

NORTH CAROLINA TRAVEL AND TOURISM BOARD



MEETING MINUTES

May 12, 2009

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Ashworth, Mike Butts, Haddon Clark, Theresa Damiano, Rep. Phil Haire, Randy Kolls, Penny Leary-Smith, James Meacham, John Meroski, Lynn Minges, Davin Olsen, Tom Pashley, Harris Prevost, Joan Pulley, Senator Joe Sam Queen, Tom Ruff, Steve Thanhauser, Richard Thigpen

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Cavanaugh, Secretary Keith Crisco, Senator Don Davis, Joyce Dugan, S. Lewis Ebert, Ed Phillips, Jamie Reibel, Leonard Rigsbee, Susan Spangler, Anne Steketee, Rep. Alice Underhill

LIAISONS, STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT: Shannon Arnold, Bryan Gupton, Eleanor Talley, Marlise Taylor, Scott Gilmore, John Ketchum, Jennifer Jenkins, Tammy O'Kelley, John Phillips, Vicky Bloxham

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Steve Thanhauser called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Steve Thanhauser recognized the day as Travel and Tourism Day and Introduced and recognized new board members Richard Thigpen, general counsel of the Carolina Panthers appointed by Travel and Tourism Coalition, and Senator Joe Sam Queen, appointed by NC Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight.

MINUTES APPROVED

Mike Butts motioned for approval of the February 10th, 2009 meeting minutes. Penny Leary-Smith seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

LYNN MINGES PRESENTED DIVISION UPDATE

- State Budget
 - Complete freeze on all spending across state government
 - Budget troubles are serious and affect day-to-day operations of all departments
 - Partnerships are more important than ever for the Division's success
- Governor Perdue announcing 2008 tourism numbers
 - Visitor Expenditures: +2.1% totaling \$16.8 billion
 - Payroll: +3.9% totaling \$4.2 billion
 - Job Loss: -0.2%
 - Tax Receipts: +3.6% totaling \$843 million
- Governor Perdue recommended adding \$1.4 million to Department of Commerce budget for tourism and business recruitment
- Division Highlights
 - 2009 NC Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism
 - Nearly 550 tourism, business and government leaders from across NC participated in the event at the Raleigh Convention Center from March 1-3 setting record attendance despite economic woes and inclement weather. Governor Beverly Perdue addressed the industry and commended travel industry leaders for their work and commitment to marketing North Carolina as a premier travel destination.
 - 75th Great Smoky Mountains National Park
 - Kicked off with the Governors' Proclamation Ceremony on April 24 at Clingmans Dome in Swain County. The event began the year-long recognition of the 75th Anniversary of the national park with remarks and the reading of recognition proclamations from NC Governor Beverly Perdue and Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen. Both Lynn Minges and Representative Phil Haire also spoke at the ceremony.
 - AAA Familiarization Tour
 - This event hosts counselors from AAA and CAA as they familiarize themselves with the areas along America's most visited unit in the national park system, the Blue Ridge Parkway. This year's Parkway tour was from April 18-26 and included visits to over 15 NC destinations on the parkway.
 - 2009 UK Sales Mission

- Heidi Walters, Director of International Marketing for the Division, called on 45 travel trade operators, 70 travel agents and 10 media outlets in London, Southampton, Liverpool, Manchester and Edinburgh on March 30-April 3. Visit Charlotte and Ferrington Village, two in-state partners participated in the mission
- Raleigh Media Mission
 - The Division's PR Department hosted a Raleigh Media Showcase on March 3 to pitch stories and ideas to in-state media outlets. More than 30 travel writers from Raleigh and surrounding geographic areas attended and more than 40 partners from all across the state joined the Division for the event.
- Travel South Showcase
 - In Kissimmee, Florida on April 4-8, the Division and 15 NC partners conducted strategic, business development meetings with over 150 tour operators from 30 states plus Canada, the UK, Brazil and Japan. Assistant Secretary Minges briefed domestic and international media and tour operators, focusing on what's new with the state's tourism products and on North Carolina's position as a travel destination market leader. This year's Showcase enjoyed record attendance of over 675 top suppliers and buyers from the travel industry.
- 2009 CycleNC
 - The event was held in Washington, NC from April 17-19 with record participation of 1,045 riders. The event partnered along 650 plus miles of bike routes through areas including: Historic Bath, Aurora Fossil Museum, Coastal Carolina Cotton Gin, Seaboard Coastline Railroad Depot, Pamlico River, Goose Creek State Park, Bayview-Aurora Ferry, and the NC Estuary.
- Two Major Events currently under development by the Division and its partners include the 75th Blue Ridge Parkway Anniversary and the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War.

LKM PRESENTED UPDATES ON VISITNC.COM AND GOLF.VISITNC.COM

Jennifer Jenkins – New changes to website

- Simplified navigation for travel planning
- Included more social media outlets
- Sweepstakes are now paid features
- Welcome Centers are more prominent on VisitNC.com as a result of request from Board's Welcome Center working group
- Results of changes
 - Tremendous growth from industry partners
 - Inquiries are up but visits are down

Scott Gilmore – Golf Update

- New advertisements for Golf.VisitNC.com
- Wit Tuttle, Director of Public Relations for the NC Division of Tourism, was featured on the Golf Channel promoting the entire state as a premier golf destination

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Senator Queen

- Senate will appropriate budget money in areas geared toward moving the economy
- Recommends using cross-promotion with other divisions to utilize all state resources

Representative Haire

- Recommends the state capitalize on the mountain region and publicity coming from the 75th Blue Ridge Parkway Celebration and 75th Great Smoky Mountains Anniversary

MARLISE TAYLOR UPDATE ON CURRENT DIVISION RESEARCH

2008 Economic Impact Numbers from U.S. Travel Association released by Governor Perdue today

- \$16.9 billion in visitor spending, 190,500 direct jobs, \$4.2 billion in payroll, \$843 million in state taxes, \$542 million in local taxes
- Visitor spending has increased 47% in NC over the past ten years

Visitor Profile Project

- NC visitors increased last year from 3.1 nights in 2007 to 3.4 nights in 2008
- Approximately 80.9% of *overnight* visitors to NC reported they were visiting for leisure purposes.
- Business travelers accounted for 17.1% of overnight visitors in 2008.
- National travel decreased about 8% in person-trips in 2008, NC experienced an increase in market share to 3.8% and rose from the 7th most visited state to the 6th most visited state in the country.

Visa Vue Project

- On a quarterly basis, Visa compiles information on overall international travelers' spending in the US. The data includes the following metrics:
 - Count of cardholders
 - Number of sales
 - Amount of sales
 - Size of average purchase
- The data is broken into a matrix of travelers' country of origin versus state of destination.
- Travelers' spending is also captured, and broken down into advanced segmentation
- Presented numbers on International Markets and Consumer Spending

STEVE THANHAUSER PRESENTED AN UPDATE ON WELCOME CENTER WORKING GROUP

Working Group members

- Steve Thanhauser, James Meacham, Penny Leary-Smith, Susan Spangler, Mike Butts, and Sally Ashworth with staff input from Bryan Gupton, Wally Wazan, and Eleanor Talley

Goals:

- Secure adequate funding for Welcome Centers operations
- Research methods other states are using for funding and best practices
- Successes include more exposure for Welcome Centers on VisitNC.com website

Meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.