

Explore ASHEVILLE

Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

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

Via Zoom Webinar due to the COVID-19 Pandemic/State of Emergency

Virtual Special Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 15, 2020

- Present (Voting):** Himanshu Karvir, Chair; Gary Froeba, Vice Chair; Leah Ashburn, Brenda Durden, John Lockett, John McKibbon, Kathleen Mosher, James Poole
- Absent (Voting):** Andrew Celwyn
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville City Councilmember Julie Mayfield
Buncombe County Commissioner Joe Belcher
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- CVB Staff:** Chris Cavanaugh, Jonna Sampson, Daniel Bradley
- Future CVB Staff:** Victoria Isley, Incoming Explore Asheville President & CEO
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
- Online Attendees:** Carli Adams, Hannah Dosa, Josh Jones, Pat Kappes, Sarah Kilgore, Sarah Lowery, Kathi Petersen, Dianna Pierce, Glenn Ramey, Charlie Reed, Dodie Stephens, Jason Tarr, Landis Taylor, Audrey Wells, Nicole Will; Explore Asheville Staff
Don Warn, Buncombe County Finance
Demp Bradford, Asheville-Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Jim Muth, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Jane Anderson, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
Ashley Keetle, 360i
John Ellis, Past BCTDA Board Member
Bob Michel, Asheville Homestay Network
John Boyle, Asheville Citizen-Times
Daniel Walton, Mountain Xpress
Jason Sandford, Ashvegas
Sunshine Request

Additional tourism industry partners registered in advance and attended the online meeting.

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Karvir called the virtual joint special meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 11:01 a.m.
- Vice Chairman Froeba reviewed the CEO search process and timeline.

- Vice Chairman Froeba announced Victoria “Vic” Isley was selected by the search committee to become Explore Asheville’s new President & CEO. He shared information about Ms. Isley’s background.
- Chairman Karvir recognized and extended his gratitude to the members of the CEO search committee.
- In an 8-0 vote, Victoria Isley was appointed to the position of President and CEO of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, d/b/a Explore Asheville, and the BCTDA chair was authorized to execute an employment agreement consistent with the terms sheet provided.
- Ms. Isley thanked the board for their confidence in appointing her to the position and expressed her excitement in joining the team. Board members welcomed her to the position and Asheville.
- With an 8-0 vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Call of the Joint BCTDA Special Meeting to Order

Chairman Karvir called the virtual joint special meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, to order at 11:01 a.m. He welcomed board members and online attendees.

Board Member Roll Call: Board members responded as Chairman Karvir called roll verifying all BCTDA members were virtually in attendance, except for Mr. Celwyn, who was absent from the meeting.

Hiring of the new Explore Asheville President & CEO

CEO Search Timeline

Vice Chairman Froeba reviewed the CEO search timeline and process:

- April: Explore Asheville President & CEO Stephanie Brown announced her resignation, effective June 30, 2020.
- May: The BCTDA contracted with SearchWide Global, a firm with expertise in recruiting tourism industry executives, to coordinate a nationwide CEO search.
- June: The BCTDA appointed a 10-member CEO search committee consisting of industry and business leaders and elected officials; SearchWide Global hosted over 100 stakeholder interviews; significant interest in the position was received.
- July: Interim Executive Chris Cavanaugh began on July 1; the position overview was finalized; preliminary candidate vetting took place.
- August: The search committee narrowed the field to 12 candidates; vetting continued.
- September: In-person interviews were held with six candidates; three candidates returned to Asheville for final interviews and presentations; the search committee voted to select a new CEO from the three finalists.
- October: A special board meeting was scheduled to officially hire the new CEO.

Vice Chairman Froeba thanked Mr. Cavanaugh and the Explore Asheville team for their help with search logistics and for keeping the momentum going during the transition.

New CEO: Victoria “Vic” Isley

Vice Chairman Froeba announced Victoria “Vic” Isley was unanimously selected as the new CEO by the search committee and shared the following information regarding her background:

- Vic Isley graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.S. in business administration/marketing.
- She began her career in tourism in the mid-1990s at the Durham CVB as the director of marketing and communications.
- Ms. Isley held senior executive-level positions at the Tampa Bay CVB and Destination DC in Washington, DC.
- She was the former COO at Destination Marketing Association International (the national trade association of DMOs/CVBs, now called Destinations International), and was executive director of the DMAI Foundation.
- Ms. Isley currently serves as chief sales and marketing officer for the Bermuda Tourism Authority, overseeing a \$25 million budget and staff of 19 in the New York City office.

Gratitude to the Search Committee

On behalf of the BCTDA board and the industry, Chairman Karvir thanked Vice Chairman Froeba for his leadership in serving as chair of the CEO search committee and all of the members who gave their time and input during the process. He recognized and thanked the committee members:

Gary Froeba (Chair) | BCTDA Vice Chair and Managing Director of The Omni Grove Park Inn
Himanshu Karvir | BCTDA Chair and President and CEO of Virtelle Hospitality
Jane Anderson | Executive Director of the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association
Joe Belcher | Buncombe County Commissioner and BCTDA ex-officio member
Kit Cramer | President & CEO of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
John Ellis | Retired Managing Director of the Diana Wortham Theatre and past BCTDA member
Julie Mayfield | Asheville City Councilmember and BCTDA ex-officio member
John McKibbon | Chairman of McKibbon Hospitality and BCTDA member
Kathleen Mosher | Vice President of Communications at Biltmore and BCTDA member
Jim Muth | Executive Director of the Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association and past BCTDA chair

Chairman Karvir also thanked Mr. Cavanaugh for stepping in and providing leadership during the transition.

Action to Hire the President & CEO

Vice Chairman Froeba made a motion to appoint Victoria Isley to the position of President and CEO of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, d/b/a Explore Asheville, pursuant to an employment agreement consistent with the terms of the employment term sheet provided and approval for the Chairman of the Board to execute such an agreement. Mr. McKibbon seconded the vote. There was no discussion and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 8-0.

Chairman Karvir was the first to officially welcome Ms. Isley to her new role and invited her to say a few words.

Words from the new CEO

Ms. Isley thanked board members for their confidence and the opportunity to be the next President & CEO of Explore Asheville. She said during this critical time, she is delighted and honored to play a role in Asheville's recovery and the balanced growth of Buncombe County tourism into the future. Ms. Isley said that having grown up in North Carolina and starting her career in destination marketing in the state, she has long-admired Asheville and is excited to return to the state and become part of this important and diverse community.

Vice Chairman Froeba said Ms. Isley will officially start as President and CEO on December 1, 2020. Several board members welcomed her to the position and expressed their excitement in having her become part of Team Asheville.

Adjournment

With no further business, Mr. McKibbon moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Lockett seconded the motion. A vote was taken and with all in favor via a roll call vote, the motion carried 8-0 and the meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m. The BCTDA will next meet on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonna Sampson, Executive Operations Manager