



Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
A Joint Meeting of the Public Authority and Nonprofit Corporation

Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; Kathleen Mosher, HP Patel, Michael Lusick, Larry Crosby, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Scott Patel
- Absent (Voting):** None
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Dodie Stephens, Michael Kryzaneck, Penelope Whitman, Jennifer Kass-Green, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Shelby Pearsall, Tina Porter, Tiffany Thacker
- BC Finance:** Melissa Moore, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Robert Sponder, Parks Hospitality
John Ellis, Prior TDA Board Member
Ruth Summers, Grover Arcade Public Market
Allen Brasington, Bulldog Marketing
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media
Chase Davis, Mountain Xpress
Megan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurants
Madison Smith, Cody G; WLOS
- Online Attendees:** Colleen Swanson, Meetings Database Institute
Carli Adams, Mickey Poandl, McKenzie Provost, Anna Harris, Emilie Soffe,
Emily Crosby, Kimberly Puryear, Shawn Boone; Explore Asheville
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee
Timothy Love, Buncombe County
Chris Smith, Madison Davis; Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports
Commission
Kit Cramer, Zach Wallace; Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group
Stephanie Rogers, Felicia Sonmez; Blue Ridge Public Radio
Kevin Beattie, WLOS News 13

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:03 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the November 29, 2023, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The November 2023 and December 2023 financial reports were both approved with a 9-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Explore Asheville leadership reviewed second quarter progress toward the strategic imperatives.
- Michael Kryzanek gave a business development update supported by Meetings Database Institute.
- Dodie Stephens provided a marketing update, looking ahead to plans for the second half of FY24.
- Commissioner Terri Wells gave a brief update.
- With a 9-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Call to Order of the Joint BCTDA Meeting

Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority, and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:03 a.m.

Durden said the meeting was being livestreamed. She noted that the agenda and meeting documents are available on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com) and were emailed to everyone who registered via Zoom by 8:00 a.m. Additional materials, including the PowerPoint, are posted after the meeting.

Introductions were made around the room.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Lusick made a motion to approve the November 29, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Mosher seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

Financial Updates

November 2023 Financial Reports

Melissa Moore, BCTDA fiscal agent, presented November 2023 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

There was a brief discussion about how vacation rental supply impacts revenue collections. Putnam then made a motion to approve the November 2023 financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

December 2023 Financial Reports

Moore then presented December 2023 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

There were no questions. Lehman made a motion to approve the December 2023 financial reports as presented. HP Patel seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

President & CEO Report

Vic Isley presented December 2023 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years. Isley shared preliminary takeaways from year-end lodging data. She invited the board to The Year Ahead event and shared festivals and events that Explore Asheville supported December through February.

Strategic Imperatives: Progress Report

Second Quarter Review (October – December 2023 Highlights)

Isley said strategic imperatives continue to guide Explore Asheville's decisions and investments. Isley invited department heads to review initiatives from the second quarter of FY24 (October 2023 – December 2023) that were aligned with the strategic imperatives of Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth, Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel, Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences, Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit, and Running a Healthy & Effective Organization.

Marketing, Content, and Public Relations – Q2 Initiatives

Dodie Stephens, vice president of marketing, recapped some of the marketing team's efforts, including the fall color campaign, mobile app launch, web redesign kickoff, messaging to diverse audiences, paid content partnerships, earned press coverage, and visitor guide release.

Business Development – Q2 Initiatives

Michael Kryzanek, vice president of business development, shared about trade show attendance and results, as well as the 48-hour meeting planner familiarization tour hosted in November.

Partnership & Destination Management – Q2 Initiatives

Penelope Whitman, vice president of partnership and destination management, reflected on the debut of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail, Tourism Product Development Fund grant cycle investments, recent event grants and sponsorships, and new partner recruitment.

Culture & Business Affairs – Q2 Initiatives

Jennifer Kass-Green, vice president of culture and business affairs, spoke about staff changes and the organization's internal volunteer and sustainability efforts.

The next quarterly review will be in April 2024. The complete [Quarterly Highlights Report \(October - December 2023\)](#) is available on AshevilleCVB.com.

Business Development Performance Update

Michael Kryzanek gave an overview of the staff of the group sales and group services teams and the guiding principles for business development. Kryzanek introduced Colleen Swanson of Meetings Database Institute (MDI) who was participating virtually.

Colleen Swanson, executive vice president for MDI, provided background on MDI and then presented trends for groups arrivals in the first half of FY24 (July 2023 – December 2023), which considered market segments, feeder markets, group sizes, arrival months, lead times, and day of week. Swanson answered questions and took requests from the board.

Kryzanek shared year-over-year group sales performance data and outlined Buncombe County's position against competitive markets. Kryzanek noted that having a higher average daily rate (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPAR) than comparable markets can impact group booking. Kryzanek then offered some details about seven groups coming to the community later in the year for meetings. There were no additional questions or comments.

Marketing Update

Dodie Stephens spoke to strategies that will be deployed in the second half of the fiscal year to inspire potential visits. Stephens also gave an overview of some upcoming plans, including a Travel + Leisure reader trip, content that will spotlight Asheville's creative spirit and engage diverse audiences, a potential partnership with Wildsam, case studies being developed with Northstar Meetings Group, and the national promotion of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail. There were no questions or comments.

Asheville City Council Update

Vice Mayor Kilgore was absent, so no city-related business was shared at this meeting.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Wells reported on recent county-related business, including the county's audit, approval of additional downtown patrols by the Sheriff, community engagement opportunities for the parks and recreation system-wide plan, and meetings to further consider short-term rentals regulations.

Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

Comments from the General Public

No one from the public signed up to make virtual or in-person comments during this meeting.

Adjournment

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Crosby made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Putnam seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 9-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy