

# Explore ASHEVILLE

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

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

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Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau – 27 College Place, Asheville

### Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 27, 2022

- Present (Voting):** Kathleen Mosher, Chair; Brenda Durden, Vice Chair; Andrew Celwyn, Matthew Lehman, Leah Ashburn, Michael Lusick, Scott Patel
- Absent (Voting):** Larry Crosby, HP Patel
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore
- CVB Staff:** Vic Isley, Marshall Hilliard, Jennifer Kass-Green, Kathi Petersen, Jonna Sampson, Julia Simpson, Hannah Dosa, Glenn Ramey
- BC Finance:** Don Warn, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bisette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Nathan Ramsey, Land of Sky Regional Council  
Demp Bradford, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission  
John Ellis, Past BCTDA Board Member  
Jane Anderson, Roy Harris; Area Residents
- Online Attendees:** Larry Crosby, HP Patel; BCTDA Board Members  
Kathryn Dewey, Maggie Gregg, Connie Holliday, Holly Oakley,  
Michael Poandl, Sha'Linda Pruitt, Charlie Reed, Whitney Smith,  
Dodie Stephens; Explore Asheville Staff  
Randy Claybrook, Bent Creek Lodge  
Scott Kerchner, Element Asheville Downtown  
Rick Bell, Engadine Inn and Cabins  
Ruth Summers, Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation  
Jim Muth, Past BCTDA Board Member  
Daniel Walton, Mountain Xpress  
Sunshine Request

### Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairwoman Mosher called the in-person joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:02 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the March 24, 2022, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 7-0 vote.
- Minutes from the March 25, 2022, BCTDA annual planning session were approved with a 7-0 vote.

- The March 2022 financial statements were reviewed and approved with a 7-0 vote.
- The FY22 BCTDA/CliftonLarsonAllen audit contract and engagement letter were approved with a 7-0 vote.
- Nathan Ramsey with the Land of Sky Regional Council provided a workforce development update.
- Ms. Isley provided her President & CEO's report.
- An update from Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley was heard.
- Public comments from Roy Harris were received.
- With a 7-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

### **Call of the Joint BCTDA Meeting to Order**

Chairwoman Mosher called the joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:02 a.m. She noted it was good to be meeting in-person again.

Chairwoman Mosher said the meeting is being live-streamed and, for remote viewers, the agenda and meeting documents are provided on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com). She added they were also emailed to everyone who registered via Zoom by 8:00 this morning and the recording and additional materials will be posted on the website after the meeting.

Introductions were made around the room.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

#### **March 24, 2022 BCTDA Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Ashburn made a motion to approve the March 24, 2022, regular meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Celwyn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

#### **March 25, 2022 BCTDA Annual Planning Session Minutes**

Vice Chairwoman Durden made a motion to approve the March 25, 2022, annual planning session minutes as presented. Ms. Ashburn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

### **Financial Reports**

#### **March 2022 Financial Reports**

Mr. Warn reviewed the March 2022 financial reports. There were no questions.

Mr. Celwyn made a motion to approve the March 2022 financial reports as presented. Mr. Scott Patel seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

### FY 2022 Audit Contract

Mr. Warn said board approval is needed for the CliftonLarsonAllen FY22 audit contract and engagement letter, which were sent to the board in advance of the meeting. He noted the only change in the contract from last year was that the fee increased to \$10,150.

Mr. Lehman made a motion to approve the CliftonLarsonAllen/BCTDA FY22 audit contract and engagement letter as presented. Ms. Ashburn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

### **Workforce Development Update**

Nathan Ramsey, executive director of the Land of Sky Regional Council and the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, shared a PowerPoint presentation in which he provided a regional workforce development update.

In his presentation, Mr. Ramsey shared information related to population, GDP, unemployment statistics both pre- and post-pandemic, total labor force, local jobs, and average hourly earnings. He noted the only two sectors in our region that pay wages above the North Carolina average are healthcare and hospitality and tourism.

Mr. Ramsey said we have a “math” problem that is not unique to the Asheville area, in that there are more job openings than there are people looking for work with the education or skills that are needed. He said every industry is hiring, with advanced manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality and tourism, skilled trades, and tech/IT making up a significant number of current job openings.

Mr. Ramsey shared pathways that can increase skills for workers, as most positions require a postsecondary certification. He encouraged employers to post their job openings on [NCWorks.gov](https://www.ncworks.gov), which currently has over 11,000 listings.

Mr. Ramsey concluded his presentation by offering suggestions on what employers can do in a tight labor market. He then answered all related questions.

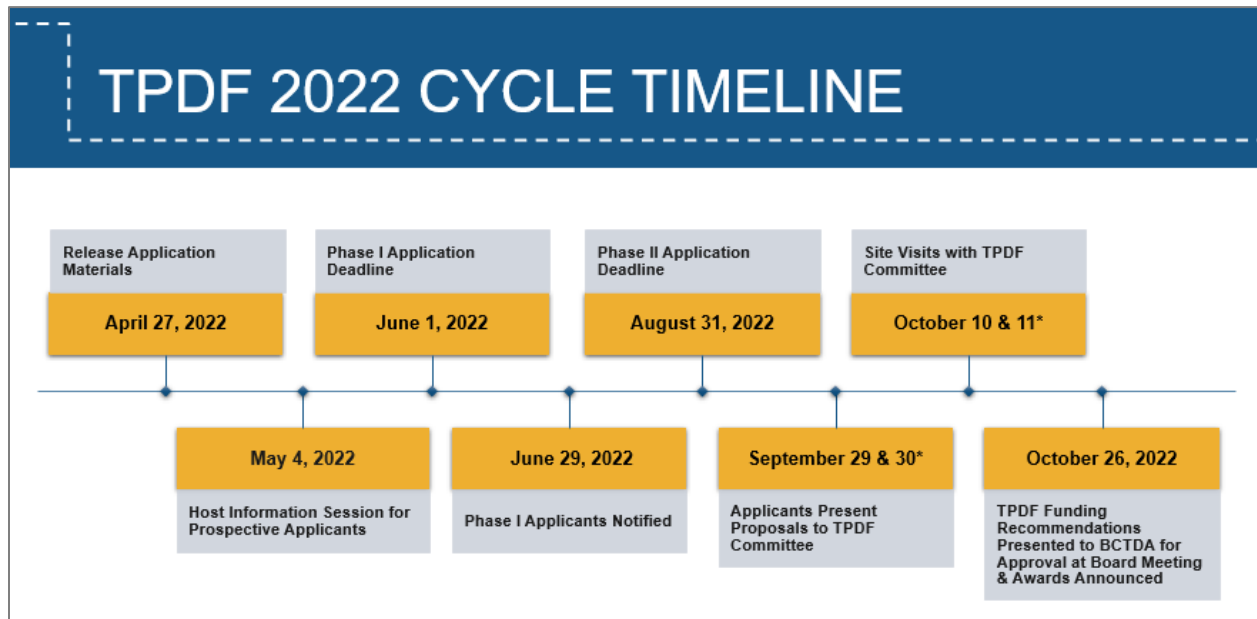
Chairwoman Mosher thanked Mr. Ramsey for providing this very informative workforce development update.

### **President & CEO Report**

Ms. Isley and Vice Chairwoman Durden shared how Explore Asheville recently participated with 22 tourism community partners in the Buncombe County High Schools Career Day, in which 400 students from nine high schools participated. They commended staff members Kathi Petersen and Glenn Ramey for working at the event and developing a passport for students to complete as they learned about various career opportunities.

Ms. Isley said participation in the career fair was part of a larger pilot initiative in development to create a workforce development pipeline and inspire young adults with the wide variety of careers available in travel and hospitality. She said introducing the idea of travel and hospitality career opportunities at the high school and vocational college levels can help develop interest at an impressionable age. Ms. Isley provided a brief overview of the effort currently underway to involve community partners in developing this initiative over the next few years.

Next, Ms. Isley reviewed the elements of the public information campaign currently running to promote the upcoming [Tourism Product Development Fund \(TPDF\) grant cycle](#) and information session scheduled on May 4. She noted the promotional campaign is funded out of Earned Revenue. Ms. Isley also shared the application cycle timeline below, which will culminate with TPDF awards being approved and announced in October 2022.



Ms. Isley shared information about upcoming events, including Explore Asheville’s [Tourism Summit 2022: The Future of Travel](#), happening on Wednesday, May 18, from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., at The Omni Grove Park Inn, and UNC Asheville’s [Asheville Ideas Fest](#), scheduled June 14-18, 2022, of which Explore Asheville is a sponsor. She encouraged everyone to attend.

Industry Metrics

Ms. Isley reviewed recent occupancy lodging metrics and provided comparisons to prior years. She said the Monthly Highlights and Destination Performance reports were emailed to the board in advance of the meeting and are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](#). Ms. Ashburn noted an error in a year label on the March lodging occupancy slide, which was corrected for the final deck posted on the website. She then invited questions.

Mr. Celwyn said he understands Explore Asheville’s work to bring group and leisure visitors to the area, however, asked if there is an effort to bring people who work remotely for something like a “workcation.” Ms. Isley responded that this is an idea that has been discussed in Explore Asheville’s strategic pillar workgroups and staff would be happy to continue evaluating this suggestion. She referenced how Bermuda and a town in Tennessee had been successful with a similar initiative. A brief discussion on this topic took place.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Ms. Isley for the report and Mr. Celwyn for his suggestion.

### **Asheville City Council Update**

Councilmember Kilgore was absent from today's meeting, therefore, an Asheville City Council update was not provided.

### **Buncombe County Commission Update**

Commissioner Pressley reported on county-related business, including recent work sessions, revenue and inflation increases, established priorities of early childcare, affordable housing, and workforce development, funding for improvements at the detention facility, the success of the recent Billie Jean King Cup event, and bond feasibility for various initiatives.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Commissioner Pressley for his report.

### **Miscellaneous Business**

There was no miscellaneous business discussed at this meeting.

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

#### **Live Virtual Public Comments**

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

#### **In-Person Public Comments**

Chairwoman Mosher said upon arrival to this morning's BCTDA meeting, anyone who indicated a desire to make public comments completed the public comment sign-in sheet, affirming that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Rules of Decorum. She said one person signed up to speak and she and invited Roy Harris to share his public comments.

Mr. Harris, a 39-year resident of the Asheville area, said he came to the meeting to share two personal announcements. He said he has a 3-year-old granddaughter and will task her to come to Asheville in 15 years when she transitions from high school to college to look at everything her grandfather was involved in to see if he made a difference. He said the BCTDA and Explore Asheville are now on the list and she will need to come to a future meeting.

Mr. Harris said his second announcement is that by coming to today's meeting, he is starting the 30-day countdown to his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday two days early, and is embarking on a local tour entitled, "To Boldly Go Where No Brother Has Gone Before." He said during this cultural tour, he will visit several places and attend many local events.

Mr. Harris thanked everyone for serving on the board and encouraged them to keep up the good work. He suggested board members take off the "hats" that they normally wear and look at things in a different light when making decisions.

Chairwoman Mosher thanked Mr. Harris for his comments.

## **Adjournment**

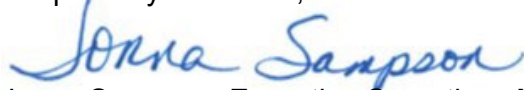
Chairwoman Mosher requested a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Celwyn moved to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Ashburn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0 and the meeting ended at 10:12 a.m.

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

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place in Asheville.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager