



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

The North Carolina Arboretum – 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way

Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 30, 2023

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; Kathleen Mosher, HP Patel, Michael Lusick, Larry Crosby, Andrew Celwyn, Elizabeth Putnam
- Absent (Voting):** Scott Patel
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Jennifer Kass-Green, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Marla Tambellini, Michael Kryzanek, Penelope Whitman
- BC Finance:** Mason Scott, Buncombe County/BCTDA Interim Fiscal Agent
- In-Person Attendees:** Drake Fowler, The North Carolina Arboretum
Glenn Murray, Matt Evans; Buncombe County
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Randy Claybrook, Asheville Bed & Breakfast Association
Chris Hardy, Robert Sponder; Parks Hospitality
Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
John Ellis, Prior TDA Board Member
Lucious Wilson, Wedge Brewing
Ken Floyd, Monte Vista Hotel
Chase Davis, Mountain Xpress
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media
Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times
Jason Burk, Black Mountain-Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
Ben Williamson, Tourism Taxes for Affordable Housing
- Online Attendees:** Mickey Poandl, Kimberly Puryear, Charlie Reed, Emily Crosby, Sha'Linda Pruitt, Anna Harris, McKenzie Provost, Tiffany Thacker; Explore Asheville
Timothy Love, Buncombe County
Jaime Matthews, City of Asheville
Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport
Madison Davis, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee
Chip Craig, Greybeard Realty
Zach Wallace, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Meghan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR)
Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast
Lacy Cross, Movement Bank
Chelsea Hett, Love the Green
Andrew Jones, Asheville Watchdog

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:04 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Durden thanked hosts at The North Carolina Arboretum; Drake Fowler, deputy executive director, addressed the group.
- Minutes from the July 26, 2023, BCTDA meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The July 2023 financial reports were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Isley provided her President & CEO's report.
- Isley facilitated board discussion about Leisure, Hospitality, & Tourism Workforce Development.
- Commissioner Terri Wells gave a brief report.
- Public comments from a Tourism Taxes for Affordable Housing campaigner were heard.
- Celwyn was thanked for his six years of service to the board.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

Call to Order of the Joint BCTDA Meeting

Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority, and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:04 a.m.

Durden said the meeting was being livestreamed. She noted that the agenda and meeting documents are available on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com) and were emailed to everyone who registered via Zoom by 8:00 a.m. Additional materials, including the PowerPoint, are posted after the meeting. Introductions were made around the room.

Durden then thanked The North Carolina Arboretum for hosting the meeting and invited Deputy Executive Director Drake Fowler to speak. Fowler introduced himself, welcomed the group, and highlighted some investments the BCTDA supported. Fowler said the arboretum staff was glad to host.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Celwyn made a motion to approve the July 26, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Crosby seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

July 2023 Financial Reports

Mason Scott, BCTDA interim fiscal agent, outlined changes to how the monthly financials would be reviewed during board meetings. Scott noted that complete financial statements would continue to be provided in advance. He presented key notes, answered questions, and explained that July financial information is limited. Lehman expressed gratitude for the effort to streamline the financial overview.

Crosby then made a motion to approve the July 2023 financial reports as presented. Mosher seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

President & CEO Report

Isley presented 2022 data from Visit NC and Tourism Economics, noting that Buncombe County benefited from \$2.88 billion in visitor spending. Isley also reviewed July lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years. Isley pointed out that hotel occupancy for July, which is the second busiest month behind October, didn't reach pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

Isley acknowledged the recent opening of Karen Cragolin Park, which received TPDF investment; listed the festivals and events that Explore Asheville supported in August and September; extended an

invite to the inaugural Asheville Tourists Travel & Hospitality Night; and shared details about the upcoming 2023 BCTDA Annual Meeting on September 19. AVL Fest was acknowledged as a success.

Concerns were expressed about what the lower occupancy in July could indicate about the future, and discussion followed about potential reasons, such as safety, for the downturn. Lehman suggested aggregating reviews across tourism-related businesses to understand recent visitor perspectives.

Leisure, Hospitality, & Tourism Workforce Development Discussion

Isley provided background about the plans for establishing a Leisure, Hospitality, & Tourism (LHT) Workforce Development program and reminded the board that it could be supported by the Earned Revenue Fund. Isley shared data collected about the LHT industry, cited realities and opportunities in Buncombe County, listened to input and experiences from board members, and proposed a program framework for consideration. Isley requested that additional feedback or suggestions be sent to staff.

Asheville City Council Update

Vice Mayor Kilgore was absent so no city-related business was reported.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Wells reported that the state budget is of interest currently. She also expressed a need for youth engagement saying 12% of youth in Buncombe County were neither employed nor in school.

Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

Comments from the General Public

Ben Williamson, a Tourism Taxes for Affordable Housing representative, said in addition to funding for affordable workforce housing the group petitioned for a service worker to be on the LIFT Committee. The coalition advocated for the appointment of James Southerland, former owner of Blue Dream Curry House.

Thanks to outgoing board member, Andrew Celwyn.

Durden recognized Celwyn for his six years of service to the BCTDA. Celwyn accepted an appreciation plaque and expressed his personal thanks to the group; he stated he learned a lot being on the board.

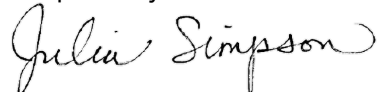
Adjournment

Crosby made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Celwyn seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 8-0. The meeting was adjourned 10:29 a.m.

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy