

Explore ASHEVILLE

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

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

Via Zoom Webinar due to the COVID-19 Pandemic/State of Emergency

Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

- Present (Voting):** Kathleen Mosher, Chair; Brenda Durden, Vice Chair; Andrew Celwyn, Larry Crosby, Matthew Lehman, HP Patel, Leah Ashburn, Michael Lusick, Scott Patel
- Absent (Voting):** None
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore
Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- CVB Staff:** Vic Isley, Marla Tambellini, Marshall Hilliard, Jonna Sampson, Julia Simpson
- BC Finance:** Don Warn, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- Online Attendees:** Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport
Colleen Swanson, Meetings Database Institute (MDI)
Carli Adams, Glenn Cox, Hannah Dosa, Pat Kappes, Jennifer Kass-Green, Sarah Kilgore, Sarah Lowery, Kathi Petersen, Tina Porter, Sha'Linda Pruitt, Glenn Ramey, Whitney Smith; Explore Asheville Staff
Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Sharon Tabor, Black Mountain-Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
Madison Davis, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Timothy Love, Buncombe County
Chris Corl, Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville
Jim Muth, John Ellis; Past BCTDA Board Members
Robert Michel, Asheville Homestay Network
Ruth Summers, Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation
Rick Bell, Engadine Inn & Cabins
Krista Stearns, Mountain Mural Tours
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
John Boyle, Asheville Citizen-Times
Sunshine Request

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairwoman Mosher called the virtual joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:00 a.m.
- Chairwoman Mosher paid tribute to Craig Madison and Karen Cragolin, two Asheville area community pioneers who recently passed away.
- Minutes from the November 17, 2021, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The November 2021 financial statements were reviewed and approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The December 2021 financial statements were reviewed and approved with a 9-0 vote.
- With a 9-0 vote, Leah Ashburn, Matthew Lehman, Chip Craig, and Kathleen Mosher as BCTDA chair, were appointed to the BCTDA finance committee.
- In her President & CEO's report, Ms. Isley reviewed recent lodging metrics, staff initiatives, reporting updates, and shared the FY 2022-23 BCTDA meeting schedule.
- Tina Kinsey provided an Asheville Regional Airport update.
- Mr. Hilliard and Colleen Swanson, with MDI, provided a group sales update.
- Updates from Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore and Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley were heard.
- Mr. Celwyn shared comments under Miscellaneous Business.
- Chairwoman Mosher reported there were no emailed public comments, nor requests to speak, received for this meeting.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Call of the Joint BCTDA Meeting to Order

Chairwoman Mosher called the virtual joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:00 a.m. She said the agenda and meeting documents are provided on AshevilleCVB.com and the recording and additional materials will be posted after the meeting.

Board Member Roll Call: Board members responded as Chairwoman Mosher called roll verifying all eleven BCTDA members were virtually in attendance.

Remembering Tourism Pioneers Craig Madison and Karen Cragolin

Chairwoman Mosher recognized and paid tribute to Craig Madison and Karen Cragolin, two community pioneers in the Asheville area who recently passed away. Chairwoman Mosher reviewed their accomplishments, noting both were recipients of the William A.V. Cecil Tourism Leadership Award and leave enduring legacies. Mr. Madison was a pivotal leader and champion of tourism and development in our community. He served as president and CEO of the Grove Park Inn Resort and Spa and was a former member and chair of the BCTDA. Ms. Cragolin founded and served as the visionary leader of RiverLink for 30 years, spearheading the revitalization of the French Broad River and the River Arts District.

Chairwoman Mosher said both of these leaders will be dearly missed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Vice Chairwoman Durden made a motion to approve the November 17, 2021, regular meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Lehman seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Financial Reports

November 2021 Financial Reports

Mr. Warn reviewed the November 2021 financial reports. There were no questions.

Mr. Celwyn made a motion to approve the November 2021 financial reports as presented. Mr. HP Patel seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

December 2021 Financial Reports

Mr. Warn reviewed the December 2021 financial reports. There were no questions.

Vice Chairwoman Durden made a motion to approve the December 2021 financial reports as presented. Ms. Ashburn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Audit Response

Mr. Warn said that as a follow-up to the FY21 audit finding that was discussed at the November BCTDA meeting, the response document that was signed electronically by board members was submitted to the Local Government Commission and has been accepted. Mr. Warn said this concludes the board's responsibility in this matter and staff will follow-through with the processes put in place.

BCTDA Finance Committee Appointments

Chairwoman Mosher said this year's BCTDA Finance Committee members are appointed as follows: Ms. Leah Ashburn (committee chair), Mr. Matthew Lehman, Mr. Chip Craig, and herself (as BCTDA chair).

Mr. Crosby moved to approve the BCTDA Finance Committee appointments as presented. Mr. HP Patel seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 9-0.

President & CEO Report

Industry Metrics

Ms. Isley shared lodging occupancy metrics for November and December 2021, and a five-year comparison chart of average occupancy by lodging type.

Monthly Reporting Updates

Ms. Isley said two reports are compiled by staff and provided to the board each month. She said the Destination Performance Report, which contains lodging, airport, visitor center, and sales and marketing metrics, will stay the same. Ms. Isley said the narrative report formerly known as the CVB Staff Recap has a new format and will be called Monthly Highlights. She said the report outlines progress on the team's goals and initiatives as they relate to Explore Asheville's strategic pillars. Ms. Isley shared an example of the changes and said the first edition of this report combines November and December's activities.

Other Updates

Ms. Isley said one recent highlight in alignment with the Deliver Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth and other key pillars is that the “Samantha Brown’s Places to Love” PBS series kicked off its fifth season with a [30-minute feature on Asheville](#). She said the BCTDA underwrote production fees and collaborated with the crew on story development that intentionally aligns with the strategic pillars. Ms. Isley said the show shines a spotlight on several local places, creators, and storytellers and then shared a sizzle reel of the video. She thanked the Explore Asheville team and all the partners who helped make the episode possible.

Next, Ms. Isley said the [Official 2022 Asheville Visitor Guide](#) is complete and available to fulfill visitor inquiries and bulk supply requests to places throughout the community. She noted Mountain Xpress is our local distribution partner. Ms. Isley reviewed how the staff was intentional about developing content and stories throughout the guide that influence visitor behavior in alignment with the strategic pillars:

- Deliver Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth
- Encourage Safe & Responsible Travel
- Engage & Invite More Diverse Audiences
- Promote & Support Asheville’s Creative Spirit

Thinking of travel as the “front porch” for economic development, and in an effort to more closely align Explore Asheville’s sales and marketing efforts with targeted business sectors to help diversify the local economy, Ms. Isley shared the 24-page “[Asheville On the Rise](#)” feature developed via a partnership with Monocle. She said the feature shines a spotlight on three dozen local business leaders and makers who are elevating our mountain city on a global stage as a hub for entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity.

Ms. Ashburn said she appreciates the approach of talking about travel as the front porch for economic development, noting her parents visited Asheville and decided that is where they wanted to start their family business: Highland Brewing Company. Chairwoman Mosher commended the Public Relations and Content teams for their behind-the-scenes efforts to work with producers to align outcomes with the strategic pillars and key objectives.

Ms. Isley said board members will receive hard copies of the visitor guide and Monocle feature in the mail this week. She added the Monthly Highlights and Destination Performance reports are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](#).

FY 23 BCTDA Meeting Schedule

Ms. Isley concluded her report by sharing the FY 2022-23 BCTDA board meeting schedule. Meetings are held 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., unless otherwise noted:

Wednesday, July 27, 2022
Wednesday, August 31, 2022
Wednesday, September 28, 2022
Wednesday, October 26, 2022
Wednesday, November 30, 2022
Wednesday, December 14, 2022
Wednesday, January 25, 2023
Wednesday, February 22, 2023
Thursday, March 23, 2023 – March Board Meeting
Friday, March 24, 2023 – Annual Planning Retreat (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023
Wednesday, May 31, 2023
Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Asheville Regional Airport Authority Update

Tina Kinsey, Director of Marketing, PR & Air Service Development for the Asheville Regional Airport, shared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on recent and upcoming airport activities, along with airline, route, and passenger metrics coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Kinsey reviewed current route maps, 2021 air service highlights, pre-pandemic record performance years, challenges endured during the pandemic, and current metrics showing a strong post-Covid recovery. She also reviewed new, returning, expanded, and canceled flight routes in 2022, and seat capacity estimates. Ms. Kinsey noted Asheville's strong leisure market is helping air traffic return more quickly than the national average. She then reviewed current airport project updates related to community connections, the master plan update process, construction on the south apron expansion, and an overview of the terminal renovation and expansion project. Ms. Kinsey concluded her update by answering all related questions.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Ms. Kinsey for the presentation.

Group Sales Update

Mr. Hilliard, Explore Asheville's vice president of sales, and Colleen Swanson, executive vice president of Meetings Database Institute (MDI), provided a group sales update to the board.

As a reminder from the presentation shared with the board in July 2021, Mr. Hilliard provided an overview of the *Group Sales Strategic Imperatives and Guiding Principles for Group Sales*. He reviewed how the imperatives and principles align with economic development target sectors. Next, Mr. Hilliard provided updates on the Asheville Business Events Council, November's 48-Hour Experience FAM, attendance at IMEX Americas, third-party strategies, meeting planner incentives, and recent sales metrics. Mr. Hilliard announced that the Society of Incentive Travel Executives Southeast awarded Senior Sales Manager Connie Holiday with the "Experience of the Year" award at its annual summit.

Ms. Swanson provided a brief overview of the sales strategies implemented in July in collaboration with MDI. She shared results of the sales team's efforts utilizing the new plan for six months (July through December 2021), compared to the first half of the calendar year (January through June 2021), which showed increases in key sectors of leads created and turned definite. Ms. Swanson then shared how MDI continues to help develop new business by identifying groups in the targeted sectors of advanced manufacturing, life sciences, climate and environmental, outdoor products, and technology.

Following the presentation, Mr. Hilliard answered all related questions. Chairwoman Mosher said it is clear that the strategic focus of the team is making a significant difference as evidenced by these results. She thanked Mr. Hilliard and Ms. Swanson for the presentation.

Asheville City Council Update

Councilmember Kilgore reported on city-related business, including approval of a conditional zoning ordinance for a property at 324 Biltmore Avenue, presentation by the stormwater task force, and the need to address Asheville's homelessness issue together as a community.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Councilmember Kilgore for the update.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Pressley provided an update on county-related business, including continuing discussions related to developing a process to distribute \$25 million in ARPA funds, and free Covid-19 home test and KN95 face mask kits that are available at BCHHS, local fire departments, and the Stephens Lee Community Center.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Commissioner Pressley for his report.

Miscellaneous Business

Mr. Celwyn said he is hoping the board can meet in person again soon. He read excerpts from an editorial that appeared in the Asheville Citizen-Times in February 2020, in which former BCTDA chair Gary Froeba supported changes to Buncombe County's occupancy tax legislation as recommended by the Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association. Mr. Celwyn said he would like to see the members of the BCTDA also publicly support occupancy tax legislation changes.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Mr. Celwyn for sharing the editorial and noted she is also looking forward to resuming in-person meetings.

Comments from the General Public

Live Public Comments

Chairwoman Mosher said members of the public were invited to sign-up to verbally share live comments during today's virtual BCTDA meeting. She reported that as of yesterday's 12:00 p.m. registration deadline, no requests to speak had been received.

Written Public Comments

Chairwoman Mosher said members of the public were invited to submit comments via email to Reply@ExploreAsheville.com through 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 25, 2022. She reported there were no written public comments received by the deadline.

Adjournment

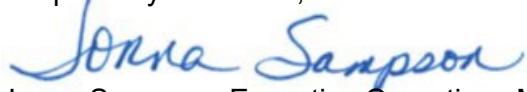
Chairwoman Mosher said it has been an exciting and informative meeting and she is glad to see the growth coming out of the pandemic.

Vice Chairwoman moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Scott Patel seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 8-0 and the meeting ended at 10:36 a.m. (Ms. Ashburn had left the meeting at 9:55 a.m. due to a conflict.)

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau and are posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, February 23, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager