



NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2016

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Sabrina Bengel, Christopher Chung, Richard Geiger, Marshall Hilliard, Senator Ralph Hise, Kim Hufham, Chris Humphrey, Caleb Miles, Tammy O'Kelley, Vinay Patel, Jessica Roberts, Senator Norman Sanderson, Chris Valauri, Lynn Wingate

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Baker, Rolf Blizzard, Donna Carpenter, Randy Cobb, Randy Danos, Lew Ebert, Joel Griffin, Katherine Hopkins, Representative Charles Jeter, Representative Pat McElraft, Lynn Minges, Art Schools, Secretary John Skvarla, Kathy Sparrow, Paula Wilber

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Kevin Brafford, David Cartier, Karin Cochran, Cary Cox, Robert Cox, Susan Fleetwood, Guy Gaster, Scott Gilmore, Marcie Gordon, Dana Grimstead, Bryan Gupton, Matthew Hebb, Jim Hobbs, Ashlee Kirk, Secretary Susan Kluttz, Catherine Locke, Brooks Luquire, Steve Mange, Andre Nabors, Nick Parker, Joe Schwarzer, Patricia Simmons, Marlise Taylor, Cyndi Tomblin, Jillian Totman, Wit Tuttell, Heidi Walters, Kara Weishaar, T. Jerry Williams

CALL TO ORDER

Tammy O'Kelley, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

WELCOME

O'Kelley welcomed Board members and guests to the Museum of History in Raleigh. She also read aloud the Ethics Statement in accordance with Executive Order No. 35.

MINUTES APPROVED

Sabrina Bengel made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes. Second by Caleb Miles. Unanimously approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley recognized new members to the Travel and Tourism Board: North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) has appointed Marshall Hilliard of Bissell Hotels (Joel Griffin, Lynn Minges and Paula Wilber were reappointed); North Carolina Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) reappointed Caleb Miles and Lynn Wingate; Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) has appointed Richard Geiger of the Winston-Salem Convention and Visitors Bureau and Kim Hufham of Wilmington & Beaches Convention and Visitors Bureau (Donna Carpenter was reappointed).

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Board member Vinay Patel provided a report from the Nominating Committee for the 2016 calendar year, which consisted of Sabrina Bengel, Rolf Blizzard, Vinay Patel, Wit Tuttell and Ashlee Kirk. The committee recommended that current chair, Tammy O'Kelley, be reappointed. Senator Norman Sanderson made a motion that the recommendation from the committee be approved; unanimously approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

O'Kelley thanked the Board for their hard work over the last year. Three committees will be in place for 2016 and the Board chair, along with staff members Wit Tuttell and Ashlee Kirk, will serve on all three. Budget and Finance: Donna Carpenter, Rich Geiger, Kim Hufham, Jessica Roberts and Caleb Miles. Governmental Affairs: Vinay Patel, Joel Griffin, Chris Valauri and Lynn Wingate. Executive: Rolf Blizzard, Sabrina Bengel and Lynn Minges.

O'Kelley presented the various aspects of the Connect NC Bond and how it relates to the tourism industry. Secretary Susan Kluttz of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources noted how the bond referendum will provide funding for the state parks and zoo, which are resources for the overall tourism industry in North Carolina. Matthew Hebb with the Connect NC Committee shared their strategy and the key talking points in relation to the bond. Pat Simmons with the North Carolina Zoo provided an overview of the vision for the facility including what approval of the

bond would mean for the future. Discussion followed amongst the Board members regarding the bond and the impact it would have on the tourism industry. The Executive Committee presented a resolution in support of the \$2 billion Connect NC bond. Board member Chris Humphrey made a motion to approve, Second by Sabrina Bengel; unanimously approved.

WORKING LUNCH

Wit Tuttell, Executive Director of Visit North Carolina, showed a special which aired on CBS This Morning in advance of the Super Bowl.

LEGISLATIVE AND INDUSTRY REPORTS

Bryan Gupton with the North Carolina Department of Commerce reported that the welcome centers saw a 3.4% increase in traffic at the end of 2015. Branding materials continue to be rolled out at and an electronic guest registry is being tested in anticipation to be implemented at all nine centers. The call center is exploring further partnerships with NCDOT.

Secretary Kluttz, Karin Cochran and Cary Cox provided an update on the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, including the transfer of programs from the Department of Environmental Quality.

Senator Ralph Hise noted that the initial reports show that there will be a surplus, which means that there is a possibility for an increase in the tourism marketing budget.

Board Member Richard Geiger of the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina reported that the collaboration between DMANC and NCTIA is moving forward. In addition, Winston-Salem is hosting the Travel South Domestic showcase in March.

Board Member Caleb Miles of the NC Travel Industry Association noted that the International Association of Golf Tour Operators will be in Pinehurst and the state in the summer. NCTIA's legislative reception is scheduled for May 24 at the Museum of Natural Sciences.

Vinay Patel of the NC Restaurant and Lodging Association provided an update involving governmental relations on behalf of its members for legislative action, including the approval of the Board's legislative short session issues. Upcoming national events: NRA Public Policy forum April 12-13 in D.C. and American Hotel and Lodging Association in D.C. on May 17. NCRLA's offices have moved downtown and the 2016 Legislative Rally in Raleigh will be held on May 11. NCRLA's Board also approved a resolution in support of the Connect NC Bond.

Kara Weishaar of the NC Travel & Tourism Coalition reported that the Board meeting was held yesterday. Issues of concern for the upcoming short session include occupancy taxes, school calendar and tourism marketing budget. A resolution was adopted by the Coalition in support of the Connect NC Bond.

O'Kelley asked the Board to draft a resolution that supports a budget increase of \$12 million in tourism marketing funds and that it be in compliance with the Travel and Tourism Policy Act and the legislation for the EDPNC. Chris Valauri made a motion that the Executive Committee draft this resolution, second made by Rich Geiger. Unanimously approved.

Board member Christopher Chung of the Economic Development Partnership of NC distributed the 2015 Annual Report of the overall organization. Mark Bellissimo has been appointed to the EDPNC as a representative of the hospitality industry. Key points of emphasis for the upcoming year will be to continue to educate the stakeholders on the various components of the EDPNC, introduce new ways of collaboration between the programs in the department to be more efficient and spread the North Carolina message in new ways and also making sure that there is an understanding that tourism is economic development. The legislature requires \$1.25 million to be raised this year in private funds. Tourism entities will be asked to invest in the EDPNC in order to reach that goal.

VISIT NC UPDATE

Wit Tuttell, Executive Director of Visit North Carolina, provided an update from the department as well as upcoming strategies for the future.

Visit NC 365: The Visit NC 365 Conference is March 13-15 at Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort. Keynote speakers are Josh Linkner, Peter Yesawich and Doug Lansky. Sponsorship goals have been reached, but registration has been down.

Research: Once again, North Carolina lodging hit records last year. Each of the six indicators hit new record levels in 2015. Room demand was up statewide in 2015 and is showing strong numbers for January 2016. Visit NC has started new ways to track visitation, including Arrivalist. Arrivalist is a new way for visitors to be tracked including where they came from and how they got there. Longwoods has reviewed the target market campaign from Atlanta and D.C. and awareness has increased significantly.

Travel Guide: RFP is out for the annual travel guide. There are multiple opportunities available for transformation of the guide, and a decision will be made in the next couple of weeks.

Public Relations: Visit NC's annual media mission was held in New York, with more than 40 partners and 91 media guests. Guests talked travel and sampled fare from local suppliers. Also on hand was fly fisherman Alex Bell, who offered fly fishing demos, and local artwork courtesy of Art-o-mat and Levi Mahan Pottery. The public relations team is headed to Canada in April and DC in May.

Public Relations Coverage: In advance of this year's Super Bowl, CBS This Morning came to the state to shoot a nearly seven-minute segment which aired during the 8am hour of CBS This Morning, and this coverage reached 2,992,409 viewers and generated \$4,750,144 in advertising value. In partnership with Durham CVB, the Durham Hotel received coverage by NBC's Today Show in "The best weekend getaways for Valentine's Day romance, or family time," which ran on-air and has been published online. The online piece reached 11,011,481 unique visitors, while the broadcast airing reached 2,895,328 viewers. Travelandleisure.com also featured the article on its website, furthering the coverage. Sports and craft beer were highlighted in the Christmas Eve print edition of the Toronto Star, which has a circulation of 361,323 and was also featured on their site, receiving 8,191,208 unique monthly viewers. Combined these two articles share an advertising equivalency value of \$34,803.

Domestic: Visit NC attended ABA in January and took more than 40 appointments with tour operators during the week, promoting group travel throughout the state. Charlotte will host ABA for the third time in 2018. Travel South is coming up March 6-9 in Winston-Salem. 3 Pre-FAMs for operators and 3 Pre-FAMs for journalists will visit various regions throughout the state.

Sports Marketing: NASC Spring Symposium is coming up in April – Visit NC will be attending for the first time. Due to the success of last year's efforts, Visit NC will be splitting the trade show budget into two shows to have a state presence at Connect in Grapevine, Texas in August and TEAMS in Atlantic City, NJ in September.

Community Relations: In partnership with Greenville/Pitt County CVB, Visit NC staff spoke with a variety of tourism-related entities in Greenville earlier this month during the latest TRAC (Tourism Resource Assistance Center) session. Next one will be held at Beech Mountain in April. Visit NC was honored with a Local Champions Award by the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority/Visit Charlotte. Visit NC was recognized for its efforts to bring tour operators and the Travel South International Showcase to Charlotte.

International: In anticipation of the new Delta flight, Visit NC traveled to Paris to educate agents and operators on opportunities in the state. Also there have been several sweepstakes surrounding Nicholas Sparks movie "The Choice."

Retire NC: The next show is scheduled to be in Bridgewater, NJ Feb. 27-28. The Spring 2016 ideal-LIVING co-op will be hitting newsstands in March featuring the certified retirement communities and other retirement areas featured here in this spread ad.

Film NC: The NC Film Office attended and recruited at Sundance Film Festival, partnering with Wilmington Regional Film Commission, Piedmont Triad Film Commission, and Charlotte Regional Film Commission to host an event for filmmakers and other industry leaders. Pending final acceptance, all funds for FY 2015-16 in the NC Film and Entertainment Grant have been awarded. Production will begin in March and April on the following: “Six” television series (Wilmington), “Good Behavior” television series (Wilmington), “Shots Fired” television series (Charlotte), “Dirty Dancing” made-for-television movie/event (Asheville), and “Three Billboards” feature film (Asheville).

Parks Centennial: Visit NC is partnering with National and State Parks to develop a special program to promote their attractions and resources around the Centennial Celebration in 2016. We’re in the process of developing a campaign to be leveraged across a number of mediums based on a partnership campaign strategy, “Reclaim Your Weekend,” and is scheduled for a March 2016 launch across various platforms.

Project 543: Visit NC refreshed and relaunched Project543.com to provide visitors to the site with an overall better user experience and have included a number of key features to help in planning your visit to any number of attractions listed, allowing the user multiple options based on how they want to interact with the site.

Target Market 2016 Campaign: Building off of the success of 2015’s Target Market campaign in Atlanta and D.C., the focus shifts to five new markets in 2016. The following markets were selected based on a number of factors/analytics, including partner interest/feedback from surveys, VisitNC.com site visitation, Arrivalist and more: Cleveland, Columbia, SC, Jacksonville, FL, Nashville and Richmond. The scroll commercial will be used again, eliminating the need for new production expenses.

2016-17 Partner Co-Op Programs: At the 2016 Visit NC 365 Conference next month, a number of new programs will be introduced for partners to participate in throughout the 2016-17 fiscal year. During Sunday’s presentation, attendees will hear about a VisitNC.com retargeting campaign, a co-op Social Influencer program, a Native advertising co-op, more large format print ad opportunities and additional regional publication combo packages.

Matador Network: Visit NC’s media partnership with the Matador Network officially kicked off in January, with plans to release and feature new content through April. This media buy will result in more than 3.7 million geo-targeted impressions, 14 new pieces of content and six videos – all of which will be featured on VisitNC.com.

CLOSING

O’Kelley requested that the Board entrust the Executive Committee to draft a resolution where any application of the state’s brand developed for North Carolina’s specialty license plate program follow the standards from the style guide as well as encouraging the inclusion of VisitNC.com as a call to action to be prominently displayed on the license plate. Motion made by Richard Geiger, second by Jessica Roberts; unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Next meeting will be May 10th, tentatively at the Museum of History again.