



# NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

## MEETING MINUTES

December 4, 2012

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Josh Bass, Sabrina Bengel, Rolf Blizzard, Chris Cavanaugh, Donna Carpenter, Randy Cobb, Sec. Keith Crisco, Denny Edwards, Chris Humphrey, Randy Kolls, Lynn Lewis, Davin Olsen, Paula Wilber

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Teresa Damiano, S. Lewis Ebert, Rep. Phillip Haire, Rep. Susi Hamilton, Sen. Ralph Hise, Kim Hufham, Vimal Kolappa, Robert O'Halloran, Sen. Jean Preston, Joan H. Pulley, Jamie Reibel, Leonard Rigsbee, Susan Spangler, Steve Thanhauser, Mitzi York

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Whitney Christensen, Shelly Carver, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Lindy Johnson, Lewis Ledford, Brooks Luquire, Lynn Minges, Eleanor Talley, Wit Tuttell, Kara Weishaar, T. Jerry Williams, Jennifer Woodward

## CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rolf Blizzard called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

## COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Rolf Blizzard recognized Paula Wilber of Biltmore, a new board member representing NCRLA. The board introduced itself. Blizzard read the statement of duty aloud (Ethics policies EO 34 and EO 35). The chairman announced the appointment of a committee consisting of past board chairman to appoint a new board chair for the February meeting. The board chairman then presented Lynn Minges, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce with a gift for her dedicated service. The NC Travel and Tourism staff led by Wit Tuttell also presented Lynn Minges with a gift, as well as board member Dave Olsen with a gift from the Carolina Hurricanes.

## MINUTES APPROVED

Josh Bass motioned to approve the August 14, 2012 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Randy Kolls and unanimously approved.

## COMMENTS BY LEGISLATORS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Rolf Blizzard representing the Travel and Tourism Coalition discussed the issues they will be monitoring in the upcoming legislative session including the Division budget, tax modernization reform, beach nourishment, tolls, ABC laws and having VisitNC on the North Carolina license plate. This session will be critical, as there will be a lot of new legislators in the House and Senate unfamiliar with travel and tourism issues.

Randy Kolls of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association announced their selection of Lynn Minges as their new CEO after a nationwide search. He said the organization was delighted to have her. Whitney Christensen from NCRLA discussed the upcoming session issues that they will be monitoring including the smoking ban, school calendar and occupancy taxes. Lynn Minges discussed moving the May Tourism Day celebration to February in an attempt to reach and educate new legislators about the industry's importance.

Denny Edwards representing the North Carolina Destination Marketing Association (DMANC) highlighted the upcoming Tourism Leadership Conference with NCTIA and DMANC's continued efforts to bring young tourism professionals together and help them get involved in important industry events and issues. He mentioned that the DMANC would be monitoring issues including federal travel restrictions, investment tax income and charitable tax income, and reclassification of nonprofit organizations' tax exempt status.

## DIVISION UPDATE BY WIT TUTTELL

Wit Tuttell reported on the continued positive year to date lodging numbers through October for North Carolina.

The Division will introduce the newly redesigned 2013 Travel Guide next week. This year the two covers feature the Grove Park Inn and kayaking in the NC Mountains. The 600,000 copies of the travel guide were produced at no expense to tax payers with \$1.1 million in investment from over 120 tourism industry partners across the state. The redesigned guide features large photographs and less copy about a variety of topics of interest to visitors including food, music, resorts, outdoor recreation and the Civil War. The new design translates well to digital and mobile devices.

The Division continues to see strong results from VisitNC.com through 2012. The site is projected to exceed 4 million visitors for the first time, up 12.72% increase year to date. The Division expects the positive trends to continue including the downstream referrals rate increasing and the homepage bounce rate decreasing.

The Division developed a number of fall seasonal online display banners drawing attention to the number of activities North Carolina offers across the state during this popular season. The campaign, active from August 15 – October 31, drove roughly 80,000 visitors to Visitnc.com and generated over 56 million impressions for a 0.14% CTR. This is up from a 0.07% CTR from the spring seasonal campaign. The Fall Color and Fall Fishing concepts were responsible for 33% of the total clicks to Visitnc.com.

The Division continues to be active across all major social media channels popular among active travelers and has attracted nearly 100,000 total fans and followers to date. North Carolina was among the early adopters of Pinterest ranking #2 among the 50 state tourism offices through October 2012.

The Division's public relations team saw success from its fall campaign which generated \$1.56 million in coverage in September and October. The Division will host media missions in January and February 2013 in New York and Atlanta. The Division has been honored with two HSMAI (Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International) Adrian Awards for 2012 for its marketing work on the Hunger Games Film Tourism Promotion and for its crisis communication during Hurricane Irene.

The Division will be the title sponsor for the ABA Marketplace's first evening event at Discovery Place during the premier group travel event hosted in Charlotte in early January 2013. Over 3000 tourism industry professionals are attending the trade show. The event, entitled "The Big Sh'Bang," encouraged guests to experience the wonders of N.C. and see Discovery Place's \$31.6 million full venue facelift. The Division also participated in the Domestic Sales Mission in September, Teams in October and SYTA in August with strong results.

The International Marketing program with eleven industry partners participated in the first Travel South International Showcase in November in Atlanta where it met with over 80 tour operators. The Division also marketed the state at its annual German Sales Mission in November and Canadian Sales Mission in October.

Sanford and Marion joined Asheboro and Lumberton in the Certified Retirement Community program. The next deadline for application will be in January 2013. The Division generated over 1100 leads at the AARP Convention in September for our partners.

The 2012 calendar year will be record year for film productions have already eclipsed 2011's recording setting numbers for in-state spending. With films and TV shows like Iron Man 3, Homeland, Banshee, We're the Millers, Safe Haven, Revolution and The Hunger Games helping to make this the strongest year in film ever.

The Division of Tourism funded a wine tourism study by UNC-Greensboro that found that 80% of winery visitors were visitors to the community. The entire study is available at [ncommerce.com/tourism](http://ncommerce.com/tourism).

The Division hosted three Mid-Year Marketing Updates (MYMU) this year across the state in mid-September. The interactive sessions, which reached an audience of about 450 in Asheville, Greenville and Raleigh, provide key insights which will help fuel the Division's strategic planning for 2013-14.

On March 11-13, 2013 the Division will host its annual Governor's Conference on Tourism in Wilmington featuring keynote speakers Mike Walsh, CEO of Tomorrow and Author, FUTURETAINMENT and Scott Stratten, President of UnMarketing.

**SECRETARY CRISCO SPEAKS**

Secretary Crisco presented Lynn Minges, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce, with an Order of the Long Leaf Pine from Governor Perdue for her service to the state.

**TEN YEAR DIVISION OF TOURISM LOOK BACK WITH WIT TUTTELL**

North Carolina has seen unprecedented growth in the last ten years leveraging limited marketing dollars through strong partnerships with our industry. The state is positioned as the sixth most visited overnight destination adding new product and accumulating accomplishments and accolades over the ten year period. Visitor spending has increased 48% since 2002 with visitors spending over \$50 million a day in the state. Visitor growth has brought a complex and new media market that challenges the ability to effectively reach consumers. Strong branding has sparked content strategy and synergy, while the changing media landscape has enhanced the Division's ability to be nimble and budget conscious in new media like online advertising.

**UPDATE FROM NC STATE PARKS**

Lewis Ledford with the North Carolina State Parks gave a presentation on the State Parks System. He discussed the history of the program, various changes, as well as recent acquisitions and growth since the program began.

Meeting adjourned at 1:17 p.m.