lee Nettles for their time served on the board, as their terms are expiring.

CLOSING

Steve Pasquantonio motioned for the meeting adjournment; it was seconded by Lee Nettles.

The next board meeting is scheduled for November 16. Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.