



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, February 28, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; HP Patel, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Scott Patel, Michael Lusick, Larry Crosby
- Absent (Voting):** Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; Kathleen Mosher
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Tiffany Thacker, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Holly Watts, Dodie Stephens, Jennifer Kass-Green, Sarajane Case, Luisa Yen
- BC Finance:** Mason Scott, Buncombe County
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Katie Stadius, Zartico
Nathan Pennington, Tim Love; Buncombe County
Megan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR)
Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport
John Ellis, Prior BCTDA Board Member
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Peter Pollay, Posana
Randy Claybrook, Asheville Bed & Breakfast Association
Roy Harris, Community Member
Matt Allen, David West; Land of the Sky Association of Realtors
- Online Attendees:** Sha'Linda Pruitt, Mickey Poandl, Connie Holliday, Kimberly Puryear, Carli Adams, Emily Crosby, Anna Harris, McKenzie Provost, Nick Kepley, Khal Khoury; Explore Asheville
Matt Evans, Savannah Glance; Buncombe County
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee
Kit Cramer, Zach Wallace; Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times
Helen Chickering, Felicia Sonmez; Blue Ridge Public Radio
Andrew Celwyn, Herbiary
Madison Davis, Chris Smith; Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Summer Casiano, Tanger Asheville
Bo Hess, Valentina Pallin; Elect Bo Hess campaign
Madison Smith, Grey Hallock; WLOS
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group
Ken Pierce, Asheville resident
Manu Chopra, ITT

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:02 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the January 24, 2024, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 7-0 vote.
- The January 2024 financial reports were approved with a 7-0 vote.
- With a 7-0 vote, Brenda Durden, Matthew Lehman, HP Patel, Chip Craig, and Chris Cavanaugh were appointed to the BCTDA Finance Committee.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report, including an annual lodging performance recap.
- Tourism Product Development Fund updates were presented.
- Buncombe County Comprehensive Plan updates were presented.
- Public comments were heard.
- With a 7-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 11:00 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 9:02 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 January 24, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Putnam seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

Financial Updates

January 2024 Financial Reports

Mason Scott, Buncombe County, presented January 2024 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

HP Patel made a motion to approve the January 2024 financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

BCTDA Finance Committee Appointments

Durden stated the purpose of the BCTDA Finance Committee is to review financial matters as needed including audits, contracts pertaining to the budget and other financial documents.

She said this year's BCTDA Finance Committee members are appointed as follows:
HP Patel (committee chair/BCTDA nonprofit treasurer), Matthew Lehman (BCTDA vice chair), Chris Cavanaugh, Chip Craig, and herself (BCTDA chair).

Putnam made a motion to approve the Finance Committee appointments as presented. Lusick seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

President & CEO Report

Vic Isley presented January 2024 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years, noting that January is historically the slowest month of the year and 2024 was no exception. Isley then reviewed annual lodging performance metrics for 2023 and compared Buncombe County to similar markets. She summarized takeaways and some of the latest national travel and tourism projections. She answered clarifying questions and took input about further analysis the board would like to see.

After the lodging report discussion concluded, Isley shared a media clip from TODAY show. Isley then announced Highland Brewing Company as the meeting location of the board's annual planning session on March 22, extended an invite to the Hospitality Outlook event, noted TPDF Committee applications close March 1, and listed festivals and events Explore Asheville supported in February and March.

An impromptu conversation about the recent dissolution of Chow Chow nonprofit event series, of which the BCTDA was a supporter, followed the update about sponsorships. Various viewpoints were shared by board members about the culinary festival ending. The board encouraged that the evaluation guidelines— particularly those related to financials—be further considered based on the experience.

Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Updates

TPDF Project Usage Report

Katie Stadius, strategic advisor for Zartico, opened her report noting that the BCTDA had committed over \$86 million in 41 community projects and wanted to demonstrate the value of those investments.

Stadius provided year-over-year comparisons about visits to TPDF projects. She then offered insights concluded from Zartico's analysis of movement and spending data. The areas of focus were the impacts of investment in the River Arts District, the benefits of sports facilities to residents and regional visitors, and the economic impact of events at TPDF projects using Pack Square Park as a case study.

TPDF Annual Update

Tiffany Thacker, director of grants for Explore Asheville, explained TPDF annual reporting requirements for each project phase (in-development, completed, or pre-construction). Thacker noted 21 active TPDF projects submitted reports.

Thacker said that in 2023 four new projects (McCormick Field, Harrah's Cherokee Center, Enka Recreation Destination, and WNC Agricultural Center) received TPDF investment and four TPDF-supported projects (Karen Cragnolin Park, Wortham Center for Performing Arts, UNCA Karl Straus Track, and Asheville Community Theater) were completed. She highlighted a few major milestones from the past year, including the unveiling of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail in December.

Thacker said six more projects should be completed in 2024. She relayed information about construction delays for a few projects and provided an update that Explore Asheville staff will be working to help the long-stalled African-American Heritage Museum project move forward.

Thacker noted status of McCormick Field, the TPDF's first debt service project, and Pack Square Pavilion restrooms, which received TPDF investment in 2009. Thacker concluded the updates with a financial summary.

There were no questions about the TPDF reports.

County Comprehensive Plan Update

Nathan Pennington, planning director for Buncombe County, provided information about the comprehensive plan process for unincorporated Buncombe County. He explained that the plan was developed in partnership with the community and would guide future decision-making.

Pennington said housing was identified as a major concern and outlined multiple strategies that have been implemented to support increasing inventory. He then spoke about the next steps in the process, including anticipated amendments, small area plans, and potential ordinance updates. Pennington said additional short-term rental regulations were being considered and provided a timeline of related meetings. Pennington fielded questions with some support from a present colleague Timothy Love.

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 opted for the detailed comprehensive plan update to be the county-related business report for the meeting; she thanked the staff members who presented.

Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

Comments from the General Public

Matt Allen, a representative of Land of the Sky Association of Realtors, commented about proposed short-term rental regulations and asked that the county slow down and consider more perspectives.

Adjournment

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Thursday, March 21, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Putnam made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Lusick seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy