

Explore ASHEVILLE

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
A Joint Meeting of the Public Authority and Nonprofit Corporation
Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 28, 2021

- Present (Voting):** Kathleen Mosher, Chair; Brenda Durden, Vice Chair; Gary Froeba, Himanshu Karvir, John Luckett
- Absent (Voting):** Leah Ashburn, Andrew Celwyn, John McKibbon
- 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, Jennifer Kass-Green, Jonna Sampson, Daniel Bradley, Hannah Dosa, Kathi Petersen, Tina Porter
- BC Finance:** None
- Legal Counsel:** Richard Kort, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
- In-Person Attendees:** Clark Duncan, Economic Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County
Colleen Swanson, Meetings Database Institute
Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
Chip Craig, John Ellis; Past BCTDA Board Members
Ruth Summers, Grove Arcade Public Market
Jim Kammann, Dining Innovations
Nnweyna Smith, Sankofa Market/Helpmate
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
- Online Attendees:** Andrew Celwyn, John McKibbon; BCTDA Board Members
Glenn Cox, Carli Adams, Kathryn Dewey, Holly Oakley, Glenn Ramey,
Charlie Reed, Nicole Will; Explore Asheville Staff
Jim Muth, Past BCTDA Board Member
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Robert Michel, Asheville Homestay Network
Sharon Tabor, Black Mountain-Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
Sophia Ungert, UNC Asheville
Derek Lacey, Asheville Citizen-Times
Brooke Randle, Mountain Xpress
Bryan Overstreet, WLOS
Sunshine Request

Additional tourism community partners and members of the public registered in advance and viewed the meeting online.

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 9:01 a.m.
- Ms. Isley presented outgoing BCTDA Chairman Himanshu Karvir with a plaque in recognition of his service on the board. She also welcomed incoming Chair, Kathleen Mosher.
- Minutes from the June 30, 2021, BCTDA regular monthly meeting were approved with a 5-0 vote.
- The revised Rules of Decorum and Processes and Protocols for Public Comments During Regular Monthly Meetings document relevant for in-person meetings was approved with a 5-0 vote.
- The preliminary June 2021 financial statements were approved with a 5-0 vote.
- In her President & CEO report, Ms. Isley reviewed recent lodging metrics, shared the board member vacancy appointment process, and reviewed the Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund and Sponsorships plan and timeline.
- A Group Sales Strategy presentation was shared by Ms. Isley, Mr. Hilliard, Colleen Swanson with MDI, and Clark Duncan with the Economic Development Coalition of Asheville-Buncombe County.
- Updates from Asheville City Councilmember Sandra Kilgore and Buncombe County Commissioner Robert Pressley were heard.
- Under Comments from the General Public, Chairwoman Mosher reported there were no requests to speak received from members of the public - either via call-in or in-person.
- With a 5-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Call of the Joint BCTDA Meeting to Order

Chairwoman Mosher called the in-person joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:01 a.m. For people watching the livestream online, she said meeting documents are provided on AshevilleCVB.com and the recording will be posted after the meeting.

Introductions were made around the room.

Thanks to Outgoing BCTDA Chair Himanshu Karvir

Ms. Isley said Mr. Karvir was recognized last month for his contributions as outgoing BCTDA Chair and she presented him with a plaque for his long-standing service on the board.

Welcome Incoming BCTDA Chair Kathleen Mosher

Ms. Isley welcomed Kathleen Mosher to her first board meeting as Chair and said she looks forward to her working with her in this new leadership role.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lockett made a motion to approve the June 30, 2021, regular meeting minutes as presented. Vice Chairwoman Durden seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 5-0.

Adoption of Rules of Decorum and Processes and Protocols for Public Comments During Regular Monthly Meetings

Chairwoman Mosher said that in February, the board adopted Rules of Decorum and Processes and Protocols for receiving public comments at virtual meetings. She said now that the BCTDA has resumed in-person meetings, the protocols have been revised to allow members of the public who are viewing the meeting via the livestream to continue to have the ability to call in and make comments. Additionally, the document outlines the steps people attending the meeting in-person will follow to request to speak for up to three minutes.

Chairwoman Mosher said board members received the revised proposed protocols to review prior to today's meeting and she invited questions or comments. Seeing none, she called for action.

Mr. Karvir made a motion to adopt the revised Rules of Decorum, Processes and Protocols for Public Comments during Regular Monthly BCTDA Meetings as presented. Mr. Froeba seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 5-0.

Ms. Isley added that at last month's meeting, a discussion took place with board members suggesting that as we work towards planning to resume in-person BCTDA meetings, to consider continuing to offer the increased transparency and online accessibility that have been available to the public via virtual meetings. She said the team worked internally on the operational logistics of that directive and she is pleased that these protocols go above and beyond the requirements to allow opportunities for public access and engagement at in-person BCTDA meetings.

The revised Rules of Decorum and Processes and Protocols for Public Comments document is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau and is posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

Financial Reports

Preliminary June 2021 Financial Reports

Ms. Kass-Green reviewed the preliminary June 2021 financial reports. She said the final June reports will be presented in the fall in conjunction with the annual audit and will include an additional month of revenue and expenses received after June 30.

In response to Mr. Froeba's question asking how many short-term rental units there are in the area, Ms. Isley said she believes the number was approximately 3,800 when she shared a report on STRs at a recent meeting.

Mr. Lockett made a motion to approve the preliminary June 2021 financial reports as presented. Vice Chairwoman Durden seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 5-0.

President & CEO Report

Lodging Metrics

Ms. Isley shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she provided recent lodging occupancy metrics.

Board Member Appointment Status

Ms. Isley said the city and county are currently in application cycles to fill five vacancies on the BCTDA board. She said Mr. Froeba and Mr. McKibbon are completing their terms as the county's appointees, and applications for those seats close on July 30, with discussion and interviews scheduled by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners on August 24.

The city's appointees terming off the board are Mr. Karvir and Mr. Lockett, and Mr. Poole resigned from his seat in July due to a change in employment. She said the application deadline for these three seats is August 9 and interviews and appointments by Asheville City Council will be scheduled on September 14.

Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund

Ms. Isley shared details about the Festival & Cultural Events grant program designed to provide financial support for events that serve both the residents of Buncombe County and the visitors who travel to the Asheville area. Highlights of plan are:

- Funds for this program are from the Earned Revenue Fund, generated by advertising on the ExploreAsheville.com website that are not subject to occupancy tax restrictions.
- Grant cycles are held annually, and the 2021 grant application process is valid for festivals and cultural events occurring in calendar year 2022.
- [Information is on the website](#) and applications are currently open with a September 29, 2021, deadline. A five-member grant committee will review the applications and funding recommendations will be presented to the BCTDA for approval at the October 27, 2021, board meeting.
- Grants range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with the funding level not exceeding 50% of the total event budget.
- The number of grant awards is limited by the amount of available funds, which vary from year-to-year. Funds do not have to be fully appropriated.
- Funds are disbursed as a reimbursement after the events take place.

Sponsorship Funding

Ms. Isley said the BCTDA also offers Sponsorship Funding from Earned Revenue to Buncombe County-based nonprofits providing professional and community development opportunities that serve the local community. She said funding requests will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and sponsorships ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 are awarded at the discretion of Explore Asheville's president & CEO. Additional information and applications forms are available on [AshevilleCVB.com](#).

Upcoming Events

Ms. Isley shared information on two upcoming events happening on Tuesday, August 3. From 10:00 to 11:15 a.m., Explore Asheville will host a [Responsible Travel & Sustainability in Tourism webinar](#). Later that day, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., a Summer Social & Sustainability Resource Fair will take place at Highland Brewing Company.

Other Updates

Ms. Isley said the CVB Staff Recap, Destination Dashboard, and Quick List are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](#).

Group Sales Strategy

Introduction

Ms. Isley introduced the speakers for the Group Sales Strategy presentation and provided an overview of Explore Asheville's four strategic imperatives. She also shared the group room night production history and further defined the strategic imperatives as they specifically relate to Group Sales efforts:

- Deliver Balanced Recovery & Sustainable Growth
 - Accelerate proactive sales efforts to increase net new business to the destination.
 - Create a local referral group of influencers in economic development sectors and community assets.
 - Deploy the sales team in alignment with broader economic development sectors.
 - Drive revenue in need periods through an updated group sales strategy.
- Encourage Safe & Responsible Travel
 - Identify, qualify, and engage purpose-driven companies to choose Asheville for meetings and events.
- Engage & Invite More Diverse Audiences
 - Increase outreach in recruiting DEI meetings and events.
- Promote & Support Asheville's Creative Spirit
 - Actively promote our creative community and resources to groups and events.

MDI Data Analysis

Colleen Swanson with Meetings Database Institute (MDI), a strategic data management and solutions firm specializing in the hospitality and meetings marketplace, provided an overview of the recently completed sales program analysis for Explore Asheville. She shared the goals, approach, segments, industries, account feeders, peak rooms, arrival months, lead time, and priorities, and summarized how the data will be utilized in sales strategies to attract the types of group business that is desirable for the Asheville area.

Economic Development Sectors

Clark Duncan with the Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County (EDC), said the EDC and BCTDA boards have long-shared a vision of expanding economic activity, and out of that vision came a partnership with an understanding that the hospitality industry has the potential to lift and grow other sectors of the economy. Mr. Duncan shared the AVL 5X5 2025 strategies for promoting cluster growth in five key industries: advanced manufacturing, life sciences, climate and environmental tech, outdoor products and recreation tech, and office and technology. He highlighted local businesses and organizations that are represented in each cluster.

Deployment

Marshall Hilliard, VP of Sales for Explore Asheville, shared the following “Guiding Principles for Sales,” and provided an overview of how they align with the economic development sectors and Explore Asheville’s strategic pillars and community assets:

- To be ADDITIVE – Focus on new business and the quality of the visit.
- To be BALANCED – Pursue and book off-peak business throughout the year focusing on specific need periods.
- To be ALIGNED - Attract business aligned with Explore Asheville’s strategic pillars, economic development sectors, and community assets.

Next, Mr. Hilliard shared how Explore Asheville’s sales managers will be deployed, with markets and segments assigned based on the data provided by Ms. Swanson and economic development clusters shared by Mr. Duncan, in alignment with the strategic pillars.

Mr. Hilliard provided an overview of the sales strategies behind the upcoming Outdoor Retailers Show in Colorado and a local influencer initiative that will be convening in the fall.

Wrap-Up

Ms. Isley concluded the presentation by stating that this sales strategy will help in the effort to bring balanced recovery and growth to the area and can help to diversify the local and regional economy. Ms. Isley, Mr. Hilliard, Ms. Swanson, and Mr. Duncan answered all related questions.

The PowerPoint presentation is on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau and is posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

Asheville City Council Update

Councilmember Kilgore provided an update on city-related business, including approval of the noise ordinance, upcoming board and commission appointments, and a recent work session on American Rescue Plan funding.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Pressley provided an update on county-related business, including approval of funding for a low-income homeowners’ program, a recent cycling event, and progress on the American Rescue Plan application process.

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 noted 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, members of the public attending today's in-person meeting were invited to register to share public comments, however, no one signed-up to speak.

Adjournment

Mr. Karvir moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Froeba seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 5-0 and the meeting ended at 10:27 a.m.

The full meeting 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, August 25, 2021, beginning at 9:00 a.m., via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager