



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD MEETING MINUTES

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, August 21, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Rolf Blizzard, Chris Chung, Shannon Gilligan, Sen. Bobby Hanig, Lynn Minges, Lee Nettles, Jessica Roberts, Marqueta Welton (on behalf of Sec. Mabelle Sanders)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kimberly Albritton, Sen. Dave Craven, Denny Edwards, Arthur Fisher, James Meacham, Rep. Charles Miller, Steven Pasquantonio, Rep. Ray Pickett, Vivek Tandon, Greg Walter

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Rebecca Badgett, Katie Bailey, Suzanne Brown, Ashton English, Guy Gaster, Veda Gilbert, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Chris McLaughlin, André Nabors, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Marlise Taylor, Wit Tuttell, Isabel Villa-Garcia, Heidi Walters

Chairperson Lee Nettles called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. The meeting was held in-person and remotely.

WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Roll call was taken of board members present. Nettles reminded members of the Ethics Statement, in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. He asked for approval of the May 2024 meeting minutes. Rolf Blizzard made the motion to approve, seconded by Lynn Minges; the minutes were unanimously approved.

SPECIAL GUESTS' PRESENTATION

Rebecca Badgett and Chris McLaughlin, with the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government, presented "Short-Term Rental Regulations & Occupancy Tax." During the presentation, general and specific questions were addressed with varied discussions held.

INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE

Rolf Blizzard, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – The group met this week with the next meeting in November for annual retreat and policy discussions. Issues of occupancy tax and usage remain at the forefront. Discussions about school calendar and the disregard of several school districts to follow the law for school start. Interest in tourism marketing budget, as additional funding ends in June 2025, making sure the funding doesn't retreat back to previous funding.

Lynn Minges, NC Restaurant & Lodging Assn. – Closely aligned with NCTTC regarding occupancy tax and school calendar. Recently passed bill now requires hotel employees have complete training about human trafficking. NCRLA offers the training on its website at no

charge. The ABC reform bill recently passed included notable improvements, including cocktails to-go made permanent and 15-year-olds allowed to work in mixed beverage permittee businesses. NCRLA's workforce program "Serving Careers" program has ended but the website will be live for about another year. More than 700,000 people have applied for jobs through the program. Through partner program with Commerce, NCRLA has delivered more than \$700,000 worth of training and credentialing to people entering or currently in the industry. Now have 36 high schools across the state offering the ProStart program.

Jessica Roberts, NC Travel Industry Association – Very focused on occupancy tax usage, in addition to school calendar, notably working with different parent groups and business leaders who are taking school districts to court.

Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina – No report.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Sen. Bobby Hanig met with Airbnb and VRBO to discuss difference in brick-and-mortar and OTAs; additional meeting with NC Realtors Assn. and NCDOR. He feels progress is being made about creating a level playing field. Updating the Vacation Rental Act may need to happen, perhaps starting the next long legislative session.

COMMERCE UPDATE

Marqueta Welton thanked Lee Nettles for speaking about tourism during the recent NC TOWERS meeting. She noted the presence of offshore tourism in some areas of the northeast and other countries. She discussed the recently released county level visitor spending. The SEUS/Japan Conference is returning to North Carolina in October.

WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

Bryan Gupton noted that, in addition to tourism-related phone calls, the Call Center answers NCDOT's 511 and customer service calls. So NCDOT is providing the Call Center a new internet-based phone system that will help with reliability and improved reporting; the system should be in place by the end of the month. The I-95 South Welcome Center is slated to reopen on Sept. 9. The I-26 East Welcome Center is scheduled to start renovations in December or January. Wit Tuttell offered special thanks for the Call Center for its assistance with information to travelers during Tropical Storm Debby.

EDPNC UPDATE

Chris Chung echoed the congratulations for Visit NC for the 2023 county level visitor spending results. EDPNC is starting work to help Commerce for the transitions to come due to the upcoming elections. He said the business recruitment and expansion part of EDPNC is seeing very good numbers with investment and jobs. The EDPNC has its 10th anniversary in October with an event planned in January. Thanked Visit NC for its participation during the last EDPNC Board meeting in Boone, which highlighted the tourism, including visitor spending, occupancy tax and product development.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Marlise Taylor reiterated the state-level record-spending numbers for 2023 to complement the county level spending numbers released last week. She provided year-to-date Visitor Economy Index, lodging data and Commercial Lodging Forecast Demand.

Scott Peacock highlighted “First in Fright,” a new mini-campaign launching on (Friday) Sept. 13 with an 8-episode podcast; this is the first time Visit NC has done a podcast. September and October is good timing for this but there’s hope to continue year-round. He showed several of the fall ads. In addition, he discussed regional media missions and the in-state media mission in Durham, along with an upcoming literary fam with NC authors, including Nicholas Sparks.

NC Film Office’s Guy Gaster reported an update on direct in-state spend by productions along with job opportunity numbers. He noted current and newly wrapped productions, in addition to upcoming releases.

Heidi Walters discussed Outdoor NC, the new Accessibility Toolkit for those partners and the new Trail Town Guide, along with two eSports Summits (one national, one in-state). The Destination Immersion program has three visit this fall. She noted international marketing efforts with four events/promotions in the fall.

OTHER BUSINESS

Lee Nettles said he will be contacting some board members to gather suggestions for a new Board chair.

The next NC Travel & Tourism Board meeting is Wednesday, November 13.

CLOSING

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.