



**NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
May 24, 2022

Travel and Tourism Board Meeting, May 24, 10:30 a.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rolf Blizzard, Christopher Chung, Rep. Bobby Hanig, James Meacham, Frank Gray on behalf of Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Rep. Ray Pickett, Andrew Schmidt, Vivek Tandon

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kimberly Albritton, Jim Beley, Tamara Daniels, Sen. Chuck Edwards, Dennis Edwards, Jonathan Fussell, Steven Pasquantonio, Sec. Mabelle Baker Sanders, Sharon Sexton, Sen. Bob Steinburg

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Katie Bailey, Annie Baggett, Suzanne Brown, Citizens Diplomacy, Ashton English, Karl Galloway, Guy Gaster, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Mary Huntley, Margo Metzger, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Marlise Taylor, Cyndi Tomblin, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, Graham Whitaker

Rolf Blizzard, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am. The meeting was held both in-person and remotely.

**WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

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

**INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE**

Kara Weishaar, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – Group discussed political updates based on the recent primary results. Monitoring the online sports wagering bill closely and any changes to tourism funding.

NC Restaurant & Lodging Association wasn't available for an update.

Andrew Schmidt, NC Travel Industry Association – Workforce development initiatives are continuing. As part of Global Meetings Industry Day in April, NCTIA partnered with the Tourism Education Foundation to host a career fair for 400 Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school students; most received job offers. Also working with TEF for tourism retention workshop in Charlotte for late summer; the purpose is to teach workers how to progress in hospitality/tourism fields.

James Meacham, Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina – Noted its members are in the final stages of budget planning. The group was reminded of the importance of having a good relationship with city and county governments regarding ARPA funds, and to maximize tourism benefits.

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

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Rep. Ray Pickett said budget chairs are working on the budget but warned things are still needing to be done, such as back-filling to address rising fuel charges for state vehicles. He doesn't expect anything controversial with this short session and does expect things to move quickly. Pickett thought the sports gaming bill would be considered. Rep. Bobby Hanig had no additional comments.

### **TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATE**

Rolf introduced Stephanie Brown, with SMARInsights. Visit NC had contracted with SMARInsights to evaluate Visit NC's 2021 "Get Back to a Better Place" campaign. Stephanie examined the results of the findings, such as measured effectiveness, campaign awareness and ROI. She also touched on the "Halo Effect," as the campaign awareness could affect North Carolina for consideration among places to live and work. A copy of the presentation is noted in the record.

### **EDPNC UPDATE**

Christopher Chung noted that activity continues to be very busy within the state, with manufacturing and industrial as the busiest sectors. He noted at least a dozen active projects are looking for larger tracts of land ("megasites") and labor forces.

### **VISIT NC UPDATE**

Marlise Taylor presented some of the latest research, including 2021 Statewide Spending Results, 2022 YTD Lodging Summary and YTD KPIs. Scott Peacock offered an update for Visit NC's "First That Last 2.0," which includes the Firsts That Last Film Series; he also discussed partner amplification and "Dream Big in a Small Town." Margo Metzger showcased PR efforts and successful media placements. Guy Gaster provided an update on the film industry's numbers to date, which included the number of projects, job opportunities and spending. Heidi Walters did an update on Outdoor NC, Group Travel, RetireNC, Community Relations and the international market. A copy of the presentation is noted in the record.

### **COMMERCE UPDATE**

No report from Commerce.

### **WELCOME CENTER UPDATE**

Bryan Gupton noted that visitation to the NC Welcome Centers is up from last year. Construction has begun at the I-95 South location and is expected to take about a year to complete. Staffing at all centers and the Call Center is at full capacity, save for one position. He

also noted the Welcome Centers had successful Tourism Day observances with strong partner participation. In addition, the Welcome Centers have and continue to implement employee safety protocols.

**CLOSING**

Rolf asked if there was any other business to discuss; nothing more was noted. Vivek Tandon made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Lee Nettles.

Meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 23.