



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

February 10, 2015

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sally Ashworth, Sabrina Bengel, Rolf Blizzard, Randy Cobb, Denny Edwards, Joel Griffin, Senator Ralph Hise, Katherine Hopkins, Chris Humphrey, Representative Pat McElraft, Caleb Miles, Lynn Minges, Bob O'Halloran, Tammy O'Kelley, Vinay Patel, Jessica Roberts, Secretary John Skvarla, Wit Tuttell, Chris Valauri

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Baker, Donna Carpenter, Randy Danos, Lew Ebert, Representative Charles Jeter, Art Schools, Kathy Sparrow, Senator Norman Sanderson, Paula Wilber, Lynn Wingate

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Peggy Brookhouse, Suzanne Brown, Rick Cain, Christopher Chung, Steve Dunkley, Susan Fleetwood, Guy Gaster, Kim Genardo, Scott Gilmore, Bryan Gupton, Jim Hobbs, Martha Jenkins, Ashlee Kirk, Brooks Luquire, Alice Miller, Andre Nabors, Nick Parker, Scott Peacock, Kathy Prickett, Reagan Riddle, Mark Shore, 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

Denny Edwards moved to approve the December 9, 2014 meeting minutes. Seconded by Rolf Blizzard. Unanimously approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley recognized Board members that were reappointed by the Senate leadership: Kevin Baker, Robert Danos, Senator Ralph Hise, Chris Humphrey and Senator Norman Sanderson. Board members reappointed by the House leadership: Representative Pat McElraft, Tammy O'Kelley, Jessica Roberts and Chris Valauri. Representative Charles Jeter has also been appointed by the Speaker of the House. O'Kelley then recognized the CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), Christopher Chung.

COMMENTS FROM CHRISTOPHER CHUNG

Christopher Chung provided an introduction and update from the EDPNC. Chung presented the updated organizational chart as well as the key functions of the partnership.

COMMENTS FROM SECRETARY JOHN SKVARLA

Secretary John Skvarla addressed the Board and expressed his appreciation for their efforts and support of the tourism industry. Secretary Skvarla reported that the main issue being addressed at this time by the legislature surrounds incentives and how that will affect economic development for North Carolina.

REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Nominating Committee Chair Denny Edwards thanked Rolf Blizzard, Lynn Minges, Vinay Patel, Chris Valauri and Paula Wilber for serving and recommended Tammy O'Kelley be reelected as chairperson for the year. Sabrina Bengel moved to approve the recommendation; seconded by Caleb Miles. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley expressed her appreciation for everyone's hard work over the last year. The legislative priorities for 2015 were distributed to all attendees. The Executive Committee for the year will be: Tammy O'Kelley, Rolf Blizzard, Vinay Patel, Secretary John Skvarla, Wit Tuttell and Ashlee Kirk. The Budget and Finance Committee for the year will be: Tammy O'Kelley, Donna Carpenter, Paula Wilber, Sabrina Bengel, Wit Tuttell and Heidi Walters.

O'Kelley acknowledged the loss of former UNC basketball coach Dean Smith and also welcomed back Jim Hobbs. Additionally, O'Kelley recognized new Visit North Carolina staff members Scott Peacock, Public Relations Manager and Nick Parker, Database and Social Media Specialist.

SPONSORSHIP REQUEST

Reagan Riddle of the Primitive Quartet presented a request of sponsorship for the production of a gospel music program for the National RFD Television Network. This request has been referred to the Budget and Finance Committee and will be reviewed before the May meeting.

LEGISLATIVE AND INDUSTRY REPORTS

Representative Pat McElraft and Senator Ralph Hise gave updates on legislative priorities and opportunities for the upcoming session.

It was suggested to all members of the Board to contact local governments and tourism boards to obtain resolutions in support of the existing school calendar laws and distribute to legislators. A resolution was proposed by the Travel and Tourism Board in support of the existing school calendar laws. Motion made by Lynn Minges; seconded by Rolf Blizzard. Motion carried unanimously. The resolution will be drafted and distributed to all members.

Board member Rolf Blizzard of the NC Travel and Tourism Coalition reported that a request of \$5 million in marketing dollars for the tourism office for television advertising would be a priority for the legislative session. The Coalition met recently to discuss other issues of concern including school calendar, film incentives, social economies, and online travel companies.

Board member Vinay Patel of the NC Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) reported that their Board of Directors met February 2 and adopted a legislative priorities resolution similar to the Travel and Tourism Board resolution including: short-term online rental marketplace regulations, occupancy tax, opposition to any new meals taxes, school calendar, ABC regulations, jet fuel tax, and regulatory reform related to the hospitality industry. Upcoming events: March 4 – Legislative Day, April 13-15 – National Restaurant Association and American Hotel & Lodging Association Capitol Hill event and September 21-22 – NC Food & Lodging Expo.

Board member Caleb Miles of the NC Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) reported that the legislative reception has been changed due to scheduling issues and the new date is February 25 at the Natural Sciences Museum. Additionally, NCTIA's priorities are in line with the other member organizations represented.

WORKING LUNCH

ADVERTISING AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT STUDY

Rick Cain of Longwoods International gave a presentation to the Board as a result of the evaluation of North Carolina's 2014 tourism advertising campaign. This report presented the detailed study findings as they relate to: North Carolina's image as a travel destination vs. its key competitors, the impact of the advertising on North Carolina's image as a travel destination, and the bottom-line impacts of the campaign. The full report will be available on Visit North Carolina's website for review.

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.

2014 Year End Lodging Report: Once again, NC lodging hit records last year. Each of the 6 indicators hit new record levels in 2014. Room Demand was up 5.4% statewide and surpassed last year's demand to reach another new record for lodging demand in the state.

Retire NC: The Certified Retirement Community program continues to grow and is being promoted at retirement shows throughout the year. A winter print co-op with ideal-LIVING featuring certified retirement communities was offered for the first time with plans for another in the spring.

Group Travel: Visit North Carolina attended ABA in January with over 20 partners. Met with over 30 tour operators from around the country and hosted an event at the Scottrade Center for the Carolina Hurricanes game vs. the St. Louis Blues. Travel South is coming up in March to meet with more tour operators. Visit North Carolina will be co-sponsoring the closing event in preparation to host the 2016 Travel South Domestic Showcase.

Public Relations: Along with several partners, Visit North Carolina hosted a winter activities familiarization tour. Due to weather, the New York Media Mission has been rescheduled to March 19.

Beer Month: Visit North Carolina's award winning Beer Month campaign is coming up in April in partnership with the North Carolina Craft Brewers Guild.

Civil War: This spring marks the 150th anniversary of the Confederate troop surrender at Bennett Place, which effectively ended the Civil War. A newly launched Civil War 150 overview can be found on VisitNC.com and time spent by visitors on the page is quite a bit higher than the average site.

VisitNC.com 2014 Performance Highlights: VisitNC.com attracted nearly 5.4 million visits in 2014, a 19% increase over 2013. Approximately 1.8 million downstream clicks or referrals from VisitNC.com to partner sites, a 45% increase over 2013. Mobile traffic has been continuously increasing.

Deeper Connections Campaign: New imagery has been added to refresh the existing deeper connections campaign. New images include: French Broad River, Romare Bearden Park and Coquina rocks.

Vacation Big: Spring and Summer television campaign will run in the targeted markets of Washington DC (March 16, 2015 –May 31, 2015) and Atlanta (April 13, 2015 –June 14, 2015). Sweepstakes and promotions will also be created to support these efforts.

2015 Travel Guide: Two covers - Manteo and Bentonville Battlefield. More than 500,000 copies are printed at no cost to the state as a result of partner investments for advertising.

International: Visit North Carolina's partner international sites have just been updated to reach those markets.

Governor's Conference: The annual Governor's Conference on Tourism will be held in Pinehurst March 8-10. Keynotes for the conference include Shawn Achor and Jay Baer.

CLOSING

Discussion followed amongst the Board members involving the jet fuel tax. O'Kelley proposed a letter on behalf of the Board be drafted to be sent to the legislative leadership in support of a jet fuel tax plan that can maintain a competitive advantage for the state involving the airline industry. Motion made by Joel Griffin; seconded by Chris Valauri. Motion unanimously approved and a letter will be created and approved in Executive Committee and distributed. Other discussions included funding and budget for Visit North Carolina.

Vinay Patel moved for adjournment; second by Sabrina Bengel. Meeting adjourned at 1:55pm.