

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
Friday, March 22, 2019

- Present (Voting):** Jim Muth, Chair; Gary Froeba, Vice Chair; Leah Ashburn, Andrew Celwyn, Chip Craig, Himanshu Karvir, John McKibbon, Tom Ruff
- Absent (Voting):** John Lockett
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Julie Mayfield
Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- CVB Staff:** Stephanie Brown, Marla Tambellini, Dianna Pierce, Pat Kappes, Glenn Cox, Jonna Sampson, Dodie Stephens, Sarah Kilgore
- Advertising Agency:** None
- Guests:** Richard Kort, McGuire, Wood & Bisette/BCTDA Legal Counsel
Bob McMurray, Black Mountain - Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce
Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
John Ellis, BCTDA Finance Committee
John Beatty, North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
Maria Pilos, Johnson Price Sprinkle, P.A.

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Muth called the joint meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 9:06 a.m.
- Minutes from the February 27, 2019 BCTDA regular meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The February 2019 financial statements were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- In her President's Report, Ms. Brown reviewed recent Explore Asheville and industry metrics and activities.
- Mr. Craig provided a finance committee report.
- Following a presentation by Ms. Brown related to financial trends and revenue projections, the board voted to set the revenue objective for FY 2019-20 at a three percent increase in revenue.

- An organizational name change for the YMI Cultural Center's TPDF contract was approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Ms. Kappes provided an update on the African-American Heritage Trail project.
- Ms. Pierce provided a Group Sales & Services departmental update.
- Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Stephens provided a Marketing & PR departmental update.
- An update from Asheville City Councilwoman Julie Mayfield was heard.
- The joint meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, adjourned at 11:50 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 9:06 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The visitors in attendance introduced themselves.

Chairman Muth thanked Mr. Froeba for his extraordinary hospitality in hosting the BCTDA's annual planning retreat yesterday at The Omni Grove Park Inn.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Celwyn made a motion to approve the February 27, 2019 regular meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Craig seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

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

Financial Reports

Ms. Lyvers reviewed the February 2019 financial statements.

Ms. Brown said shared insight on the Tourism Product Development Fund balance and answered questions related to the status of projects currently in progress, adding Ms. Kappes will provide a full project update at the April BCTDA meeting. Ms. Brown and Ms. Lyvers also answered questions related to Fund Balance categories, restrictions and totals.

Ms. Ashburn made a motion to approve the February 2019 financial statements as presented. Mr. Celwyn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

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

President's Report

Destination Dashboard

Ms. Brown shared a PowerPoint Presentation highlighting metrics from the February Destination Dashboard report. Ms. Tambellini and Ms. Pierce reviewed numbers from the marketing and sales departments and answered all related questions.

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

Staff Update

Ms. Brown said Web Manager Elizabeth White was recently promoted to Director of Web and Analytics. She added Hannah Dosa started this week as Hospitality Coordinator and Jennifer Kass-Green will join the team in April in the new position of Director of Finance.

CVB Staff Recap, Destination Dashboard & Quick List

The CVB Staff Recap, Destination Dashboard, Quick List, financial statements, board meeting minutes, agendas, and relevant research reports can be found on ExploreAshevilleCVB.com.

FY 2019-20 Budget Process

Finance Committee Report

As chairman of the BCTDA finance committee, Mr. Craig said he and members John Ellis and John Luckett met recently with Ms. Brown and started the process of planning for next year's budget, including the revenue objective and variables that affect the budget year-over-year. He added the committee will meet again to review the proposed budget prior to it being presented to the full BCTDA in May.

Financial Trends & Revenue Projections

Ms. Brown shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the process and general timeline followed to develop and present the next fiscal year's budget to the BCTDA. She said staff would like to receive budget guidance from the board to establish the revenue objective today, which is the percentage of increase or decrease that next year's budget will be predicated upon, so that staff has a base budget number to work with. Staff will then scope the program of work and prepare the draft budget, which the finance committee reviews and provides feedback on prior to being presented to the BCTDA in May. Following a 30-day public notice period, the budget is approved at the June meeting and goes into effect on July 1, 2019.

Ms. Brown reviewed the BCTDA's Financial Management Policy, last year's revenue objective, and economic outlook reports from Smith Travel Research. She then shared several types of data including lodging trends, supply update, and revenue increases by lodging type.

After reviewing several BCTDA business considerations, new initiatives and a revenue projection worksheet, Ms. Brown asked for input from board members related to the trends they are seeing in their businesses, adding their expertise and input is valuable in this process of establishing a revenue objective.

A discussion took place regarding industry trends and variables that can affect next year's budget, including Airbnb changes and regulations, election year challenges, having a new advertising agency on board, growth in Asheville Regional Airport flights and passenger numbers, weather, TPDF projects, rock slides, various signature sporting events and the addition of the Chow Chow culinary festival.

During the conversation, board members expressed that they were comfortable with setting next year's business objective at a three percent increase in revenue. When the discussion ended, Chairman Muth called for action.

Action to Establish Revenue Objective

Vice Chairman Froeba made a motion to set the BCTDA's revenue objective for FY 2019-20 at a three percent increase in occupancy tax revenue. Mr. Karvir seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 9-0. The CVB staff will develop the budget based on this directive.

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

TPDF Agreement Update – YMI Cultural Center

Ms. Kappes said the Eagle Market Streets Development Corp. was awarded a Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) grant in the amount of \$800,000 in 2018 for improvements to the YMI Cultural Center. The grantee has submitted a formal letter requesting that the organization's name on the grant be changed from Eagle Market Streets Development Corp. to the YMI Cultural Center. This constitutes the only change to the project. A copy of the letter was provided in the board books.

Mr. McKibbin made a motion to approve the organizational name change on the project from Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation to the YMI Cultural Center. Mr. Karvir seconded the motion. There was no discussion and with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

Update on African-American Heritage Project

Ms. Kappes shared a PowerPoint presentation which provided an update on the African-American Heritage Trail project. She said in 2018, the BCTDA voted to support the development of the African-American Heritage Trail and the vision includes the creation of new physical and digital assets to link key sites to showcase the unique history of the African-American community in the Asheville area. Ms. Kappes shared details related to goals, connected projects, community partnerships, the core team, development phases and a project kick-off event at the Creative Sector Summit on May 16-17, 2019.

A brief discussion took place centering on project objectives and partnership opportunities, with Ms. Kappes and Ms. Brown answering all related questions.

Upcoming Events

Ms. Kappes encouraged board members to attend the next CVB Partner Forum, entitled "What's New in 2019," scheduled at two different times on March 27, and the Tourism Week Summit at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel on Tuesday, May 14, from noon to 5:00 p.m.

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

Sales Update

Ms. Pierce shared a PowerPoint presentation centering on areas the Group Sales & Services department will be focusing on in FY 2019-20, including client connectivity, brand boosters, trade events and communications. She also reviewed signature sporting events successes and trade event highlights from the current fiscal year.

Ms. Pierce concluded her report by thanking the board for supporting the initiatives she presented at yesterday's retreat and stating next year's program of work will be similar to that of FY 2018-19. During and after the presentation, Ms. Pierce answered all related questions.

Chairman Muth thanked Ms. Pierce for the update.

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

Marketing Initiatives

Ms. Tambellini shared a PowerPoint presentation focusing on current and proposed marketing initiatives and activities, including: the promotion of Elizabeth White to Director of Web and Analytics, integrated marketing in FY 2019-20, an ExploreAsheville.com website refresh, new business intelligence tools, expansion of full-county neighborhood coverage, changes to social media platforms, and the Google DMO program.

Next, Ms. Stephens reviewed the PR Engagement calendar, upgrades to the online newsroom for media on ExploreAsheville.com, and the CVB team's support of Chow Chow, scheduled September 12-15, 2019. Ms. Stephens highlighted several recent PR successes, including the significant article in Rolling Stone, entitled "[Why Asheville, North Carolina, Is the New Must-Visit Music City.](#)"

Councilwoman Mayfield said that City of Asheville staff recently underwent a process to evaluate events and Chow Chow did not rank high enough on the list to get any in-kind support in the form of sanitation, police support, signage, etc., this year and possibly next. She added other festivals, including Shindig on the Green, will receive reduced support. A discussion took place on this with Ms. Brown and board members expressing concerns about the process, result, and the impact the lack of support will have on these events.

Councilwoman Mayfield said she will send the ranking criteria to Ms. Brown. In response to Vice Chairman Froeba's suggestion to have a member of the BCTDA board appointed to the city's committee that evaluates event funding in the future, as the BCTDA provides significant funding to many local events, Councilwoman Mayfield said she will submit that request.

When the discussion ended, Ms. Stephens concluded her report by highlighting elements related to the Tourism Builds Community message using value-added credits through the Asheville Citizen-Times/Gannett.

Ms. Tambellini commended Ms. Stephens and the PR team for their efforts.

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

Nominating Committee

Chairman Muth said he will be reaching out to board members to establish a nominating committee to make recommendations for a BCTDA chair and vice chair succession plan.

Asheville City Council Update

Councilwoman Mayfield reported on city-related business, including an agreement with ABYSA related to fixing and the future management of the J.B. Lewis Soccer Complex and new hotel proposals that will come before Asheville City Council in the coming months.

Chairman Muth thanked Councilwoman Mayfield for the update.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Belcher had left the meeting due to scheduling conflict, therefore, a Buncombe County Commission update was not provided at this meeting.

Miscellaneous Business

There was no miscellaneous business shared at this meeting.

Comments from the General Public

There were no comments from the General Public made at this meeting.

Adjournment

Chairman Muth thanked everyone for their participation in yesterday's annual planning retreat and today's meeting, and adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m. The BCTDA will next meet on Wednesday, April 24, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., in the Board Room of the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager