

**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, August 29, 2018

- Present (Voting):** Jim Muth, Chair; Gary Froeba, Vice Chair; Andrew Celwyn, Leah Ashburn (10:20 arrival), Chip Craig, Himanshu Karvir, John Lockett, John McKibbon
- Absent (Voting):** Tom Ruff (excused)
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Julie Mayfield  
Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- BC Finance:** Jennifer Durrett, Eric Hardy
- Advertising Agency:** No one was present from the Peter Mayer Agency
- CVB Staff:** Stephanie Brown, Marla Tambellini, Glenn Cox, Pat Kappes, Dianna Pierce, Jonna Reiff, Sarah Kilgore, Dodie Stephens, Justine Tullos
- CVB Staff Absent:** None
- Guests:** John Ellis, BCTDA Finance Committee  
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Katie Button, Curate and Nightbell  
Jael Rattigan, French Broad Chocolates  
Martin Lewis, Stuart Weidie; Bob Lewis Ballpark  
Bob McMurray, Black Mountain-Swannanoa Chamber  
Jane Anderson, Beth Edwards; Asheville Independent  
Restaurant Association  
Demp Bradford, Andrew Lawrence; Asheville Buncombe  
Regional Sports Commission  
Rick Bell, Engadine Inn  
Kevin Barnes, Ultimate Ice Cream  
Aaron Grier, Gaining Ground Farm  
Jessica Reiser, Burial Beer Co.  
Peter Pollay, Posana  
Charles Hodge, Sovereign Remedies  
Kyle Ellison, Wai Mauna Asheville SUP Tours  
Timothy Sadler, Hemp & Heal/Spiritex  
Robert Pietri, Homestay Permit Holder

Jason Sandford, Ashvegas  
Dillon Davis, Asheville Citizen-Times  
Maria Pilos, Johnson, Price, Sprinkle  
Josh Kelly, Local Biologist

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

- Chairman Muth called the joint meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:03 a.m.
- Minutes from the July 25, 2018 BCTDA regular meeting were approved with a 7-0 vote.
- The July 2018 financial reports were reviewed and approved with a 7-0 vote.
- Katie Button and Jael Rattigan presented an overview of the Asheville Culinary Festival slated for September 2018. The BCTDA approved funding in the amount of \$50,000 in FY 2018-19 and \$25,000 in FY 2019-20 out of earned (non-occupancy tax) income for this initiative with a 7-0 vote.
- In her President's Report, Ms. Brown reviewed recent Explore Asheville CVB and industry activities and initiatives.
- Following a request presented by Martin Lewis and Stuart Weidie, the BCTDA approved a contract amendment for the Bob Lewis Ballpark TPDF project with a 7-0 vote.
- The BCTDA approved granting Tom Ruff an excused absence through December and invited Ms. Wilber to participate as a non-voting advisor with a 7-0 vote.
- Members of the marketing department gave updates on recent initiatives, including the agency review process, recent and upcoming advertising campaigns, and the results of the Zach King influencer partnership.
- Updates from Asheville City Councilwoman Julie Mayfield and Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher were heard.
- Under Miscellaneous Business, Ms. Brown, Mr. Celwyn and Mr. McKibbon shared remarks.
- The joint meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and Nonprofit Corporation, adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

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

Chairman Muth called the joint meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:03 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The visitors in attendance introduced themselves.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Craig made a motion to approve the July 25, 2018 regular meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Lockett seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

The minutes are on file with the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).

## **July 2018 Financial Reports**

Ms. Durrett announced she has resigned her position as Controller of Buncombe County Finance (BCF) effective September 13, and that this marks her last BCTDA meeting. She added working with the Explore Asheville CVB team and BCTDA board has been a highlight of her time with the County and thanked everyone for their guidance, support and patience over the past few years. Ms. Durrett said Eric Hardy and Blair Chamberlain will be the BCTDA's main contacts moving forward.

Ms. Durrett reviewed the July financial reports. She noted revenue received in July is for June hotel sales and is accrued back to FY 2017-18, therefore, only expenses and interest appear on the financial reports. She also mentioned that the reports have a new format due to the transition to Workday and changes in budget categories.

July expenditures totaled \$744,124. The net change to fund balance was (\$693,105), due to occupancy tax receipts being credited back to the prior fiscal year and other total revenue in the amount of \$51,022 being received. July expenditures for Salaries & Benefits: 437,591; Net Media: \$3,500; Research: \$0; Sales: \$116,668; Marketing: \$102,392; Public Affairs: 574; Other Operating Expenditures: \$83,472; Events/Festivals/Sponsorships: \$0.

There is currently \$4,837,022 in undedicated funds in the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF).

Ms. Durrett said there were some conversion issues with the salaries and benefits budget line which will soon be resolved. She also said she has handed out a supplement to the financials that gives a year-end snapshot of FY 2017-18. Ms. Durrett reminded the board that based on previous direction, online travel companies have been combined with the vacation rentals category effective with the start of FY 2018-19. She then answered all questions related to the financial statements.

Mr. Karvir made a motion to approve the July 2018 financial reports as presented. Mr. Froeba seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

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

## **Event Development Fund Proposal**

Katie Button and Jael Rattigan introduced themselves as President and Vice President respectively, of a new nonprofit being formed and they, along with members of the board, are present today to share plans in development to create a new signature event for the Asheville area. They provided a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted plans for an Asheville Culinary Festival to take place September 12-15, 2019, anchored in Pack Square Park, however, utilizing other locations throughout the county for a variety of immersive experiences.

During the presentation, Ms. Button and Ms. Rattigan shared potential elements of the festival, the mission statement, and optional experiences that celebrate the rich culinary and artistic culture found in the area. They provided a roster of local board members that included local culinary business owners and Explore Asheville CVB and AIR staff members. They reviewed the experience of Angel Postell, the director that has been selected to coordinate the festival, who previously directed the Charleston Wine & Food

Festival for nine years. Ms. Button and Ms. Rattigan shared objectives and, using figures obtained from the Charleston food festival, discussed the potential economic impact. They concluded their presentation by requesting funding from the BCTDA to allow them to officially hire the event director and begin brand development work and answered all related questions.

Chairman Muth commended Ms. Button and Ms. Rattigan on a strong presentation, stating their passion, coupled with the ability to bring an impressive group of people together to collaboratively work towards creating this concept, is a testament to their leadership abilities.

Ms. Brown reviewed the budget information that was provided in the board books and confirmed \$50,000 has been allocated in the current fiscal year for event development from earned (non-occupancy tax) revenue from advertising on ExploreAsheville.com.

In response to Mr. McKibbon's suggestion of committing dollars in future years, as well, Ms. Brown said there will be less in the earned revenue fund next year, however, she would feel comfortable committing \$50,000 for start-up funding in FY 2018-19 and \$25,000 in FY 2019-20.

When all questions had been responded to, Mr. Craig moved to award \$50,000 for the Asheville Culinary Festival from the current fiscal year's Earned Revenue budget, Events Development Fund, and to authorize staff to enter into a contract for disbursement of these funds, and to direct staff to include \$25,000 in funding in the next fiscal year's budget for the Asheville Culinary Festival that will be payable between the start of the new fiscal year and the event in September. Mr. McKibbon seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

Ms. Button thanked the BCTDA for its support and said her board is very excited to move forward.

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

### **President's Report**

In her President's Report, Ms. Brown shared recent Explore Asheville CVB activities and highlights included:

- Ms. Brown thanked the CVB's Green Team for taking on the initiative to reduce waste by providing non-disposable plates, cups and utensils at meetings.
- The BCTDA's Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 19 in the Seely Pavilion at The Omni Grove Park Inn. She thanked Mr. Froeba for generously hosting the event again this year. The keynote speaker will be Andrew Nelson from National Geographic and attendees will see a preview of the 30-minute television special, *Asheville by Design*, which will air on the National Geographic Channel on September 20.
- On September 8, staff will be present at a ribbon-cutting at Black Mountain College Museum + Art Center's new location, located across from the Pack Square Pavilion.
- Recent and upcoming staff events include a Partner Forum that highlighted community initiatives, a CVB 101 in Black Mountain for Black Mountain

businesses, and a CVB overview and reception for Asheville Chamber Visitor Center volunteers.

- Two new sales managers and an intern from WCU recently joined the CVB team and two positions are currently open in the Marketing & PR department.
- Ms. Brown recognized the tourism industry for donating enough items to provide 500 completed backpacks to the United Way's *Back to School Backpack Drive*. She also commended Himanshu and Swati Karvir for again spearheading the effort which, in total, provided 2,400 backpacks to local students.
- A CVB team of 10 staff members will participate in the United Way's Annual Campaign Kick-off event by giving a 3-minute, 80s-themed lip sync performance on September 21 at Highland Brewing Company.
- Explore Asheville is being recognized as Goodwill's Business Advisory Partner of the Year, and Mr. Cox will travel to Winston Salem to receive the award.
- Local hotel partners are teaming up to support MANNA FoodBank for *Sweet Dreams, Full Plates* for the second year in a row, where hotel guests can forego housekeeping in September and a donation will be made to Manna that provides meals to local families. A video shoot will take place to include Ms. Brown speaking on the merits of this initiative.

During her presentation, Ms. Brown answered all related questions.

#### *CVB Staff Recap, Visitor Index, Quick List*

The CVB Staff Recap, Visitor Index and Quick List were not reviewed at this meeting. They are posted, along with other meeting materials, on [ExploreAshevilleCVB.com](http://ExploreAshevilleCVB.com).

#### **Bob Lewis Ballpark TPDF Disbursement**

Ms. Kappes circulated recent photos of the Enka Ballfields complex. She said the project was awarded a Tourism Product Development Fund grant in 2014, in the amount of \$2 million, and two of the three contracted disbursements have been made. Ms. Kappes said the facility is now complete and being used, however, one item in the scope of the contract that has not been completed is the paving of the parking lot.

Project representatives Stuart Weidie and Martin Lewis addressed the BCTDA, stating they are very appreciative of the support that has been extended throughout the planning and building process. It was noted that four tournaments have been hosted since the fields opened on July 18. They then reviewed decisions that were made during the construction phase that increased project costs, such as upgraded AstroTurf, a sub-surface drainage system, additional fencing, adding an electrical conduit for future lighting, and upgrades to the concession facility. Mr. Weidie and Mr. Lewis said fundraising efforts are continuing and the parking area will be paved when funds are raised, at an estimated cost of \$200,000, however, they are requesting the final TPDF grant payment to be made at this time. They reviewed numbers from the recent tournaments, said \$5.5 million has been spent on the project to date, and answered all related questions.

When the discussion ended, Mr. Lockett moved to amend the TPDF contract with the Enka Youth Sports Organization to remove the paving of the parking lots and landscaping from the scope of work and change the required completion date to August 6, 2018. Mr. Karvir and Mr. Celwyn simultaneously seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

## **Board Member Update**

Chairman Muth said Paula Wilber's term on the BCTDA ended on July 31, 2018, and Tom Ruff with Biltmore was appointed by the Chamber to a 3-year term to fill the vacancy. He said that due to health-related issues, a motion is needed to give Mr. Ruff a temporary excused absence and invite Ms. Wilber to serve in a non-voting advisory capacity on the BCTDA until Mr. Ruff can join the board.

Mr. Froeba moved to give Mr. Ruff an excused absence through December and invite Ms. Wilber to serve on the BCTDA as a non-voting advisor until Mr. Ruff can participate. Mr. Luckett seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 7-0.

## **Marketing Report**

Ms. Tambellini provided an update on the advertising agency selection process. She said 25 agencies expressed interest in response to an initial request for information and 20 agencies sent responses to the follow-up RFQ that were due yesterday. She said Magellan Strategy Group has been engaged to help coordinate next steps in the agency selection process.

## **Advertising Update**

Ms. Tambellini introduced the CVB's Director of Advertising, Sarah Kilgore, noting she has done a great job since joining the team in January.

Ms. Kilgore shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Harvest and Fall advertising campaigns. She reviewed campaign parameters, tactical approaches, target audiences, media approach by market, and gave an overview of spot TV and national cable platforms. Ms. Kilgore then shared details of partnerships, including National Geographic, which has produced *Asheville by Design*, a 30-minute television special on the Asheville area, which will air on the National Geographic Channel on September 20. She then shared an overview of radio, print, digital, Native, paid social, rich media, and retargeting efforts. She concluded her presentation by reviewing elements of the upcoming Fall campaign.

Ms. Kilgore and Ms. Tambellini answered all related questions during and after the presentation. Ms. Tambellini added the Peter Mayer team has decided not to participate in the agency review process and will continue to work with the CVB team throughout the transition.

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

## **Zach King Video Partnership**

Ms. Stephens shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the results of the Explore Asheville CVB's partnership with social media star and digital magician/influencer Zach King. In concert with the *"Let the Magic Find You"* campaign, the CVB partnered with Zach King earlier this year to create a short film entitled, ["A Whole Latte Trouble,"](#) featuring several Asheville area locations such as Double D's Coffee, the Flat Iron, Biltmore, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and others. Ms. Stephens shared the video and the reviewed results to date that included 4.5 million views on Instagram, 877,000 views on YouTube, and 260,000 added-value views from two Zach King behind-the-scenes

videos. She also highlighted the strategies the marketing team followed to roll-out the video, comments received on social media channels, and a [video from the “magical viewing parties.”](#) which captured reactions of local Zach King fans.

Ms. Tambellini commended Ms. Stephens for spearheading the Zach King partnership and Ms. Kilgore and everyone on the marketing team for their efforts in maximizing this effort and staggering the roll-out to generate more excitement and exposure.

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

### **Asheville City Council Update**

Councilwoman Mayfield reported on city-related business, including the launch of the budget process, approval of a letter of support for a TPDF project, and the search for a new city manager.

Chairman Muth thanked Councilwoman Mayfield for the update.

### **Buncombe County Commission Update**

Commissioner Belcher reported on recent county-related business, including new playgrounds at Lake Julian, progress on the Enka Heritage Trail and Sports Complex, the search for a new finance director and county manager, and initiatives undertaken by Interim County Manager George Wood.

Commissioner Belcher concluded his report by thanking and commending Jennifer Durrett for the outstanding job she has done as Controller at Buncombe County Finance and wishing her well in her new position. He said she will be dearly missed.

Chairman Muth thanked Commissioner Belcher for the report.

### **Miscellaneous Business**

Ms. Brown said the BCTDA has retained the law firm of McGuire, Wood and Bissett and one of two attorneys, Sabrina Rackoff or Richard Kort, will regularly attend board meetings. She added due to the ongoing history of the Fund, TPDF legal review will remain with Van Winkle.

Mr. Celwyn said four board members will participate in an upcoming fundraiser for the Council on Aging that involves scaling a building.

Mr. McKibbin said he recently came across the music app, JamBase, that includes event calendars from local music venues.

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

There were no comments from the general public made at this meeting.

**Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Froeba adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m. The BCTDA will next meet on Wednesday, September 26, 2018, at 9:00 a.m., in the Boardroom of the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonna Reiff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonna Reiff, Executive Operations Manager