



## **NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, May 19, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rolf Blizzard, Dave Chapman, Chris Chung, Sen. Dave Craven, Dennis Edwards, Sen. Bobby Hanig, Kim Jochl, James Meacham, Steven Pasquantonio, Jessica Roberts, Andrew Schmidt

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sabrina Bengle, Scott Cooper, Arthur Fisher, Shannon Gilligan, Rep. Frank Iler, Sec. Lee Lilley, Lynn Minges, Rep. Ray Pickett

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Katie Bailey, Amanda Baker, Suzanne Brown, Ashton English, Susan Fleetwood, Guy Gaster, Veda Gilbert, Scott Gilmore, Dana Grimstead, Bryan Gupton, Lily Hauser, Clayton Henkel, Carol Kline, André Nabors, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Kylee Sprengel, Catherine Swain, Marlise Taylor, Iona Thomas, Debbie Tullos, Jesa Vale, Wit Tuttell, Kara Weishaar

Chairperson Dennis Edward called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. The meeting was held in-person.

### **WELCOME/COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

Roll call was taken of board members present. Edwards reminded members of the Ethics Statement, in accordance with Executive Order No. 35. He asked for approval of the February 2025 meeting minutes. James Meacham made the motion to approve, seconded by Andrew Schmidt.

### **INDUSTRY PARTNER UPDATE**

Kara Weishaar, NC Travel & Tourism Coalition – Rep. Julia Howard was honored during a legislative reception last week as the “founder and godmother” for her work establishing the House occupancy tax guidelines in the state during the mid-1990s. With proposed Senate budget funding for Visit NC. SB 754 provides reasonable compromises for school calendar issues.

NC Restaurant & Lodging Assn. – No report

Jessica Icenhour Roberts, NC Travel Industry Association – The silent auction at the Visit NC Tourism Conference raised \$8,000 for the Tourism Education Foundation of NC. The Foundation is working with hotel HR directors and non-profit organizations to train and employ individuals that are financially challenged to work in the hospitality industry. NCTIA partners with other organizations for a Global Industry Meetings Day event that raised about \$6,000 for TEFNC.

James Meacham, Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina – Most are working on their own budgets for the next fiscal year, plus monitoring unique occupancy tax-related bills.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Sen. Dave Craven said House budget has been released. Push will be on tax policy. Senate has reached a good choice regarding school calendar issues.

Sen. Bobby Hanig said looking forward to reviewing House budget proposal. School calendar bill is a good compromise and to that being finalized.

### **EDPNC UPDATE**

Wit Tuttell reminded everyone that the legislature is also considering funding for business marketing, not just for Visit NC. It's been a smooth transition with the new team at Commerce.

### **VISIT NC UPDATE**

Marlise Taylor shared the governor's office released the 2024 Visitor Spending earlier in the month. Reviewed YTD lodging and lodging forecasts, along with the latest Recovery research regarding visiting the mountain regions.

Scott Peacock said Visit NC is basically running two campaigns – “For Real” spotlights the Piedmont and Coast and “Recovery” for the Mountains.

NC Film Office's Guy Gaster offered filming is slow but it's trending nationwide, possibly due to economic concerns.

Heidi Walters provided updates for Outdoor NC, including the recent Guide Summit; Sports NC, specifically esports; international marketing, including a recent mission and fam; and the consumer travel/retire shows.

### **COMMERCE UPDATE**

Susan Fleetwood noted the new Division of Community Resilience, administering federal recovery grant program; Rural Economic Development is administering Small Business Infrastructure Grant program. In addition, focused on several workforce related areas largely driven by executive orders.

### **WELCOME CENTER UPDATE**

Bryan Gupton reported strong partner participation during National Travel & Tourism Week. Sec. Lee Lilly visited the I-26 NC Welcome Center; First Lady Anna Stein toured the NC Correctional Institution for Women, including a stop at the Call Center, where she was very pleased with the program.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Iona Thomas with the Great Trails State Coalition presented an update of their work to date. They are seeking additional funding for a billboard campaign.

The next NC Travel & Tourism Board meeting is August 19, 2025.

**CLOSING**

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.