



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

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Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, November 29, 2023

- 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, Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Dodie Stephens, Tiffany Thacker, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Penelope Whitman, Michael Kryzanek, Marla Tambellini, Mia Brown
- BC Finance:** Melissa Moore, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent  
Matt Evans, Mason Scott; Buncombe County
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Tim Lyons, Mauldin & Jenkins  
Mary Standaert, Community Member  
Christine Smith, CSConsulting 101  
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media  
Randy Claybrook, Asheville Bed & Breakfast Association  
Lacy Cross, Movement Bank  
John Ellis, Prior Board Member  
Will Hoffman, Angela Wilhelm; Asheville Citizen Times  
Chase Davis, Mountain Xpress  
Matt Alan, Land of the Sky Realtors Association  
Zach Wallace, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Megan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association  
Roy Harris, Community Member  
Madison Smith, John Wellbeloved, WLOS News 13  
Felicia Sonmer, Blue Ridge Public Radio  
Steven Marascalco, Community Member
- Online Attendees:** Carrie Gill, Megan Shields; MMGY Global  
Sha'Linda Pruitt, Mickey Poandl, Tina Porter, Khal Khoury, Emily Crosby, Carli Adams, Anna Harris, Emilie Soffe, Holly Watts, McKenzie Provost; Explore Asheville  
Timothy Love, Buncombe County  
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee  
Joseph Mickey, Lamar Advertising

Andrew Celwyn, Herbiary  
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association  
Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission  
Grey Hallock, WLOS  
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group

### **Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes**

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:04 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the October 25, 2023, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The October 2023 financial reports were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The final June 2023 financial reports were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- Mauldin & Jenkins's FY23 audit presentation was approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The BCTDA Investment Policy was approved with a 9-0 vote.
- TPDF budget amendments were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- An operating fund budget amendment was approved with a 9-0 vote.
- 25 Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund grant investments, totaling \$100,000, were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore and Commissioner Terri Wells gave brief updates.
- Public comments were heard.
- With a 9-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:45 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 9:04 a.m.

Durden said the meeting was being livestreamed. She noted that the agenda and meeting documents are available on [AshevilleCVB.com](http://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**

Putnam made a motion to approve the October 25, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Lusick seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### **Financial Updates**

#### **October 2023 Financial Reports**

Melissa Moore, BCTDA fiscal agent, presented October 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. Mosher made a motion to approve the October 2023 financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### Final June 2023 Financial Reports

Moore explained the reason for revisiting June financials and then reviewed operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and fiscal-year-end lodging sales trends by month and lodging type. Moore identified a few differences from the preliminary financials. HP Patel requested that the county's 5% administrative fee be added as an itemized expenditure in future monthly financial reports.

HP Patel then made a motion to approve the final June 2023 financial reports as presented. Lehman seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### FY23 Audit Presentation

Moore reminded the board that Buncombe County and the BCTDA went through a competitive bid process to get a new auditor this year; she welcomed Tim Lyons, partner at Mauldin & Jenkins.

Tim Lyons introduced himself and shared background on Mauldin & Jenkins and the audit team. Lyons explained that financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, were audited in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. The audit opinion was "clean" unmodified. Lyons outlined compliance report and related procedures. Lyons delivered required communications and accounting recommendations, offered continuing education to the board, and answered all questions.

There was some discussion about auditing collection of occupancy taxes from third-party reservation systems, which was not in the purview of Mauldin & Jenkins. Isley offered to use the mid-year lodging report as an opportunity to look at occupancy tax collections compared to STR and AirDNA reports.

Crosby made a motion to accept the BCTDA's FY23 audit as presented and place it on file, and Putnam seconded the motion. A vote was taken. With all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### BCTDA Investment Policy

Moore explained the objectives of establishing an investment policy. A draft was sent to the board in advance for consideration. There were no questions. Mosher made a motion to approve the BCTDA Investment Policy as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Budget Amendment

Moore said budget amendment approvals was an administrative step needed to appropriate funds in the budget to the previously approved TPDF awards for McCormick Field, Enka Recreation Destination – Phase II, WNC Agriculture Center's Equine Center, Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville as well as the closure of the Coxe Avenue Green Street project. The itemized amounts were on screen. Open discussion followed about the Coxe Avenue Street project as it related to McCormick Field investment, general processes around TPDF investing, and the value of annual project progress tracking.

Lusick then made a motion to approve the TPDF budget amendments as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### Operating Fund Budget Amendment

Dodie Stephens, Explore Asheville's vice president of marketing, explained how the 2024 election year is expected to impact advertising costs and inventory. She made a request to increase paid advertising

investment by \$1.352 million to maintain the advertising promotion schedule and reach due to rising media costs in a presidential election year.

Isley clarified that no additional advertising would be purchased; the increase simply ensures the advertising investments that were strategically planned can be executed. Stephens and Isley fielded all questions with support from research partners at MMGY who were dialed in via Zoom.

Crosby made a motion to approve the operating fund budget amendment as presented. Lehman seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

**Festivals & Cultural Events Grant Investment Recommendations**

Tiffany Thacker, Explore Asheville’s director of grants, provided background for the Festivals & Cultural Events (F&CE) Support Fund Grant Program. Thacker spoke to the evaluation criteria used by the F&CE Grant Committee. She then presented the committee’s investment recommendations for events that will occur in 2024. The committee recommended investing a total of \$100,000 in the 25 events listed in the chart below, which was provided in a memo to the board in advance of the meeting.

	Organization	Event	Amount
1	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)	ASAP Farm Tour	\$5,000
2	Asheville Brewers Alliance	AVL Beer Week	\$5,000
3	Asheville Celtic Group	Asheville Celtic Festival	\$5,000
4	Asheville Creative Arts / Lovely Asheville Enterprises, LLC	3rd Lovely Asheville Annual Fall Festival 2024	\$5,000
5	Asheville Downtown Association	Pritchard Park Summer Culture and Art Series	\$2,500
6	Asheville Downtown Association	Asheville Holiday Parade	\$2,500
7	Asheville Downtown Association	Downtown After 5	\$5,000
8	Asheville FM	5th Annual Asheville FM Record Fair	\$1,500
9	Asheville Independent Restaurant Association	Taste of Asheville	\$5,000
10	Asheville Makers Inc.	Maker Faire Asheville	\$1,500
11	Asheville Mardi Gras, Inc.	Asheville Mardi Gras Parade and Queen's Ball	\$5,000
12	Big Ivy Community Development Club dba Big Ivy Community Center	Big Ivy's Independence Day Celebration	\$2,500
13	Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center	[Re]HAPPENING 12	\$3,500
14	Black Wall Street AVL	GRINDfest	\$5,000
15	Blue Ridge Pride	Blue Ridge Pride Festival	\$5,000
16	Buncombe County Recreation Services	Festival of Lights at Lake Julian	\$4,500
17	Center for Honeybee Research	Asheville HoneyFest	\$5,000
18	Connect Beyond Festival	Connect Beyond Festival	\$5,000
19	LEAF Global Arts	LEAF Festival	\$5,000
20	Organic Growers School	Sow & Grow Fest	\$1,500
21	Southern Highland Craft Guild	Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands	\$2,500
22	Swannanoa Community Council	Groovin On Grovemont	\$2,500
23	The Dr. MLK, Jr. Association of Asheville & Buncombe County	"Celebrating the History and Legacy of Juneteenth"	\$5,000
24	Weaverville Business Association	Weaverville's Music on Main	\$5,000
25	YMI Cultural Center	Goombay	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$100,000</b>

Thacker noted events represent a variety of organizations and are dispersed throughout the county. She plotted events on a timeline to demonstrate they are spread throughout the next calendar year.

Isley reminded the board that F&CE grants are now funded through the operating budget instead of earned revenue, which will be used for workforce development. It was noted that some events not funded may qualify for sponsorship and that additional funds may be allocated to F&CE in the future.

Lusick made a motion to approve the grant investment funding for each event as recommended by the F&CE Grant Committee, and Putnam seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. A vote was taken, and with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### **President & CEO Report**

Vic Isley presented October 2023 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years and offered insights on the data. Isley shared updates about a few recent collaborations, including The Good Road, Hallmark's Biltmore Christmas, and Asheville Championship.

Isley extended an invitation to the Black Cultural Heritage Trail ribbon cutting event on December 15. She listed festivals and events that Explore Asheville supported in November and December. Isley gave a few reminders related to upcoming board meetings and reporting and then announced a new nonstop air route to Orlando.

### **Asheville City Council Update**

Vice Mayor Kilgore reported on recent city-related business, including a proposal for the Asheville municipal building and the requests for capital investments the city plans to submit through LIFT Fund.

### **Buncombe County Commission Update**

Commissioner Wells reported on recent county-related business, including new assistance programs for veterans and low-income homeowners, additional funding for Homeward Bound, the bid for trash and recycling services, and the Medicaid expansion kickoff.

### **Miscellaneous Business**

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

### **Comments from the General Public**

Mary Standaert thanked the BCTDA and expressed gratitude for Explore Asheville staff's support with the recent dedication ceremony of the Alan School historical marker.

Christine Smith engaged with the board and shared perspectives about communication strategies.

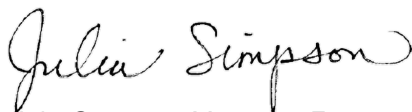
### **Adjournment**

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

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Mosher made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Crosby seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 9-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy