

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

Virtual Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

- Present (Voting):** Gary Froeba, Chair; Himanshu Karvir, Vice Chair;
Andrew Celwyn, Chip Craig, John Luckett, John McKibbon,
Kathleen Mosher, James Poole
- Absent (Voting):** Leah Ashburn
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher
Asheville City Councilwoman Julie Mayfield
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- CVB Staff:** Stephanie Brown, Marla Tambellini, Dianna Pierce, Pat Kappes,
Kathi Petersen, Jonna Sampson
- BC Finance:** Don Warn, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
- Advertising Agency:** Ashley Keetle, 360i
- Online Attendees:** Glenn Cox, Jennifer Kass-Green, Daniel Bradley, Carli Adams,
Kathryn Dewey, Connie Holliday, Sarah Lowery, Tina Porter,
Charlie Reed, Ritchie Rozzelle, Dodie Stephens, Jason Tarr,
Landis Taylor; Explore Asheville Staff
Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategy Group
Kit Cramer, Samantha Cole; Asheville Area Chamber of
Commerce
Jim Muth, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
Demp Bradford, Madison Davis; Asheville-Buncombe Regional
Sports Commission
John Ellis, John Winkenwerder; Past BCTDA Board Members
Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport
Cathy Ball, City of Asheville
Timothy Love, Buncombe County
Sharon Tabor, Black Mountain/Swannanoa Chamber
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
Daniel Walton, Mountain Xpress
Mark Barrett, AVL Watchdog
Taylor Stewart, WLOS
Sunshine Request

Members of the public and additional tourism industry partners registered in advance and attended the online meeting.

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Froeba called the joint virtual meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:00 a.m.
- Minutes from the April 29, 2020 BCTDA regular monthly meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Minutes from the May 8, 2020 BCTDA special meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The April 2020 financial statements were reviewed and approved with an 8-0 vote.
- A budget ordinance, in the amount of \$5,000,000, to establish the Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund was approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Chairman Froeba appointed a nominating committee to recommend a slate of BCTDA officers for FY 21.
- In her President's Report, Ms. Brown provided an update on the Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund.
- Ms. Pierce, Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Petersen presented the 'Asheville Cares' Stay Safe Pledge initiative.
- Ms. Tambellini presented an update on the FY 20 marketing budget.
- Ms. Tambellini presented an overview of the FY 21 marketing budget.
- Ms. Pierce presented an overview of the FY 21 sales budget.
- Ms. Kappes presented an overview of the FY 21 TPDF administrative budget.
- Ms. Brown presented the proposed BCTDA FY 21 budget ordinance. A motion that the board accept the proposed ordinance as presented for the purposes of the public hearing and to hold the public hearing was approved with a 7-0 vote.
- A virtual public hearing on the proposed BCTDA FY 21 budget took place and an electronic public comment period to receive input on the budget through June 23, 2020 was opened.
- Approval of the CEO search agreement and authorization for Chairman Froeba to execute it was approved with a 7-0 vote.
- Updates from Asheville City Councilwoman Julie Mayfield and Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher were provided.
- Under Miscellaneous Business, Mr. Celwyn expressed his gratitude to those involved in developing the 'Asheville Cares' Stay Safe Pledge.
- Chairman Froeba stated there were no comments from the general public received by the 4:00 p.m. deadline on May 26, 2020.
- The joint meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Call of the Joint BCTDA Meeting to Order

Chairman Froeba called the virtual joint meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:00 a.m. He welcomed the board and members of the public attending online.

Meeting Materials: Chairman Froeba said meeting materials were provided to the public in advance on the AshevilleCVB.com industry website.

Public Comment: Chairman Froeba said members of the public were invited to provide comments in advance of the meeting via email. He noted there were no comments received by the 4:00 p.m. deadline on May 26, 2020.

Board Member Roll Call: Board members responded as Chairman Froeba called roll verifying all BCTDA members were virtually in attendance, except for Ms. Ashburn, who was absent from the meeting.

