



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
February 22, 2022

Travel and Tourism Board Meeting, February 22, 10:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Kimberly Albritton, Jim Beley, Rolf Blizzard, Christopher Chung, Tamara Daniels, Dennis Edwards, Jonathan Fussell, Rep. Bobby Hanig, Isabel Vita-Garcia on behalf of Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Steven Pasquantonio, Rep. Ray Pickett, Marqueta Welton on behalf of Sec. Machel Baker Sanders, Andrew Schmidt, Sharon Sexton, Sen. Bob Steinburg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Chuck Edwards, James Meacham, Vivek Tandon

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Bryan Anderson/WRAL, Annie Baggett, Suzanne Brown, Guy Gaster, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Margo Metzger, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Marlise Taylor, Cyndi Tomblin, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Brian Lewis

Rolf Blizzard, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Due to COVID-19 considerations, the meeting was held remotely.

WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Roll call was taken of board members present; quorum was met. Rolf reminded members of the Ethics Statement, in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. Rolf asked for approval of the November meeting minutes. Andrew Schmidt made the motion to approve, seconded by Lee Nettles; the minutes were unanimously approved.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

Dennis Edwards, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – Group is watching the online sports gaming bill closely and esports tax incentive program, while workforce concerns still exist.

Isabel Vita-Garcia, NC Restaurant & Lodging Association – NC Business Recovery Grant has reopened for Phase 2 on Monday; excited to see checks from earlier allocation going out this week. NCRLA is working hard on workforce development, especially with the \$5 million appropriation from the General Assembly for a state-wide workforce recruitment campaign; its working with and listening to its members to put the campaign together.

Andrew Schmidt, NC Travel Industry Association – Workforce development initiatives are continuing. As part of Global Meetings Industry Day on April 7, NCTIA is partnering with the Tourism Education Foundation to host a job fair for about 900 Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school students at the convention center; the job fair is specifically designed for the hospitality industry. Also working with TEF, several apprenticeships have been secured, too, for students.

Also on April 7, NCTIA is hosting a “Kicking It with Political Leaders” lunch. Andrew and NCTIA’s lobbyist Brian Lewis are presenting a tourism industry update at AENC on March 10.

Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina wasn’t available for an update.

NC Sports Leadership Council wasn’t available for an update.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Rep. Hanig said the legislature is aware of workforce issues. For the beaches, he said the issue is housing. He noted \$35 million in the legislative budget for Dare County designated for affordable housing projects that should also benefit Currituck County.

Sen. Steinburg said there’s no question the emphasis in the northeast part of the state is on travel & tourism. He noted significant investment in and near Edenton that should help expand the area’s tourism. He mentioned plans for an “Inner Banks” ferry-type system that should greatly help the northeast region due to linking smaller towns.

Rep. Pickett echoed concerns for his area for housing and workforce – in hospitality, education and healthcare. He noted area restaurants are still having supply issues.

TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATE

Rolf introduced Ron Hetrick who presented his “Demographic Drought,” which examined how a lack of people, including why there’s a lack, is changing how businesses look at labor. Challenges include those 55 and older who have left the labor force, younger potential workers no longer engaged and immigration issues. He examined a number of factors that break down the information. Ron answered questions after his presentation.

EDPNC UPDATE

Christopher Chung started his remarks with a shout-out to Wit and the Visit NC team; 2021 was a bounce-back year for visitor spending and he said he was encouraged by new metrics for 2022. Chris discussed the EDPNC’s recent efforts with active projects and opportunities. He noted foreign direct investment (such as a foreign-owned parent company) is starting to tick back up. As NC is being considered, this amounts to business tourism.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Marlise Taylor presented some of the latest research, including year-end lodging and demand numbers, and the newly created Visitor Economy Index. Scott Peacock offered an overview of Visit NC's 2022 Integrated Marketing Campaign, "First That Last 2.0," which also includes the Firsts That Last Film Festival.

COMMERCE UPDATE

Marqueta Welton announced the 2020-'21 annual report focused on impacts of the hospitality and tourism industry will be released on March 14. She offered a few quick facts on the report.

WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

Bryan Gupton, NC Commerce, gave an update on the Call Center phone calls and the N.C. Welcome Centers, with visitors and booking room nights. He noted the I-95 South NC Welcome Center will be closing by the end of this week for 14 months; it will temporarily be relocated to the Rest Area site in Fayetteville.

CLOSING

Rolf reminded everyone of the Visit NC 365 Conference (March 20-22 in Durham), along with the EDPNC Annual Forum on Economic Development (March 24).

Andrew Schmidt made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Lee Nettles.

The next board meeting is scheduled for May 24. Meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.