



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

Highland Brewing – Barrel Room | 12 Old Charlotte Highway

BCTDA FY25 Annual Planning Session Minutes

Friday, March 22, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; HP Patel, Kathleen Mosher, Lucious Wilson, Larry Crosby, Matthew Lehman, Elizabeth Putnam, Michael Lusick, Scott Patel
- Absent (Voting):** None
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore
Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Dodie Stephens, Mike Kryzanek, Penelope Whitman, Jennifer Kass-Green, Connie Holliday, Tiffany Thacker, Luisa Yen, Emilie Soffe, Nick Kepley, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Julia Simpson
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- Facilitator:** Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategy Group
- Presenters:** Travis Napper, Tourism Economics
Scott Dedman, Retired Housing Executive
Chris Davidson, MMGY Global
- Panelists:** Christy Greer, A-B Tech Student
Alucia Noonan, Grand Bohemian Hotel
Dawson Winchester, Hampton Inn & Suites
- TPDF Committee:** Ken Stamps (*partial*), Jim Muth, Michael Andry, Randy Claybrook, Scott Kerchner, David McCartney, Stephanie Moore
(*Partial session noted*)
- LIFT Committee:** Himanshu Karvir (*partial*), Laura Webb (*partial*), Barbara Benisch, Dr. Joseph Fox, Kyle Highberg, Amy Kelly
(*Partial session noted*)
- In-Person Attendees:** Felicia Sonmez, Blue Ridge Public Radio
John Ellis, Prior BCTDA Boar Member (*partial*)
Aboubacar Saibou, Cindy Weeks; Community Members (*partial*)
Zach Wallace, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce (*partial*)
(*Partial session noted*)
- Online Attendees:** Jay Curwen, Nantahala Outdoor Center/TPDF Committee (*partial*)
Kyle Highberg, Biltmore Farms/LIFT Committee (*partial*)
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group (*partial*)
Andrew Celwyn, Herbiary (*partial*)
(*Partial session noted*)

Executive Summary of Annual Planning Session Minutes

- Durden called to order the joint annual planning session of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 10:05 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Chris Cavanaugh and Vic Isley discussed parameters that impact tourism development authorities in North Carolina and the BCTDA.
- Travis Napper presented a travel and economic outlook for Asheville and Buncombe County.
- Scott Dedman offered perspectives on local housing supply and affordability.
- Chris Davidson reviewed key findings from the 2024 resident sentiment survey; group breakout discussion followed.
- A panel of young hospitality professionals talked about their career experiences in the industry.
- The annual planning session adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

Durden called to order the joint annual planning session of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 10:05 a.m. Durden thanked the Explore Asheville staff for the planning session preparations.

Durden said the session was being livestreamed. She noted that the agenda and relevant session 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.

Durden welcomed board members, present Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) and Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Committee members, Explore Asheville staff, presenters, and in-person and livestream guests from the public and media. Introductions were made around the room.

Setting the Table: The Role of a Tourism Development Authority in North Carolina

Chris Cavanaugh, president of Magellan Strategy Group, reviewed state legislation and guidelines that impact lodging tax usage in North Carolina. Cavanaugh informed the group of a recent North Carolina Court of Appeals ruling against Currituck County about permissible uses of occupancy tax dollars.

Vic Isley offered additional context specific to the BCTDA and its legislation. Isley also outlined the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) and Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund grant capabilities. Isley pointed out that to date municipal partners have been the primary beneficiaries of TPDF investments, with 79% going to government partner projects. She then spoke to the authority's future debt service capacity and the ability to continue being a significant investment partner in more legacy projects for the community.

A 15-minute break was taken, and the session resumed around 11:30 a.m. The livestream was paused during the break.

National, State, and Local Travel and Economic Outlook

Travis Napper, director of destination partnerships at Tourism Economics, delivered a market-specific forecast for Asheville and Buncombe County's travel and lodging sector and provided context through national and regional comparisons. Napper answered all questions.

Lunch Break

The group took a 30-minute lunch break, and the session resumed around 12:30 p.m. The livestream was paused during the lunch break.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Scott Dedman, retired housing executive and Asheville resident, provided background on the housing affordability in Asheville and Buncombe County. He then offered a comprehensive review of factors impacting housing supply and affordability. Dedman offered his conclusions on opportunities for improvement, using recommendations from *The Affordable City* to supplement his position. Dedman fielded comments and questions from the group. Hardcopies of the book references were made available.

A 15-minute break was taken, and the session resumed around 2:00 p.m. The livestream was paused during the break.

2024 Resident Perspectives on Tourism

Chris Davidson, executive vice president of insights and strategy at MMGY Global, provided background on the annual Resident Perspectives on Tourism survey. Davidson highlighted four takeaways: 1. positive sentiment about tourism grew; 2. some concerns about parking, housing supply, and the environment grew; 3. there are a range of perspectives in the community; 4. there is an opportunity to continue to educate residents. Davidson expanded upon each point with supporting data from the survey. Davidson answered all related questions. The full report is on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

There was group breakout discussion for 15 minutes; the livestream was paused. The session resumed around 2:50 p.m.

Nurturing and Growing Our Workforce

Three young travel and hospitality professionals were introduced as participants in a panel discussion: Dawson Winchester, assistant general manager of Hampton Inn & Suites; Alucia Noonan, housekeeping supervisor of Grand Bohemian Hotel; and Christy Greer, hospitality management student at A-B Tech Community College. Each one talked about their personal career experiences in the industry. They answered questions about their own paths and aspirations. They made a few suggestions about ways the BCTDA might engage students through its workforce development program.

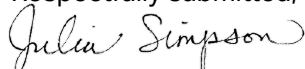
Wrap-Up & Adjourn

Crosby moved to adjourn the meeting, and Putnam seconded. With all in favor, the motion carried 9-0. The meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

The PowerPoint presentations and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be in-person on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy