



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD MEETING MINUTES

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, November 23, 10:30 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Beley, Rolf Blizzard, Chris Chung, Tamara Daniels, Dennis Edwards, Rep. Bobby Hanig, James Meacham, Lynn Minges, Rep. Ray Pickett, Andrew Schmidt, Sharon Sexton, Sen. Bob Steinburg, Vivek Tandon

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kimberly Albritton, Jonathan Fussell, Mike Hawkins, Sen. Chuck Edwards, Sec. Mabelle Baker Sanders, Steve Pasquantonio

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Bonnie Bernat, Catherine Swain, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Brooks Luquire, Kara Weishaar, Wit Tuttell, Guy Gaster, Allison Schult, Marlise Taylor, Kathy Prickett, Andre Nabors, 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 reviewed the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. Roll call was taken of board members present; quorum was met. Lynn Minges made motion to approve the Minutes; Denny Edwards seconded.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

NC Travel & Tourism Coalition

Dennis Edwards reported the Coalition had its annual meeting this past week and discussed a myriad of items that were approved in the state budget, included funding for film grants, motorsports and esports. He also thanked members of the General Assembly for their support and understanding of tourism. During the annual meeting, the group approved its 2022 Legislative Agenda and Priorities.

NC Restaurant & Lodging Association

Lynn Minges commended policymakers for their support of the restaurant and lodging industry. She explained how NCRLA had put together a blueprint for the revival of the hospitality industry, putting together a menu of items for policymakers to address during the legislative session. Minges noted that North Carolina was probably one of two states that didn't have a Payroll Protection program for expense deductibility for hospitality businesses, so NCRLA placed that high on its agenda, which was approved. NCRLA also worked for a Small Business Grant program. Workforce development was also addressed with additional funding in the

budget. In addition, NCRLA is working for acquire training funds to assist business owners by providing funding through federal funds instead of from the hospitality business itself.

NC Travel Industry Association

Andrew Schmidt noted NCTIA had its annual conference in September, noting everyone was pleased to be meeting in-person. During the conference, NCTIA established its Legislative priorities. NCTIA worked to acquire funds through the Tourism Education Foundation for a pilot program in Charlotte that would address the recruitment, training and retention of hospitality employees. In addition, the group is working with the Pathways for Hospitality program, which would introduce high school students to careers within the hospitality industry.

Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina

James Meacham reported that DMANC had its annual meeting in conjunction with NCTIA, emphasizing the continued effort on recovery. DMANC's meeting focused on ensuring DMOs are maximizing the remaining programs that are still available to them. He expressed appreciation to the legislature for legislative action approved to allow TDAs and CVBs to get PPP recovery loans/grants.

NC Sports Leadership Council

Bonnie Bernat announced the Leadership Council will have its first in-person meeting on Jan. 5 in Charlotte. The group is monitoring the Sports Wagering Bill, along with the establishment of a grant fund.

Legislative Update

Rep. Bobby Hanig thanked his fellow legislators for their support of tourism and for understanding its importance. Hanig noted the passage of funds for Dare County for essential housing that should help Dare and surrounding counties regarding those people who work in Dare County. He invited each tourism group to share their legislative agendas for information as the General Assembly considers future policies in upcoming sessions.

Sen. Bob Steinburg noted every county, regardless of size, needs help with travel & tourism as other businesses have relocated elsewhere. He noted several counties in his district are examining what they have to offer and welcome assistance in ways to promote themselves. One lesson learned from the pandemic is that tourism can't be taken for granted. He encouraged getting all legislators involved, so he would also welcome agendas from any tourism organization.

Rep. Ray Pickett echoed the significance of tourism to the state and the importance of everyone's involvement in keeping that on the forefront. He voiced his pleasure that the budget and the PPP relief have passed. Pickett also requested legislative agendas so the General Assembly could get an early start.

EDPNC

Chris Chung confirmed the workforce labor challenges is affecting the economic rebound, as it's impacting tourism, business development and industry recruitment. The problems look to continue based on demographic trends in the US. Chung also echoed thanks to the General Assembly and governor for additional funding for the EDPNC's marketing efforts, plus funding for the NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office.

Visit NC

Dana Grimstead gave an overview of the *2022 Official North Carolina Travel Guide*, which is scheduled to be released in mid-December. She highlighted the added value found in the contract with Meredith Travel Marketing, which publishes the guide.

Dennis Edwards asked Wit Tuttell about the status for EDA funding from the state, noting it appeared part of the money would be allotted to NC State Parks. Tuttell noted several entities are slated to benefit from the funding, including the Main Street program with the NC Department of Commerce and NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources overseeing the submission. Tuttell invited Catherine Swain to provide additional information.

Marlise Taylor reviewed the 2020 County Level Spending report, noting the new methodology that was used; examined current lodging data, along with the Daily Travel Index; and discussed the results of Visit NC's latest NC Resident Sentiment survey.

Wit Tuttell told the board about another study that was done by Visit Florida. Interestingly, at the Visit Florida board meeting in October, it was shown that North Carolina and South Carolina were now the primary competitors for Florida tourism. Tuttell noted this shows North Carolina is positioned very well to come out of the pandemic strongly.

NC Film Office's Guy Gaster updated the board on filming activities within the state, noting 91 projects have completed "intent to film" forms this year. As of Nov. 1, there's been an estimated \$437 million of in-state spending by productions; more than 5,300 crew hires and nearly 27,600 job opportunities; and filming has happened in all eight of the state's Prosperity Zones.

Margo Metzger mentioned Visit NC is back to hosting journalists and holding media events in-person. She highlighted several notable media placements.

Tuttell wrapped up with an update on Visit NC's marketing efforts for Group Travel, Outdoor NC, Retire NC, partner relations and international markets. He also announced the in-person return on the 2022 Visit NC 365 Conference, slated for March 20-22 in Durham.

Welcome Center/Visitor Services Update – NC Commerce

Bryan Gupton said the Welcome Centers are very busy. In some cases, seeing visitation at 2018 levels. The anticipated December closure for I-95 South has been pushed to Spring 2022. Plans continue to improve the Welcome Centers internally, both visually and for security reasons. The Call Center is seeking a new manager due to a retirement.

CLOSING COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Blizzard noted the EDPNC Open House on Thursday, Dec. 9, scheduled 4-6 pm. The Travel & Tourism Board is invited to attend.

CLOSING

James Meacham motioned for the meeting adjournment; it was seconded by Andrew Schmidt. The motion passed unanimously.

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2022. Meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.