



# NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

## MEETING MINUTES

February 12, 2013

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rolf Blizzard, Donna Carpenter, Sec. Sharon Allred Decker, Denny Edwards, Kim Hufham, Vimal Kolappa, Randy Kolls, Lynn Lewis, Robert O'Halloran, Davin Olsen, Steve Thanhauser, Paula Wilber, Mitzi York

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Josh Bass, Sabrina Bengel, Chris Cavanaugh, Randy Cobb, Teresa Damiano, S. Lewis Ebert, Rep. Phillip Haire, Rep. Susi Hamilton, Sen. Ralph Hise, Chris Humphrey, Joan H. Pulley, Jaime Reibel, Leonard Rigsbee, Susan Spangler

**LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT:** Peggy Brookhouse, Tracy Brown, Chelsea Chambers, Whitney Christensen, Steve Dunkley, Bryan Gupton, Nicolle Jones, Ashlee Kirk, Brooks Luquire, Steve Luquire, Lynn Minges, Harris Prevost, Aaron Syrett, Eleanor Talley, Wit Tuttell, Kara Weishaar, T. Jerry Williams

## CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rolf Blizzard called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

## COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Rolf Blizzard welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for participating in various activities related to Tourism Day at the NC Legislature. Blizzard then read aloud the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35.

## MINUTES APPROVED

Randy Kolls motioned to approve the December 4, 2012 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Denny Edwards and unanimously approved.

## REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Steve Thanhauser reported the recommendation of the Committee to re-elect Rolf Blizzard as Board Chairman. 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 occupancy tax, increasing the tourism marketing budget by \$5 million and the proposed Charlotte prepared meals tax. Blizzard reported that the Coalition Board met yesterday and that they will maintain the same position on most issues. Additionally, the T&T Coalition did not sponsor a Legislative breakfast for Tourism day but hopes to do so sometime later in the legislative session.

Randy Koll of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association reminded everyone that the annual Taste of North Carolina event will occur on Monday night, February 18<sup>th</sup> at the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill.

## SECRETARY DECKER INTRODUCTIONS & COMMENTS

All attendees gave a brief introduction and welcome to Secretary Sharon Allred Decker.

Secretary Decker gave her 5 tenets of community development

- 1) Everyone in NC deserves the opportunity for a healthy life
- 2) Education
- 3) Core Economic Development
- 4) Arts, Tourism & Culture
- 5) Quality of Life and the Environment

Discussion followed amongst the Board members regarding the important goals of the industry and how the new administration and the Board can work together to meet these goals. Highlights include the concept of investing in NC

tourism pays high dividends (“Tourism loves back”), increasing the tourism marketing budget to put NC on par with other Southern states, Wine moving to Agriculture, developing a better statewide brand, representation from the state & the Division at the DMANC meeting, importance of Tourism in maintaining culture and history across the state (“Tourism is a keeper of the culture”), and increasing the presence of the North Carolina message.

#### **COMMENTS BY LEGISLATORS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS (CONT’D)**

Lynn Minges of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association reported on the issues that they will be monitoring in the upcoming legislative session including the smoking ban, which was enacted three years ago and has turned out to be profitable, the school calendar, casino nights, prepared meals taxes, and increasing the statewide tourism budget.

Lynn Lewis of the North Carolina Travel Industry Association explained that Tourism Day was moved up to bring the importance of Tourism earlier in the legislative session than normal. Lewis reported that there was an industry dinner last night and 45 partners were in attendance. Tonight is the industry reception and a good turnout is expected.

Denny Edwards of the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina reported that they are monitoring the same legislative issues as the other industry partners. With Governors Conference coming up, they hope that the state DMOs will attend. Edwards highlighted the Tourism Leadership conference which is typically held in the fall.

#### **DIVISION UPDATE BY WIT TUTTELL**

Wit Tuttell reported on the positive 2012 year-end lodging report for the State of North Carolina, specifically that revenues are at an all-time high and the highest demand on record. Annual Attendance was also up at most state attractions.

