



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

August 5, 2014

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Baker, Sabrina Bengel, Rolf Blizzard, Secretary Sharon Decker, Denny Edwards, Caleb Miles, Lynn Minges, Tammy O'Kelley, Vinay Patel, Senator Norman Sanderson, Art Schools, Wit Tuttell, Chris Valauri, Paula Wilber, Lynn Wingate

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Donna Carpenter, Randy Cobb, Randy Danos, Lew Ebert, Joel Griffin, Representative Susi Hamilton, Senator Ralph Hise, Chris Humphrey, Representative Pat McElraft, Diane Nordstrom, Bob O'Halloran, Jamie Reibel, Leonard Rigsbee, Jessica Roberts

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Peggy Brookhouse, Suzanne Brown, Hill Carrow, David Cartier, Theresa Carter, Karin Cochran, Cary Cox, Robert Cox, Susan Fanning, Marc Finlayson, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Rusty Holderness, Jim Hobbs, Nicolle Jones, Ashlee Kirk, Brooks Luquire, Andre Nabors, Kathy Prickett, Betsy Rosemann, Neha Shah, Mark Shore, Amber Skeen, Marlise Taylor, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar

CALL TO ORDER

Tammy O'Kelley, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 11:02am. O'Kelley welcomed attendees and thanked them for their attendance. O'Kelley then read aloud the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35.

MINUTES APPROVED

Sabrina Bengel motioned to approve the May 13, 2014 meeting minutes. Seconded by Chris Valauri. Unanimously approved.

FUNDING REQUESTS COMMITTEE REPORT AND POSITION STATEMENT

O'Kelley gave a report from the Funding Requests Committee. Changes were made to the initial statement presented to the Board in May, and the new version was read aloud. Discussion followed and based on comments from Denny Edwards, Art Schools, Tammy O'Kelley and Sabrina Bengel, the statement will be amended to note that if there are additional dollars allocated to the Division of Tourism, unless they are earmarked for a grant program, the Board would prefer the money to be spent on tourism marketing. Sabrina Bengel made a motion to approve this statement with changes discussed. Art Schools seconded; motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley reviewed the two major initiatives that the Board took positions on in the short session: (1) the transfer of the Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development to the new Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina; and (2) the resolution requesting that lawmakers extend the sunset of the North Carolina Film Tax Credit or pass other favorable legislation that would preserve the film tax rebate at a level that would keep North Carolina a tier-one production state. O'Kelley stated that the positions taken by the Board were completely in line with its duties as outlined by North Carolina General Statute (§ 143B-434.1).

UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP OF NC

Department of Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker addressed the Board regarding the public private partnership, including a status update and a plan for the future. Also included in the comments were budget cuts and personnel changes.

Wit Tuttell, Executive Director of the Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, reviewed the organizational chart for the new partnership (both private and public sides of Tourism). Discussion followed amongst the Board members, specifically involving the funding of tourism, both in marketing and personnel.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

LEGISLATIVE AND INDUSTRY REPORTS

Board member Senator Norman Sanderson expressed his appreciation for being a part of the Travel and Tourism Board and hearing first-hand the challenges facing the industry. Senator Sanderson also noted that he would continue to work to bring tourism and marketing to the same levels as North Carolina's neighboring states.

Board member Rolf Blizzard of the NC Travel and Tourism Coalition reported that they will continue to monitor the transition of tourism to the public private partnership and expressed the disappointment regarding the inaction of the film incentives. Successes noted were no change in the school calendar and the extra \$1 million for tourism marketing. The NC Travel and Tourism Coalition will be meeting next week.

Board member Lynn Minges of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) also reported their disappointment involving the sunset of the film incentives. Minges reviewed other legislative issues of importance to NCRLA during the session, including carbon monoxide regulations. NCRLA will also be implementing a North Carolina Food and Lodging Expo, to be held in September 2015.

Board member Caleb Miles of the North Carolina Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) expressed his appreciation of the leaders and lobbyists of tourism working together on legislative issues that affect the industry as a whole. The NCTIA in partnership with DMANC is holding the Tourism Leadership Conference in Winston-Salem in October 8-10th.

Board Member Denny Edwards of the Destination Marketing Association of NC (DMANC) requested that if there are updates on the North Carolina brand to bring them to the Mid Year Marketing Update in October.

GUEST SPEAKER HILL CARROW

Hill Carrow of the 2015 US Figure Skating Championships provided a presentation to inform the Board of the event held in Greensboro, which is coming up in January 2015 and its impact on tourism, visitor spending, and the overall economic impact for the state.

DIVISION UPDATE

Wit Tuttell, provided a brief update to the Board on the recent accomplishments and future goals. Tuttell reminded everyone of the Mid Year Marketing Updates being held across the state within the next two months.

Research: State-wide mid-year lodging numbers have been released, with North Carolina showing an increase in every category, particularly in demand for rooms.

Back-to-back US Opens were held in Pinehurst and the Division partnered with the Department of Commerce and several others to do a hospitality area to showcase the state to potential clients and travel writers both domestically and internationally. Paired with the US Open, the Division partnered with local destinations to package state-wide trips for these travel writers and media coverage is already showing up as a result of these familiarization tours.

The Division assisted Rockingham County with the negative perception regarding the coal ash spill as it relates to tourism by kicking off the summer travel season along the Dan River with a media event with multiple news outlets.

Public Relations: The Raleigh Media Mission will be held on August 12th to allow partners to meet with in-state media outlets. The Division has been hosting numerous travel writers for the purpose of generating positive media coverage for various destinations across the state.

International: Golf marketing has increased with international tour operators as a result of the US Open and increased international flights.

SportsNC: The Division will continue to partner with the North Carolina Sports Association as well as remaining involved with TEAMS each year.

RetireNC: A quarterly e-newsletter was sent out to potential retirees and the database is growing as the Division attends more consumer shows to promote the state as a retirement destination. Currently with 9 communities in the program, a co-op opportunity will become available to reach the target markets through Ideal Living, an organization based in Wilmington.

Community Development: Bon Appétit Appalachia is a project of the Appalachian Regional Commission. A pull-out guide was placed in Food Traveler Magazine featuring multiple culinary destinations in western North Carolina.

Film: Mid-year numbers were strong, including 19,000 job opportunities, and filming took place in all regions of the state in the first 6 months of the state. Additionally, films based their productions in all but one region of the state.

VisitNC.com: Numbers visiting the website are up 10%, downstream traffic increased and the bounce-rate has decreased; all positive results at the six month point of the year.

Marketing: The additional \$1 million earmarked for tourism marketing will allow the Division to have a television presence in two targeted markets (Atlanta and Washington, D.C.).

Advertising: Partnering with other southern states through Travel South, the Division was able to increase awareness through a buy-in with USAToday.com.

Brand: An estimated timeline of the release of the statewide brand was reviewed.

Meeting adjourned at 1:34pm.