



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

December 9, 2014

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Ashworth, Sabrina Bengel, Rolf Blizzard, Donna Carpenter, Denny Edwards, Katherine Hopkins, Chris Humphrey, Caleb Miles, Bob O'Halloran, Tammy O'Kelley, Jessica Roberts, Art Schools, Kathy Sparrow, Wit Tuttell, Chris Valauri, Paula Wilber, Lynn Wingate

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Baker, Randy Cobb, Randy Danos, Secretary Sharon Decker, Lew Ebert, Joel Griffin, Representative Susi Hamilton, Senator Ralph Hise, Representative Pat McElraft, Lynn Minges, Vinay Patel, Senator Norman Sanderson

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Kevin Brafford, Peggy Brookhouse, Suzanne Brown, Karin Cochran, Cary Cox, Robert Cox, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Ashlee Kirk, Secretary Susan Kluttz, Ray Langen, Brooks Luquire, Steve Luquire, Steve Mange, Andre Nabors, Kathy Prickett, Mark Shore, Secretary John Skvarla, Marlise Taylor, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, T. Jerry Williams

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 August 5, 2014 meeting minutes. Seconded by Rolf Blizzard. Unanimously approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley recognized three new Board members: Kathy Sparrow and Katherine Hopkins from North Carolina Watermen United, and Sally Ashworth from Visit Lake Norman. All attendees introduced themselves. O'Kelley reported on the recent changes to the state tourism office and the partnership, including the hiring of a new CEO for the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) and the departure of Department of Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker. O'Kelley expressed appreciation on behalf of the Travel and Tourism Board for the dedication and support during the last two years by Secretary Decker. O'Kelley then recognized Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Secretary John Skvarla, as the incoming Secretary of Commerce.

COMMENTS FROM SECRETARY SKVARLA

Secretary John Skvarla provided a brief overview of his vision of tourism for the state and his commitment to supporting the industry.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

O'Kelley announced the members of the Nominating Committee for Board chair for 2015: Denny Edwards (chair), Rolf Blizzard, Rep. Pat McElraft, Chris Valauri, Lynn Minges, Vinay Patel, and Paula Wilber. The Nominating Committee will have recommendations to present at the February meeting.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

O'Kelley presented a document outlining the Legislative Priorities for the Travel and Tourism Board for approval, as drafted by the Executive Committee: (1) Funding for tourism marketing and promotion, (2) Local occupancy tax policy, (3) Support the Travel and Tourism Policy Act, (4) Support existing school calendar law, (5) Protect our environment, (6) Post-Production Film Tax Credit

Sabrina Bengel motioned to adopt the 2015 Legislative Priorities as presented, seconded by Donna Carpenter; unanimously approved.

LEGISLATIVE AND INDUSTRY REPORTS

Secretary Kluttz of Department of Cultural Resources expressed her appreciation of partnerships with tourism including Civil War programs, Art That Moves You and historical sites.

Board member Rolf Blizzard of the NC Travel and Tourism Coalition reported they have held their annual retreat where they outlined their legislative priorities for the upcoming year, with the main priority being the transition of tourism to the EDPNC. Other issues of primary concern: admissions taxes, film incentives, school calendar, marketing funds for state tourism, and online travel companies.

Board member Bob O'Halloran of the NC Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) reviewed the legislative issues that their organization would be monitoring during the upcoming session: occupancy tax and how the revenue is being spent, online travel companies and Airbnb regulations. NCRLA's upcoming events include: Legislative day - March 4, Taste of North Carolina and industry awards – February 2, NC Food & Lodging Expo – September 2015

Board member Caleb Miles of the NC Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) recognized T. Jerry Williams, who reported the concerns involving school calendars and requested that the Board examine the importance of agritourism. Miles informed attendees of the NCTIA Legislative Reception scheduled for February 4.

Board member Chris Valauri wanted to remind everyone of the spotlight placed on North Carolina during the 2014 US Open Championship in relation to the environmentally-friendly water-saving methods used during both tournaments.

Board Member Donna Carpenter of the Destination Marketing Association of NC (DMANC) reported that their organization will be monitoring many of the same legislative issues for 2015. Upcoming events include the One Voice Industry Dinner on February 3 and a legislative reception on February 4.

EDPNC/VISITNC UPDATE

Wit Tuttell, executive director of Visit North Carolina, provided an update to the Board on the recent accomplishments and future goals of the organization. Tuttell welcomed everyone to the new building and cited the hiring of new CEO Christopher Chung as the major news from the EDPNC. The organizational chart was reviewed as well as current job openings.

Research: 2014 has been a record year, and North Carolina has been ahead of the competition in all categories of lodging, particularly in room demand at 5.8%. Lodging revenues are at \$2.5 billion year-to-date, which is also a record.

Accolades/Accomplishments: Mercury Awards were won for NC Beer Month and the 2014 Travel Guide. Presented by the US Travel Association's National Council of State Tourism Directors, the Mercury Awards recognize members for excellence and creative accomplishment in state/ territory destination marketing and promotion.

2015 Travel Guide: Split cover - Bentonville Battlefield in Four Oaks and the Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse in Manteo. 525,000 copies are distributed each year. The guide serves as the main fulfillment piece and is produced at no cost to the state, supported by advertisers. There is also a digital version available with added video content.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

EDPNC/VISITNC UPDATE CONTINUED

International: Swiss tour operator Knecht Reisen released the 2015 Motorhome catalogue. North Carolina is the only featured Destination in the catalogue. "Essentially America," a UK magazine distributed to approximately 50,000, featured a six-page spread and cover on North Carolina as a result of a visit by Mary Moore Mason. Additionally, a UK familiarization tour took journalists to Cape Fear, Crystal Coast and the Outer Banks regions. Visit North Carolina also returned in October to the World Travel Market, the largest travel trade show in England. Visit NC teamed with Travel South USA for a larger presence among the U.S. destinations.

RetireNC: There are now (10) communities in the program as Winterville joined the Certified Retirement Community (CRC) program. Recently RetireNC.com began featuring display ads just for the CRC partners. In addition to the display ads, Visit NC is offered a print co-op opportunity for the first time in "Ideal Living Magazine" for the Winter and Spring of the 2014-15 fiscal year. Certified Retirement Communities (CRC) receive a 50% off discounted rate while non-CRCs have the ability to participate at the full rate.

Tourism Development: Visit North Carolina and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) held a media event unveiling of Bon Appétit Appalachia, a regional map highlighting food, farms and flavors throughout the Appalachian Region. Bon Appétit Appalachia is a project of the ARC, a federal-state economic development partnership that includes North Carolina and 12 other states. The map, published in "Food Traveler" magazine, features 283 farms, markets, farm-to-table restaurants, wineries, craft breweries, and other culinary destinations.

Group Travel: Partner Relations Manager André Nabors promoted travel to North Carolina at the Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) Annual Conference in Toronto, Canada, in August. The conference and marketplace brought together student and youth tour operators, group travel planners and the business suppliers. More than a dozen partners accompanied Nabors on the annual domestic tourism sales mission in Indianapolis, Ind., Louisville and Lexington, Ky., and Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio.

SportsNC: Visit North Carolina's Director of Partner & Industry Relations Heidi Walters led a delegation of 35 industry partners who were promoting the state's sports industry during the annual TEAMS (Travel, Events And Management in Sports) Conference & Expo, held in Las Vegas, Nev., in November. Attendance at the meeting of the sporting events conference was estimated at 1000. The SportsNC team hosted its annual invitation-only event for sports event organizers, which allowed SportsNC partners one-on-one time with decision-makers of numerous sporting events. Also distributed 2nd edition of SportsNC newsletter to events rights holders nationwide and featured a new print ad in a special North Carolina Sports section in the "Sports Business Journal" in November.

NC Film Office: As of November 19, the following estimates reflect activity by the industry in 2014: In excess of \$314 million in direct in-state spending, 19,000 job opportunities, 3,500 crew positions, 3,361 production days, 55 projects have registered with the NCFO. Working draft of the 2015 Film and Entertainment Grant Guidelines have been distributed to the industry and are available for view on the NC Film Office's website. Final version will be posted the first week in January, with the guidelines becoming official on January 26, following a 20-day public comment period.

Public Relations: The PR team and 33 partners from across the state shared their stories with a variety of media at the annual in-state media reception in Raleigh. The Nature Research Center, the highly interactive wing of the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, hosted partners and media guests who attended the two-hour event. In addition, contributions of North Carolina wine, beer and spirits helped tell the story of these growing industries. On January 27, Visit North Carolina's PR team will head to NY for the national media event of the year. In April, PR will host a regional media mission event in Atlanta.

Public Relations Successes: North Carolina craft beer, a rising star on the state's tourism landscape, was featured in a segment that aired Saturday on NBC's "Today." The story, though national in scope, was shot on location in Asheville with NBC correspondent Kerry Sanders visiting Highland Brewing, Wicked Weed and the site of New Belgium's \$140 million brewery, set to open in 2015. Viewership for "Today" is 3.1 million, which gives the 3½-minute segment \$1.1 million in media value. The clip's online reach of 8.3 million adds \$76,818.

VisitNC.com: Visitation to the site for fall grew significantly compared to the same time period for last year, September 22 – November 2. Overall visitation to the site increased 41.03% with more than 771,500 visits, also driving increased downstream referrals from VisitNC.com to partners' websites. The three main Fall reports together (Mountains, Coast, Piedmont) have received more than 51,000 total page views, a 5.79% increase from the page views last year. Through November, there have been more than 5 million visitors to VisitNC.com.

Fall Social Media: Visit North Carolina social media by the numbers for September 1 – October 31: Facebook (2,680 new page Likes, 1.1 million total impressions, 29,000+ engagements on 74 posts, 30.85% of audience engaged); Twitter (1,252 new followers, 20.6 million potential impressions, 7,208 engagements on 379 tweets. 22.73% of total audience engaged); Instagram (1,469 new followers, 3 million potential impressions from #VisitNC use, 24,470 engagements on 85 posts, 539.6% of audience engaged); #VisitNC (5,227 uses across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and G+, 7.6 million potential impressions).

Fall Digital Advertising: Campaign included presence on Pandora and Spotify that led music enthusiasts to new content on VisitNC.com focused on the state's many music festivals taking place this fall, such as Farm Aid and IBMA's World of Bluegrass in Raleigh, and the eclectic music venues everyone enjoys throughout the year. WeatherBug continues to be a successful digital partner for us in terms of driving downstream traffic to VisitNC and partner sites, and is also a great venue to feature the state's beautiful landscapes in a high-impact environment.

Civil War Campaign: 2015 will be commemorating the last year of the Civil War, and that is the year North Carolina played a very prominent role in the end of the War and the progression from there. Visit North Carolina and the state Department of Cultural Resources have partnered together to channel the astute observations and wry humor of Mary Chesnut's "A Diary From Dixie" into The Mary Chesnut Project, which time travels from the 19th century to engage modern generations. Anchored by a blog on Tumblr and broadcast on Twitter, The Mary Chesnut Project illuminates life during wartime with images and words that connect historical characters to current sites, tours and re-enactments through the thread of social media.

Vacation Big: Spring 2015 Target Market Campaign - Atlanta and DC metros: Campaign strategy and objectives: Targeting high opportunity markets with strong baseline awareness of and visitation to NC. DC and Atlanta are top out-of-state markets of origin across the state, and based on partner input, they represent growing audiences and desired markets.

2015 Governor's Conference on Tourism: The 2015 North Carolina Governor's Conference on Tourism will take place at the Pinehurst Resort's the Carolina Hotel in Pinehurst March 8 – 10.

Meeting adjourned at 1:47pm.