



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

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Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; Kathleen Mosher, HP Patel, Michael Lusick, Larry Crosby, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Scott Patel
- Absent (Voting):** None
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Tiffany Thacker, Dodie Stephens, Mike Kryzanek, Penelope Whitman, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Marla Tambellini, Tina Porter, McKenzie Provost, Luisa Yen
- BC Finance:** Melissa Moore, Buncombe County/BCTDA Fiscal Agent  
Matt Evans, Buncombe County
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Chris Corl, City of Asheville – Harrah’s Cherokee Center – Asheville  
Allison Dains, Buncombe County Parks & Recreation  
Megan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association  
Robert Sponder, Parks Hospitality  
John Ellis, Prior TDA Board Member  
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media  
Roy Harris, Community Member  
Jason Sandford, Asheville.com  
Will Hoffman, Angie Wilhelm; Asheville Citizen Times  
Chase Davis, Mountain Xpress
- Online Attendees:** Mickey Poandl, Ali Wainright, Emily Crosby, Kathryn Dewey, Connie Holliday, Anna Harris, Emilie Soffe, Sha’Linda Pruitt, Maggie Gregg; Explore Asheville  
Timothy Love, Buncombe County  
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee  
Andrew Celwyn, Herbiary  
Chris Smith, Madison Davis; Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission  
Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast  
Grey Hallock, Kevin Beattie; WLOS

## **Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes**

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:01 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the September 27, 2023, BCTDA meeting were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- The September 2023 financial reports were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- \$6,140,415 of Tourism Product Development Fund investments were approved with a 9-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided her President & CEO's report.
- Explore Asheville leadership reviewed first quarter progress toward the strategic imperatives.
- Commissioner Terri Wells gave a brief report.
- Public comments were heard.
- With a 9-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:24 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 9:01 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.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Mosher made a motion to approve the September 27, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Putnam seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

## **September 2023 Financial Updates**

Melissa Moore, BCTDA fiscal agent, presented September 2023 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

There were no questions. HP Patel made a motion to approve the September 2023 financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

## **2023 Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Grant Cycle Update**

### **2023 TPDF Grant Cycle Overview**

Tiffany Thacker, director of grants, summarized the two-phase grant cycle. Thacker noted that \$7,980,884 was available to award. She recognized the TPDF volunteer committee members who were involved in thoroughly reviewing applications, visiting project sites, and making recommendations.

### **TPDF Committee's Capital Project Investment Recommendations**

Thacker gave a project-by-project overview of the three requests that the TPDF Committee recommended funding in this grant cycle: 1) phase two development of Enka Recreation Destination, 2) upgrades to Harrah's Cherokee Center – Asheville, and 3) modernization of the equine facility at the Western North Carolina Agricultural Center. The proposed project completion timelines were shared.

The committee's investment recommendations (outlined in the following chart) totaled \$6,140,415.

Applicant	Project	Amount Requested	Investment Recommendation
Buncombe County Parks & Recreation	Enka Recreation Destination - Phase II	\$6,000,000	\$4,054,415
City of Asheville	Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville Upgrades	\$2,000,000	\$1,586,000
Western NC Agricultural Center	Equine Facility Modernization	\$500,000	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$8,500,000</b>	<b>\$6,140,415</b>

Thacker and Isley answered all questions. The board openly discussed and shared opinions on long-term strategies for investing grant funds. It was clarified that: a nonprofit or government entity must apply to be considered and that the projects not recommended were not due to lack of available funds but due to qualifications and preparedness.

Crosby then motioned to approve the grant investment funding for each project as recommended by the Product Development Committee. Putnam seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0.

### **President & CEO Report**

Vic Isley presented September 2023 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years.

Isley listed festivals and events that Explore Asheville supported in October and November; she noted that the Festivals & Cultural Events 2024 grant cycle would close on Friday, October 27. She reminded the board that the Festivals & Cultural Events grant program is no longer supported through Earned Revenue and that those funds are now devoted to workforce development efforts.

Isley addressed a question about vacation rental inventory and said more comprehensive data would be shared on trends after the end of the calendar year.

### **Strategic Imperatives: Progress Report**

#### *First Quarter Review (July – September 2023 Highlights)*

Isley reminded the board that strategic imperatives were adopted to guide decisions and investments. She indicated that the shift to quarterly progress reports was based on feedback from board members.

Isley invited department heads to review initiatives from the first quarter of FY24 (July 2023 – September 2023) that were aligned with the strategic imperatives of Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth, Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel, Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences, Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit, and Running a Healthy & Effective Organization.

#### *Marketing, Content, and Public Relations – Q1 Initiatives*

Dodie Stephens, vice president of marketing, provided a recap of the marketing team's efforts to drive visitation to Black Mountain, to support Skyview Golf Tournament, to assist with continued recovery for arts and cultural institutions, and to position Asheville as a sustainably minded destination. Stephens also described how the team worked to generate demand using TV advertising, to earn noteworthy media coverage, and to boost social engagement through insights.

### Business Development – Q1 Initiatives

Michael Kryzanek, vice president of business development, explained the value of the group sales and services team members attending trade shows, hosting meeting planner familiarization tours, collaborating with the airport on air route development efforts, and partnering with the Economic Development Coalition to recruit specific types of business. Kryzanek also showcased new resources being utilized by the team (DIGIDECK custom proposals and the online gift bag guide). Kryzanek concluded by summarizing quarterly results and answered performance-related questions.

### Partnership & Destination Management – Q1 Initiatives

Penelope Whitman, vice president of partnership and destination management, reflected on the team's investment in local businesses through partner event activations and product purchases. She shared that FY23 Annual Report copies were available, gave a synopsis of the Annual Meeting, reiterated the significance of the McCormick Field grant, noted the accomplishment of the Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund Committee formation, and spoke about the efforts of the LGBTQIA+ working group. Whitman ended with stats about event grants and sponsorships and new partner recruitment.

Durden fielded feedback from the board. Isley said the next quarterly review would be in January 2024. The complete [Quarterly Highlights Report \(July - September 2023\)](#) is available on AshevilleCVB.com.

### Asheville City Council Update

Vice Mayor Kilgore was absent, so city-related business was not reported at this meeting.

### Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Wells reported on recent county-related business, including information about bonds, the Sheriff's report of a decline in crime, and the potential merger of county and city schools.

### Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

### Comments from the General Public

Roy Harris expressed thanks to the BCTDA and acknowledged Explore Asheville's prominence in the community. He shared his personal positive perspective about the organization and its efforts in bringing more diverse visitors to our community.

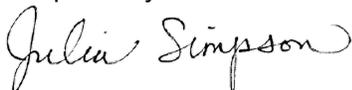
### Adjournment

Lusick made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Putnam seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried Crosby. The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](#).

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 29, 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