Chairman Froeba said roll call votes will be taken for all action items during today's meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2020 Regular Meeting

Mr. Karvir made a motion to approve the April 29, 2020 regular meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Luckett seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 8-0.

May 8, 2020 Special Meeting

Mr. Karvir made a motion to approve the May 8, 2020 special meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Poole seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 8-0.

Both sets of minutes are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Financial Reports

April 2020 Financial Reports

Mr. Warn reviewed the April 2020 financial reports. There were no questions.

Mr. Craig made a motion to approve the April 2020 financial statements as presented. Mr. Celwyn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 8-0.

The April financial reports are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Budget Ordinance for Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund

Ms. Brown presented a budget ordinance to transfer \$5,000,000 from the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Appropriated Fund Balance to establish the Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund. It was noted that an update on this Fund will be provided later in the meeting.

Mr. Celwyn made a motion to approve the budget ordinance as presented, transferring \$5,000,000 from TPDF Appropriated Fund Balance to establish the Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund. Mr. Craig seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 8-0.

The budget ordinance is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau

BCTDA Nominating Committee

Chairman Froeba appointed Mr. Craig, Mr. Lockett and Mr. McKibbon to serve on a nominating committee to present a recommended slate of officers for FY 21 at the BCTDA's June meeting. He thanked them for their willingness to serve in this capacity.

President's Report

Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund Update

Ms. Brown reported on the Tourism Jobs Recovery Fund process. She said Mountain Bizworks has done an amazing job in the short time since being hired in an administrative capacity to manage the grant application process. This includes setting up a website, hosting four informational webinars that has attracted 600 viewers, with two more scheduled, fielding questions and sending out communications. She said that the application cycle opened on May 15 and applications will be accepted through midnight on May 31. Ms. Brown added that to date, 126 applications have been received requesting \$3 million. A team of reviewers will begin reviewing applications next week with announcements to be made in June.

Destination Dashboard, Quick List & CVB Staff Recap

Ms. Brown concluded her report by inviting questions related to the documents that were shared in advance of the meeting, of which there were none.

CVB Staff Recaps, Destination Dashboards, Quick Lists, financial statements, board meeting minutes, agendas, and research reports can be found on AshevilleCVB.com.

Chairman Froeba thanked Ms. Brown for the report.

'Asheville Cares' Stay Safe Pledge Campaign

The graphic features the 'ASHEVILLE CARES STAY SAFE Pledge' logo with a red hand icon. Below the logo, it states: 'We care about the residents, workers and guests of Buncombe County. Our pledge is a shared commitment to take necessary precautions for all of us to stay safe while following recommended public health guidelines.' It lists two columns of pledges: 'WE pledge TO:' and 'GUESTS pledge TO:'. The 'WE' column includes: 'WASH OUR HANDS FREQUENTLY & HAVE HAND SANITIZER AVAILABLE', 'WEAR FACE COVERINGS WHEN INTERACTING WITH GUESTS', 'FOLLOW SOCIAL DISTANCING & CAPACITY GUIDELINES', 'FOLLOW CDC STANDARDS OF CLEANING & SANITATION', 'CONDUCT WELLNESS SCREENINGS OF EMPLOYEES', and 'TRAIN EMPLOYEES ON COVID-19 SAFETY PROCEDURES'. The 'GUESTS' column includes: 'WASH OR SANITIZE HANDS BEFORE ENTERING', 'WEAR FACE COVERINGS', 'FOLLOW SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES', 'STAY HOME IF YOU HAVE A COUGH, FEVER OR OTHER SYMPTOMS', 'AVOID DIRECT CONTACT WITH STAFF & OTHER GUESTS', and 'USE A CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD IF POSSIBLE'. At the bottom, it says 'Welcome and thank you for supporting the health of our community. ExploreAsheville.com/stay-safe-pledge' and the 'Explore ASHEVILLE' logo.

Ms. Pierce, Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Petersen shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the launch of the new 'Asheville Cares' Stay Safe Pledge initiative. This has been a quick and collaborative effort to provide a resource for businesses in Asheville and the surrounding areas to communicate a shared commitment to safety and compliance with public health recommendations. The pledge is for both businesses and visitors and is especially important as COVID-19-related restrictions begin to be lifted and businesses start to reopen.

The pledge states, "We care about the residents, workers and guests of Buncombe County. Our pledge is a shared commitment to take necessary precautions for all of us to stay safe while following recommended public health guidelines." It has points of what businesses and guests pledge to do to keep everyone safe.

Throughout the presentation, Ms. Pierce, Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Petersen reviewed the steps taken in the development of the pledge, downloadable collateral, examples of how it's being used, as well as education and communications efforts. It was noted a webinar is being held later in the day to provide information to tourism industry partners.

The CVB team acknowledged the many partners that collaborated with them to develop the pledge and answered all related questions.

Additional information and the toolkit containing downloadable assets specific to several local communities may be found on AshevilleCVB.com.

Chairman Froeba and Ms. Brown thanked the staff for pulling this pledge together over the course of about a week. Ms. Brown noted the US Travel Association wants to promote it as a tool for other destinations to consider utilizing.

The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

FY 20 Marketing Budget Update

Ms. Tambellini shared a PowerPoint presentation providing a marketing budget update for the current fiscal year. She reviewed the modest advertising budget that is being utilized to keep Asheville top of mind during the COVID-19 pandemic by sharing virtual experiences with potential future visitors. Ms. Tambellini said the team's objective is to continue a phased approach toward economic recovery by safely and responsibly encouraging travel when the time is right, while working closely with local government.

Next, Ms. Tambellini reviewed trends, strategies, current traveler and community sentiment, and ended the presentation with an overview of next steps. A brief discussion took place with Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Brown receiving feedback and answering questions from board members.

FY 21 Marketing Budget Overview

Ms. Tambellini continued her presentation by providing an overview of the FY 21 marketing budget and program of work. She said that with all of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, advertising in the next fiscal year will need to be much more adaptive to changes than in previous years. Ms. Tambellini said the marketing team is continuously working closely with the agency on various recovery scenarios and utilizing ever-changing data and research to direct decisions. She reviewed next year's advertising considerations and strategies which included: developing markets, messaging, media flexibility, audience segments, personalization and automation, Chatbot, seasonal motivation, website refresh, 2021 visitor guide options, and more.

Ms. Tambellini concluded her presentation by providing an overview of the shifting PR landscape, outlining how the Explore Asheville public relations team will pivot their efforts and initiatives in the coming year.

Chairman Froeba thanked Ms. Tambellini for her budget reports. The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

FY 21 Sales Budget Overview

Ms. Pierce shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she provided an overview of the proposed FY 21 sales budget. She discussed current COVID-19 challenges and trends affecting meetings and events. Ms. Pierce provided an update on the meetings brand refresh project and unveiled the new “*Elevate your Meeting*” tagline, noting collateral is still in development. She also reviewed technology and data tools that will help to automate communications, and trade events, client connections, and sporting events.

Next, Ms. Pierce shared revisions to the Meetings Development Fund, which is being increased to \$70,000 in FY 21, noting a memo was sent to the board explaining the recommended changes.

Chairman Froeba said group business is a tough market right now and that moving forward will be quite challenging. He added the hard work and dedication of the sales team will be needed. Ms. Pierce thanked him and said her department will do everything they can to stay in front of meeting planners to keep Asheville top of mind.

Chairman Froeba thanked Ms. Pierce for her report. The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

FY 21 TPDF Administrative Budget Overview

Ms. Kappes shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she provided an overview of the proposed FY 21 Tourism Product Development Fund administrative budget, which totals \$518,000. She reviewed the budgeted expenses related to the wayfinding program, which includes maintenance costs and additions to the River Arts District. Ms. Kappes also provided an update on the African American Heritage Trail project, for which a supplemental funding request will be made at a later date for Phase 3 and Phase 4.

Ms. Brown said that using conservative estimates, staff is estimating \$3.7 million will be collected in TPDF revenue in FY 21.

Chairman Froeba thanked Ms. Kappes for presenting the proposed TPDF administrative budget. The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Proposed BCTDA FY 21 Budget Ordinance

Ms. Brown presented the proposed FY 21 budget ordinance, noting that over the past two regular board meetings, the detailed budget has been presented and staff members have not received any subsequent feedback. Ms. Brown said the ordinance includes the proposed operating budget, totaling \$15,504,194 (includes a transfer from Fund Balance), and the TPDF administrative budget, totaling \$518,000.

Mr. Craig made a motion that the board accept the proposed BCTDA FY 21 budget ordinance as presented for the purposes of the public hearing and to hold the public hearing. Mr. Karvir seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 7-0. (Mr. Poole was not present for the roll call, having exited at 10:01 a.m. due to technical challenges.)

The proposed budget ordinance is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau and is posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

Public Hearing on Proposed BCTDA FY 21 Budget

At 10:37 a.m., Chairman Froeba opened the public budget hearing which, pursuant to N.C. General Statute 166A-19.24 (e) during this COVID-19 state of emergency, may be held electronically. He announced the board will receive public comments on the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority's proposed FY 21 budget via email to Reply@ExploreAsheville.com through Tuesday, June 23, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. Chairman Froeba then closed the public budget hearing.

CEO Search

Chairman Froeba said he has been in contact with Mike Gamble of SearchWide Global, an expert who specializes in placing executives for destinations. A detailed proposal outlining the process and timeline to conduct a search to fill the CEO position being vacated by Ms. Brown on June 30 has been received and shared with the board.

Mr. McKibbin made a motion to approve the CEO search agreement with SearchWide Global and authorize Chairman Froeba to sign. Ms. Mosher seconded the motion. Discussion included Chairman Froeba stating he and Mr. Karvir will work to form a search committee consisting of about 9 industry and non-industry representatives. Commissioner Belcher thanked Ms. Brown for her professionalism throughout the years. A vote was then taken and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 7-0.

Chairman Froeba said he will have more to report on the search process at the June BCTDA meeting. The CEO search documents are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Asheville City Council Update

Councilwoman Mayfield briefly reported on significant deficits in the City of Asheville's budget for the current and upcoming fiscal years related to COVID-19 uncertainty.

Chairman Froeba thanked Councilwoman Mayfield for the update.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Belcher reported on county-related business, including gratitude to the Explore Asheville and Asheville Chamber teams for hosting tourism industry town hall meetings with Buncombe County staff. He also reviewed budget adjustments, OneBuncombe Fund financial assistance, greenways, and efforts that are underway to bring Phase 2 lodging guidelines into alignment with both the county and the state.

Chairman Froeba thanked Commissioner Belcher for the report.

Miscellaneous Business

Mr. Celwyn extended his gratitude to the Explore Asheville staff members involved for their impressive work in a difficult situation related to executing the 'Asheville Cares' Stay Safe Pledge. Chairman Froeba echoed Mr. Celwyn's sentiment.

Commissioner Belcher encouraged board members to reach out to each other and have positive and encouraging conversations during this pandemic.

Comments from the General Public

Chairman Froeba said members of the general public were invited to submit comments via email to reply@ExploreAsheville.com through 4:00 p.m. on May 26, 2020. Chairman Froeba reported no comments were received by the deadline.

Adjournment

Chairman Froeba thanked everyone for attending. Mr. McKibbon moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Karvir seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote taken by Chairman Froeba, the motion carried 7-0 and the meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m. The BCTDA will next meet on Wednesday, June 24, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager