
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Cedric's at Biltmore

Annual Planning Retreat Notes

Thursday, March 23, 2017

- Present (Voting):** Paula Wilber, Chair; Jim Muth, Vice Chair; Chip Craig, John Ellis, Gary Froeba, Himanshu Karvir, John Lockett, John McKibbon
- Absent (Voting):** Leah Ashburn
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher
Asheville City Councilwoman Julie Mayfield
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- BC Finance:** No one was present from Buncombe County Finance
- Advertising Agency:** Josh Mayer, Jeremy Braud, Michelle Clarke, David Crane, Michelle Edleman
- CVB Staff:** Stephanie Brown, Marla Tambellini, Glenn Cox, Jonna Reiff, Pat Kappes, Dianna Pierce, Brooke Ptaszek
- CVB Staff Absent:** Tom Roberson
- Guests:** Joe Lathrop, OCG International
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Ron Storto, Biltmore Farms Hotels
Bob McMurray, Black Mountain/Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
Laurie Crosswell, Mountain Xpress

Executive Summary of Annual Planning Retreat Notes

- Chairwoman Wilber called the BCTDA's Annual Planning Retreat to order at 8:44 a.m.
- Chairwoman Wilber provided a brief history of the BCTDA and an overview of the annual planning process.
- Mr. Lathrop led a facilitated session in which he reviewed and received input on the BCTDA's Strategic Plan and led a discussion on industry trends and the status of the BCTDA and CVB as organizations.
- Ms. Pierce shared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on Groups Sales & Services strategies.

- Ms. Tambellini and the Peter Mayer team shared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on Marketing and Advertising strategies.
- Mr. Lathrop led an assessment exercise for board members centering on destination and organization strengths and challenges.
- The annual planning retreat business concluded at 4:47 p.m.

Call of BCTDA Annual Planning Retreat to Order

Chairwoman Wilber called the annual planning retreat of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) to order at 8:44 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The visitors in attendance introduced themselves.

BCTDA & Annual Planning Process Overview

Chairwoman Wilber provided a brief history of the BCTDA, which began with the passage of legislation that established the Buncombe County occupancy tax in 1983, followed by the creation of the Tourism Product Development Fund, an important community asset, in 2001. She said the BCTDA has been an excellent steward of the tax for over three decades and the role of board members is to administer the use of occupancy tax according to the legislation. Chairwoman Wilber noted the unprecedented increase in room supply that has and will continue to occur will be at the center of many strategic discussions today and tomorrow and thanked everyone for their active participation.

BCTDA Facilitated Session

Ms. Brown said to set the stage for next year, provided in the board books is a mid-year activity report compiled by CVB staff. She added that while the staff has been working hard on tight deadlines on reorganization and relocation efforts, simultaneously, work has continued on the BCTDA's five-year Strategic Plan. She said Joe Lathrop with OCG International was here a few years ago to guide the process that resulted in the development of the Plan, and this morning will be dedicated to using it as a focal point to continue the progress and guide decisions over the next few months.

Mr. Lathrop said he has worked with 130 different CVBs and while most grapple with the same types of issues, Buncombe County is unique in the way that whenever the subject of Asheville comes up in conversation, people have only positive things to say about the area. He began a PowerPoint presentation and said the agenda for this facilitated session includes a review of the Strategic Plan, an overview of trends in the DMO world, a review the BCTDA's/CVB's current situation, followed by an assessment exercise. The targeted outcome of these discussions is to set the BCTDA and CVB up for continued success in FY 2017-18 while arriving at a revenue objective for next year's budget. He applauded the BCTDA for the progress it has made on aggressively working the Strategic Plan, noting substantive changes have occurred. He added many destinations develop plans and ultimately fall short on the implementation of them. Mr. Lathrop said he was especially impressed with the progress related to the increase in resources and capacity, and improved relevance with expanded TPDF tools and criteria.

Mr. Lathrop reviewed each page of the Strategic Plan, including the Mission, Legislative Mandate, Realistic Vision for 2020, Operational Imperatives, and Key Strategic Priorities. As he reviewed each slide, Mr. Lathrop encouraged everyone to provide input.

Highlights of the review/discussion included:

- The BCTDA's legislative mandate on how occupancy tax dollars are to be spent is very clear and must be followed as written.
- Under "Realistic Vision for 2020," the following changes were suggested: add group/conventions meetings to #2 and add beverages (beer/wine) and shopping/retail to #12. Change 1,300 new rooms to 2,300 under #10. Separate the number of new rooms and riverfront redevelopment into two different points. Mr. Lathrop said the board should consider prioritizing/reordering the list.
- During the discussion regarding Operational Imperatives, Ms. Brown said she gets regular requests from people wanting the CVB to do very specific things for their individual businesses that take a lot of time. She said having a brand ambassador on staff to help plug people into the right channels and provide assistance when appropriate, while also being out in the community to make necessary connections, would be beneficial.
- Mr. Froeba said demand should be added as a performance measure under #12 of Operational Imperatives. Mr. Ellis said in addition to the sales tax already listed, property tax is also a valuable indicator. Commissioner Belcher suggested changing sales tax "collections" to "contributions."
- Ms. Brown updated the board on progress that has taken place so far under Key Strategic Priorities, including developing new markets, using the TPDF to strategically develop high ROI tourism products, improving transportation, managing fiduciary responsibility, increasing BCTDA and CVB relevance, board development, protecting the funding/source of investment, and expanding resources to increase capacity. It was noted that under #7, in addition to fostering relationships with elected officials and strategic partners, specific groups such as AIR, the Brewers' Alliance, the Buskers' Collective, etc. should be included. Mr. Ellis suggested adding the word "unique" in front of strategic partners, since the list would also include arts, music and retail.
- Ms. Brown said that similar to establishing the Fiduciary Task Force to complete specific objectives of the Strategic Plan, it would be a good idea to have a board committee appointed each year to focus on one priority, such as the Community Engagement Plan. Chairwoman Wilber agreed creating an advocacy committee next year after the Fiduciary Task Force completes its work would be beneficial.

After a short break, Mr. Lathrop switched the topic to "Trends in the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) World." He then led a discussion centering on the BCTDA's and Asheville CVB's current situation that included structure change, increased inventory, increased resources/expectations, destination marketing and management, and organizational rebranding. Mr. Lathrop shared statistics related to hotel supply, metrics in comparable markets, and Buncombe County lodging statistics. Throughout the discussion, ideas were shared and documented and Mr. Lathrop will continue the facilitated session with a strengths and challenges assessment exercise at the end of the day.

The BCTDA Strategic Plan, the CVB's mid-year report, and Mr. Lathrop's PowerPoint presentation are on file with the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The retreat broke for lunch and reconvened at 12:51 p.m.

Group Sales & Services Strategies

Ms. Pierce shared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on goals and activities of the Group Sales & Services team. She reviewed an historical comparison of sales goals to actuals, groups and room nights booked by area of origin and market segment, and other team metrics that are tracked. Ms. Pierce then reviewed sales team successes, challenges and opportunities, and current trends. She shared FY 2017-18 objectives related to client contact, brand boosters, communications, and trade events. During and after the presentation, Ms. Pierce answered all related questions.

Chairwoman Wilber thanked Ms. Pierce for the presentation and commended her and the sales team for their efforts. A round of applause was received.

The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Marketing & Advertising Strategies

Ms. Tambellini introduced the CVB's Director of Advertising, Brooke Ptaszek, who is joining the retreat for the marketing and advertising presentation. She added Ms. Ptaszek works with the agency on a daily basis to execute the program of work strategies and has been integral in the success of the National Geographic Traveler partnership.

Josh Mayer introduced himself and the members of the Peter Mayer advertising agency team who were also present: Michelle Edleman, David Crane, Jeremy Braud, and Michelle Clarke, Asheville's account supervisor.

Ms. Tambellini and the Peter Mayer team then shared a PowerPoint presentation that included a review of creative used the last two years followed by an outline of research insights and the proposed FY 2017-18 marketing strategy. Mr. Mayer walked the board through the evolution of the creative messaging through Spring 2017 and shared the elements for the April Union Station takeover in Washington D.C. The team shared insights gleaned from Buxton and Arrivalist data and noted that the data will shape a new market-by-market approach as a layover to the overall strategy. The market insights will be used to address target audience, media selection, creative messaging and campaign flights in addition to impacting media relations tactics and social efforts.

During and after the presentation, Ms. Tambellini and the Peter Mayer team answered all related questions.

Chairwoman Wilber thanked Ms. Tambellini, Mr. Mayer, Ms. Clarke, Ms. Edleman, Mr. Crane and Mr. Braud for the presentation and fantastic job they are doing to market the Asheville area.

The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Assessment Exercise

Mr. Lathrop led an exercise in which BCTDA board members wrote down strengths and challenges associated with the organization and destination on post-it notes and in turn, placed them on the wall by category. Everyone actively participated and shared their thoughts and there were several recurring themes centering around staff, data, destination attributes, and perceptions. An informal discussion took place surrounding

these topics. Mr. Lathrop said he will compile and summarize the sentiments submitted and the discussion will continue at tomorrow's board meeting.

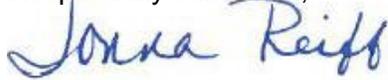
Adjournment

Chairwoman Wilber thanked everyone for attending and engaging in today's discussions and activities, adding this is the best board on which she has ever had the honor to serve. She added she hopes to wrap-up tomorrow's board meeting by about 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Brown thanked Chairwoman Wilber for hosting the meeting and a round of applause was given for her generous hospitality and the efforts of the Biltmore staff.

The retreat adjourned at 4:47 p.m. and was followed by a reception in Cedric's courtyard, hosted by Chairwoman Wilber. The BCTDA will next meet on Friday, March 24, 2017, beginning at 8:30 a.m., for the March board meeting, also to be held at Cedric's at Biltmore.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Reiff, Executive Operations Manager