The Division’s family of websites experienced increased performance in 2012. Overall site traffic to the Division's VisitNC.com family of websites - including mobile, media and wine sites - totaled 4,473,077, an increase of 14.01 percent over 2011.

The U.S. Travel Association has launched advocacy and awareness campaign called “Travel Effect: You’ll Know When You Go” to generate greater understanding of tourism’s contribution to the recovery and US economy overall. The Travel industry adds jobs 16 times faster than other sectors and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest growth industry behind business services and healthcare.

Coming off a record year in 2011 with over \$241 million dollars in spending generated by films, the North Carolina Film Industry in 2012 broke those records – accounting for more than \$376 million in direct in-state spending and created more than 4,100 well-paying crew positions for our state’s highly skilled workforce. All told, productions created nearly 20,000 job opportunities – including talent and background extras for North Carolinians. Notable productions included Iron Man 3, Homeland, Banshee, and Safe Haven.

The Division’s public relations team showcased the best of North Carolina to 65 national media members in New York City this past January for the sixth consecutive year. As a direct result of this event, the Division landed the opportunity to be featured on a broadcast of GMA Live, which is an online steaming program extension of “Good Morning America.” Asheville’s culinary scene received coverage in the February 2013 print and online edition of Food & Wine magazine as a result of the efforts of the Division working in partnership with the Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Charlotte hosted the American Bus Association's Annual Marketplace, one of the premier industry events for group travel. The Division and Visit Charlotte were extremely excited to host a convention that plays such a vital role in the group travel industry. According to the ABA, motorcoach travel in North Carolina had a direct economic impact of \$1.1 billion and provided more than 18,000 jobs in 2012.

The Division partners annually with the NC Ski Areas Association to conduct a media buy promoting NC's ski resorts and winter fun valued at \$80,000. This year's buy included cable TV, outdoor billboards and digital display ads.

The Division's International contracts are currently up for review and the RFP process is happening now. The International Marketing program is looking forward to two upcoming FAM tours which will bring UK representatives to the mountains in April and Canadian representatives to the Outer Banks Region in May.

New communities Marion and Sanford were added to the Certified Retirement Community (CRC) list. The Division has received applications for two new cities, Pittsboro and Mt. Airy. Visitors can sign up to be included in a quarterly e-newsletter providing more information about North Carolina's popular retirement destinations and CRCs. Upcoming AARP Conference Planning for their Life @ 50+ National Events which are occurring in Las Vegas in May and Atlanta in October.

The Division is planning for upcoming TRAC (Tourism Resource Assistance Center) events in Greensboro on March 21 at the Proximity Hotel and in Fayetteville on May 16. The goal is to have 4-6 TRAC programs across the state again this year.

North Carolina's Inaugural Beer Month will occur this April. A Month-long beer tourism promotion spearheaded by the North Carolina Brewers Guild and the Division of Tourism will capitalize on North Carolina's emergence as the #1 destination for craft breweries in the Southeast. Featured offerings include gourmet prix fixe menus, beer pairings and chef dinners, special release beers, beer-themed cooking classes, collaboration beers, hotel and tour packages, festivals, and special events.

The Division along with LGA is currently working on the re-launch for VisitNC.com. This will be the first substantive upgrade in four years, with a commitment to maintaining a best-in-class visitor experience online, one that is content-first oriented, supported and driven by analytics and responsive to whatever way visitors prefer to consume information. Site will be built using responsive design, providing the best presentation and experience across all platforms from mobile devices to web-enabled TVs. Responsive design is increasingly important as forecasts indicate consumers accessing the web using mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) will overtake desktop in 2014. In March, the website will be debuted at Governor's Conference and plans to launch on July 1, 2013.

The Division will host its annual Governor's Conference at the Wilmington Convention Center on March 10-12, 2013. This year's keynote speakers are Mike Walsh, CEO of Tomorrow and Author, FUTURETAINMENT and Scott Stratten, President of UnMarketing.

Meeting adjourned at 12:17pm.