



July 26, 2017

To: BCTDA
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report

June was quite a month! The CVB team officially became Explore Asheville, an independent non-profit controlled by the BCTDA. We wrapped up a successful fiscal year and adopted a budget for the next year. And, we moved out of the Chamber and (with a temporary interruption) into a wonderful new building with affiliated partners AIR and the Sports Commission.

Lodging sales through May were up 13.5 percent. According to Smith Travel Research, fiscal year hotel occupancy ended down .8 percent with supply up 4.6 percent and demand up 3.6 percent. A new report from AirDNA illuminated the scale of Airbnb in Buncombe County, reporting 368,910 room nights sold on this single platform – that's 16 percent of total combined demand.

The sales team ended the year very strong with 74,497 rooms booked, an increase of 14.7 percent over prior year, with 376 leads turned definite and estimated revenue of \$17.5 million (up 26%). The team distributed 787 leads to hotel partners and completed 11,895 person-to-person contacts.

The marketing team had another amazing year that was punctuated by earning Lonely Planet's designation of #1 Best US Destination. They placed 786 significant stories through 879 media touchpoints. Their work reached 148 million in print and broadcast, and 4.8 billion online. Several months of double-digit website growth posted a year-end 4.3 million visitors to ExploreAsheville.com. The team generated a whopping 4.9 million video views.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- The media relations team hosted five influencers and completed 57 touchpoints.
- A communications strategy was developed for the relocation.
- A sales mission to Chicago included a client event at Rivinia Festival, plus sales calls and a presentation to BCD Meetings & Incentives. The trip has already produced two RFPs.

- Staff exhibited at MPI World Education Conference and conducted 18 30-minute appointments.
- Staff attended IPW in DC and met with 42 international tour operators.
- The TPDF Committee invited four of eight applicants to participate in Phase II.
- A Tourism Partner Forum attracted 52 for an “Asheville Visitor Research Update.”

JUNE CVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During June, the sales team posted 929 personal contacts (up 38%). June sales activities generated 62 sales leads (flat) and 10 convention bookings (down 52%), representing 1,789 rooms (down 43%). Completing all 12 months of the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down 4 percent and room nights represented are up 15 percent.
- CVB leads generated 49 group events in June (up 9%), with revenue of \$822,211 (down 50%). The services team assisted 57 groups (up 30%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 24,322 visitors (up 8%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,171 visitors (up 4%).
- The PR team landed 41 significant placements in May (down 23%), with 57 media touchpoints (up 58%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$605,877 with reach of over 19.5 million. Online placements added \$356,769 in value and reach of nearly 348 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 395,212 visits (up 16%), including 245,339 to the mobile site (up 15%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 1,882 (down 58%) and video views totaled 119,808 (down 50%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 100 room nights (up 39%) with total room revenue of \$16,922 (up 47%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$31,089,636 in May, up 11.2 percent. Eleven months into the fiscal year, YTD 2016-17 sales are up 13.5 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 80.7 percent during June (down 1.2%). The average daily room rate was \$155.58 (up 3.8%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$125.58 (up 2.6%). Room demand increased 1.6 percent with 175,051 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 17.6 percent to total 79,671 in May.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: Staff worked with the agency to finalize elements of the media plan and to tweak creative for the August/September campaign. The Matador Travel Network team edited a series of Asheville videos that will be launched this summer as part of a paid partnership. One hero, or longer form video, will be complemented by 8 video shorts ranging from 30 to 45 seconds each. The videos will be rolled out starting at the end of July and continuing through August. The spring campaign wound down in mid-June. Engagement rates for the digital portion of the campaign increased significantly over last year and the effort drove approximately 240,000 visits to the site over four months. Bounce rate improved by 20 percent and page visits increased from 1.28 to 1.74 while average time on site improved by 29 seconds. The Matador Travel Network team edited a series of Asheville videos that will be launched this summer as part of a paid partnership.

Paid search efforts: Year over year, Google paid search click-through rate has improved 25 percent and site sessions are up 32 percent. All told, Google and Bing paid search drove more than 57,000 site visits. The term "What to do in Asheville, North Carolina" is the highest performing keyword phrase, but terms around the solar eclipse continue to rank very high. A new brand campaign added in April is also performing extremely well, generating nearly 500 Travel Guide requests, more than 100 new e-newsletter subscribers, 1,500 partner referrals and 282 "Book Now" clicks.

General Media Relations: The PR team was in a heavy logistics mode in June curating the site visits of five high-profile digital influencers, as well as a prominent music blogger. All six of these visits are part of larger campaigns that the team is executing. The month also presented the team with a significant number of media inquiries and site visit requests. Notably, June ushered in a wave of media outreach focused on the August solar eclipse. In total, the team logged 57 touchpoints and supported 16 media on the ground in Asheville. High profile media support included *Raw Travel* (television show), *Thrillist*, *Beer Connoisseur*, *Charlotte Observer*, *Road Trip Masters* (on *Discovery's Destination America* channel), *Wine Enthusiast*, *Connect* (meetings, conventions and group market), *Smarter Travel*, *Travel Chanel* and *Our State*. Asheville imagery and assistance was also provided to *USA TODAY's* 'Best Years' magazine, *U.S. News & World Report*, as well as *Frederick*, *DallasChild* and *Fun After Fifty* magazines.

Digital Influencer Campaigns

The PR team created detailed itineraries for each of the five influencer visits and connected with each influencer while they were in Asheville. The influencers' itineraries included connection points with over 30 tourism partners. Influencers included:

Influencer/Site	Audience Reach	Focus in Asheville
Divergent Travelers	260.3k	Outdoor Adventure
Adventurous Kate	210.5k	Culture/Music/Wellness
Anna Everywhere	186k	Destination Overview
Expert Vagabond	606k	Destination Overview
Travel Freak	140.4k	Outdoors & Culture

Significant Placements

- *Wine Enthusiast* – “Don’t Underestimate Asheville’s Wine and Food Scene”
- *A&E* – “Scraps Cooking Travel”
- *BuzzFeed* – “12 of the Most Underrated Food Cities in America”
- *CNBC.com* – “The 25 Best Places to Visit in the U.S.”
- *CNN Travel* – “Adult Summer Vacations, Surfing, Falconry and Other Activities”
- *Out Traveler* – “Nashville to Asheville”
- *CraftBeer.com* – “12 Brewery Music Venues You Can Visit in the South”
- *The Sun (Fabulous Magazine)* – “Travel to America’s Asheville (AKA the Beer City) for Craft Breweries, Ziplines and a Chocolate Lounge”
- *The Scottish Sun* – “Go, North Carolina”
- *POPSUGAR.com* – “Best Things to Do in Asheville”
- *Zagat.com* – “14 Reasons to Drive to Asheville”
- *U.S. News & World Report* – “The 2017-18 Best Vacations in the World”
- *USA TODAY* – “50 States: 50 Summer Food Festivals” and “2017 Beer Festivals and Events”
- *Lifestyles After 50* – “Asheville, Mountains of Fun”
- *Business Insider* – “U.S. Roads to Drive Before You Die”
- *TrailBlazer* – “Welcome to YouTopia, Asheville”
- *TrailBlazer* – “Steep Canyon Rangers”
- *Smart Meetings Magazine* – “Asheville Emerges as a Cosmopolitan City”
- *SmarterTravel.com* – “10 Best Bachelorette Party Destinations (That Aren’t Las Vegas)”
- *Thrillist.com* – “Best Bachelor Party Destination Cities”
- *Thrillist.com* – “Best Beers for Summer 2017”
- *PasteMagazine.com* – “Haute Historic Hotels”
- *Room5.Trivago.com* – “10 Under the ‘Gaydar’ LGBTQ Cities”
- *Green Global Travel* – “Top 10 Things to Do in Asheville for Nature Lovers”
- *Plate Magazine* – “Band of Brewers”
- *Resonance* – “America’s Best Cities Revealed”
- *Prates’ Living* – “How to Plan Your Next Getaway to Asheville”
- *Travelroads.com* – “Asheville’s Vibrant and Eclectic River Arts District”
- *Travelroads.com* – “Celebrating Beer City, USA”
- *Adventurous Kate* (Digital Influencer) – “14 Reasons Why I’m Smitten With Asheville”
- *A Music Blog, Yea?* (Music Writer) – “I’m Heading to Asheville, North Carolina! Follow My Adventures!”

Google Trekker: While the PR team continued to manage the Google Trekker effort in June, securing permits and handling the logistics, the Content team helped with a nice social boost. To kick off the rollout of the Trekker project, Jason created two videos for social media—the first a “teaser” video of the trekker equipment being unboxed, and the second an explainer-type video describing the project and promoting the 360-degree content as a new way to plan your Asheville trip. The explainer video garnered more than 13,000 views on Facebook in the first few weeks. The team wrapped up collection of the remainder of the planned treks, accommodating for weather and schedule delays. In total, 19 sites were collected ranging from under-the-radar urban POIs to iconic waterfall trails and the highest peak in the East, Mt Mitchell. Google estimates that it will take roughly six months for them to process and upload the imagery, at which time the team will launch and new content via Explore Asheville channels and an integrated content and communications push. Timelines estimate: Feb-March 2018.

Music Initiative: The content team moved forward with shooting the long-planned Music Sizzle video. The final version will be rolled out this summer. As part of the ongoing PR execution of the music destination campaign, the team hosted Alicia Atout of the award-winning music website *A Music Blog, Yea?* in June. Alicia’s itinerary was a joint effort between the Asheville CVB PR team and local agency Mason Jar Media. Alicia’s itinerary hit a broad spectrum of Asheville’s music scene, including a tour at Echo Mountain Studios, the Band & Beer LaZoom Tour, the All Go West festival and, a traditional instrument making exhibit at the Smith McDowell House. While in Asheville, Alicia conducted interviews with local musicians, festival organizers and an ACME representative. Next up, the team will host an American Songwriter out of Nashville.

Content Development Projects: The content team was busy with several projects in June. In addition to the music video, Cat Kessler moved forward with production on other video projects, including a viral-style explainer video about the South Slope. Cat worked with Brooke and photographer Emily Chaplin to create new photography featuring local galleries, greenways, breweries, retail and nightlife. Cat also worked with a part-time intern to upload digital photo and video assets to new photo organization platform Libris, and they began the process of tagging image files for easy access. Jason Tarr updated the always-popular “Top Breakfast Spots” content by conducting a new Facebook poll and compiling the results. He also made significant improvements to several summer-related stories and did a detailed audit and update of the Foodtopian profile content. The team sent out the June e-newsletter from new email platform MailChimp, running an A/B test to determine the best template for the email creative. The test results were inconclusive, but the overall open rate exceeded recent averages.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of June, seven new pieces of editorial content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: a story featuring the Grove Arcade, a round-up of Fourth of July-related events and five weekend event round-ups.

- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 46,013 new page views, followed by the new-and-improved Top 8 Breakfast Spots post, which received 10,362 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- June saw 1,882 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 256,544.
- There were 48 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of June.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a share of Spoon University's "20 Restaurants in Asheville to Add to Your Bucket List." It has reached 133,036 people organically, generating 4,122 total reactions, and 675 comments.
- The most popular paid post this month was also the announcement of the top breakfast spots in Asheville (following our Facebook poll). It reached 88,760 users in total (58,689 of those organically), generating 2,107 total reactions, 228 comments and 374 shares.
- The most engaging post this month was the Spoon University post. It engaged 6.8% of the 133,036 users reached.

Foodtopia page

- June saw 683 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,462 likes.
- There were 13 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of June.
- The most popular post — the Foodtopia profile on Oscar Wong of Highland Brewing — reached 28,803 people (1,334 organically), generating 1,284 reactions, 43 comments and 117 shares.

Video:

- There were 11,371 new organic YouTube views in June. The most popular video by organic views this month was Return Again, which received 2,335 non-paid views. The Spirit of Asheville video came in second with 1,952 new views.
- The team broadcast two new Facebook Live videos in June, featuring sunset at Bearwallow Mountain and the Friday night Drum Circle. Those three videos have received more than 30,000 views to date.
- Across all of our video platforms, there were 119,808 views.
- Asheville video content has received 4.9 million views since July 1, 2016 (fiscal YTD).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,531. Foodtopia accounts for 1,369 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,162.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 33,717 followers.
- There were 42 new posts in June. The most popular was a sunrise at Wiseman's View. It received 2,046 engagements (likes and comments).
- Jason created four new Instagram Stories in June, featuring the Rhododendron blooms, LaZoom Band and Brew Tour, the Asheville Visitor Center and the Asheville Drum Circle. The Instagram stories averaged more than 4,000 views on the first slide and, on average, retained more than 50 percent of viewers through the final slide. He also began using the "swipe up for more information" feature on Instagram stories, which allows users to swipe up and be taken directly to a page on ExploreAsheville.com.

Twitter:

- Across all our accounts (no longer including AshevilleDeals and FallColorHunter) we have a total of 28,502 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,422 followers. We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

Asheville Traveler E-newsletter:

- Subscribers: We have 118,937 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In June, we sent out our first monthly e-newsletter on the MailChimp platform. The newsletter was sent to 120,445 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 17.4 percent and a click-through rate of 3.3 percent.

Transition Communications: In preparation for the transition, Marla Tambellini and Dodie Stephens worked on a communications strategy that addresses the organizational change and the move. As part of the effort, Elizabeth White helped design and develop new organizational logos to be used online and as part of updated collateral. This included business cards, letterhead, nametags, notecards and an email signature.

ExploreAsheville.com: In June, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 15.9 percent year-over-year, which includes a 19.7 percent increase in organic user sessions, a 349.9 percent increase in social referral sessions, and a 50.3 percent increase in paid search user sessions. Mobile visits in June increased by 17.82 percent year over year. Due to an increased investment in the spring campaign, web sessions from display advertising increased 79.5 percent year over year. Page views for the lodging pages increased 29.6 percent year over year in June.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO

In June, the CVB kicked off Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) Engagement with Simpleview. The marketing team worked to provide a list of goals as part of an onboarding questionnaire process. Simpleview analysts will be spending the next two months evaluating our site based on organization priorities and developing a series of tests with the intent of improving conversions such as booking engine interactions, clicks to lodging pages and eNewsletter signups. The first test involved tweaks to the

booking widget in order to increase the number of searches to the booking engine. Results will be available soon. Elizabeth and Cat also worked with Hannah Mullenbach, SEO Analyst, toward Search Engine Optimization improvements in the month of June.

- The organic traffic was up by 20 percent year over year
- The stories section is up by 160 percent year over year and the top performing posts were: 50 Things to Do in Asheville and Top 8 Breakfasts Spots in Asheville
- The event details section is up by 171 percent year over year. The changes resulted in an uptick in event details. Google also has been starting to put our client's event details in their events carousel on mobile devices:
<https://www.screencast.com/t/gDorongif>
- The Solar Eclipse brought in 970 organic visits for June, 1.52 pages/visit & 00:01:30 duration
- Of the 2,690 Travel Guide form completions, 50 percent were the result of organic traffic

Online Reservations: There were 64 orders for 100 room nights in June with a total of \$16,922 in booking revenue and \$765 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in June were North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Ohio and Pennsylvania. *Note: there is not a way in aRes to pull *accurate* room night by State excluding tickets (inflated due to Peak Perks) and cancellations.

June 2017	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$16,922	\$11,488	47.3%	\$165,284	\$159,998	3.3%
Commission	\$765	\$452	69.2%	\$7,191	\$7,125	0.9%
Orders	64	42	52.4%	749	661	13.3%
Room Nights	100	72	38.9%	1,034	1,078	-4.1%

*Room Nights/Orders no longer reflect cancellations, as previously reported.

Visitor Guide: Planning continues for the new Visitor Guide. Brooke Ptaszek has partnered with Katie Knorovsky, local managing editor and Bill Hutliz with SagaCity team to develop a story line up for the upcoming 2018 guide. There will be 50 percent more content in the 2018 guide than in previous guides.

Travel Guide Requests

There were 2,578 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in May, an 11 percent decrease from last May. Year to date, there are 23,962 travel guide requests, a 10 percent decrease from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are: Tampa/St. Pete, New York, Atlanta, Washington D.C., and Orlando. Online travel guide requests increased by 4 percent from last May with 286 unique browsers. Page views were down 3 percent with a total of 5,196. The average time spent viewing was 2.46 minutes, a 2 percent decrease from last May. There were 32 clicks on links, an 11 percent decrease from last May.

Top 5 DMAs for May 2017	# of Guides Requested	FY 2016-2017 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
Tampa, St. Pete	139	New York	1072
New York	132	Tampa, St. Pete	939
Atlanta	124	Atlanta	913
Washington, DC	124	Washington, DC	793
Orlando	109	Orlando	777

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 10 definite group bookings in June as compared to 21 the prior year. Of these group bookings, nine were meetings & conventions and one was a wedding, representing 1,789 room nights distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in June. Leads were down 52.4% and rooms represented by those leads were down 43% over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$495,314, a 51 percent decrease from the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$822,211, a 50 percent decrease from the prior year. In 2016, seven groups exceeded \$100,000 in actualized revenue as compared to one group in 2017. Person-to-person outreach totaled 929 contacts, a 38 percent increase over last year. Indirect outreach totaled 10,332 contacts, a 25 percent increase over the prior year.

Sales Calls/Missions: Shawn Boone hosted a client event at Ravinia Festival in Chicago with six planners/guests attending. Additionally, eight sales calls were completed, including a presentation to four associates with BCD Meetings & Incentives, one of the top five travel companies in the U.S. Two immediate RRFs totaling 1205 room night resulted from the visit. Carla McGlynn and Shawn traveled to Las Vegas to attend Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress (WEC). Eighteen 30-minute one-on-one appointments were conducted. Additionally, the CVB staffed an exhibit throughout the conference. An additional 32 planners stopped by to express interest in Asheville. Staff attended education events, evening receptions and other networking opportunities throughout WEC. Four RFPs were received from the conference totaling over 2,000 room nights.

Beth McKinney is out on maternity leave through early September, giving birth to a little girl. Leann Swims is handling motorcoach/reunions and Joseph Weber is handling wedding related responsibilities.

Carla attended Financial & Insurance Conference Planners (FICP) Education Forum in Bluffton, SC. More than 200 national level planners attended representing organizations like John Hancock Financial Services, Philadelphia Insurance Companies, Modern Woodmen of America and AIG. Carla attended the educational forums and networking opportunities. The CVB partnered with Reed Expositions to host the Chuck Fazio

HeadShot Lounge during International Business Travel Managers America (IBTM) meeting in Hollywood, Florida. IBTM America unites travel industry suppliers with qualified meeting and events planners. As the sponsor, the CVB received logo recognition on the event website and show signage, full credit for the Chuck Fazio HeadShot Lounge, social media marketing and pre-conference email marketing. Placement of the Lounge was in the central hub. Tina Porter worked the Lounge, speaking to approximately 90 planners and attended educational sessions and networking events.

Dianna Pierce attended International Pow Wow in Washington DC. More than 70 countries were represented at IPW. Staff met with approximately 42 international tour operators, receptive and media. Dianna participated in American Bus Association's and National Geographic Society's invitation only networking events. The CVB and Biltmore worked in the NC Division of Tourism's booth, anchored in the Travel South International pod.

A total of 33 wedding guides were downloaded this month, as compared to 18 in June 2016.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: Four site visits were hosted this month including: 2018 Friendship Force International – 96 room nights; 2018 Society of Gynecologic Surgeons – 36 room nights; 2018 NC Association of ABC Boards – 250 rooms for March and 820 rooms for July; a 2018 Trans Orbit USA – FIT program. Confirmed July groups include: 2019 Tag and Label Manufacturing Institute – 335 room nights; 2017 NC School Public Relations – 220 room nights; 2017 Affinity Health care – 30 room nights; 2019 Back Country Horsemen of America – 144 room nights; 2018 WNC Health Network – 300 room nights; 2017 National Association of Homebuilders – 94 room nights; 2017 Husqvarna – 230 room nights, among others.

Group Sales Communications:

- Finalized editorial content for the meetings section of EA.com with stories about hotel growth and expanding options for meeting planners and a round-up of unique off-site venues added.
- New concepts for a meetings trade show display was reviewed. HaveMoreFunOnUs.com URL was purchased. Work on two new promo videos; a Have More Fun on Us Incentive Program sizzle and a testimonial video for the 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience continued.

Media:

- Explore Asheville staff worked with a senior editor at Connect Faith to research faith-based group travel options
- Voting began for Northstar Meetings Group's Stella Awards, recognizing excellence in the meetings industry. Explore Asheville CVB is in the running for Best CVB in the Southeast Region.

Mass Communications:

- An e-newsletter was sent to 10,242 meeting planner clients. Open Rate: 15 percent, Click Through Rate: 20 percent.
- A follow-up email was sent to 90 meeting planners met at IBTM America. Open Rate: 52 percent, Click Through Rate: 17 percent.

Convention Servicing:

- A new version of a promotional rack card encouraging meeting attendance to an Asheville meeting was printed.

Departmental Activities: The ACVB hosted the quarterly DOS meeting. Staff conducted training with SDR to update them on meeting venues in Asheville. SDR provides auxiliary prospecting and appointment setting for the CVB. Staff attended the NC Sports Association annual meeting; toured UNC Asheville's meeting/event space; attended WomanUp networking event; established AAA webinar training dates for next fiscal year. In addition, Carli Adams discussed group activity options and explained how to connect meeting planners with Navitat, Franny's Farm and The Conundrum.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts: The TPDF committee met on June 21 to discuss Phase I submissions and determined that four of the eight submissions would be invited to participate in Phase II. Submissions that will move through the next stage of the application process include Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, the Leaf Cultural Arts Center in downtown Asheville, a project by the Organic Growers School and a Haywood Street Fresco at the Haywood Street Congregation. All applicants were notified on the status of their application on June 28. Phase II applications are due August 30. Further evaluation, presentations of the project and visits to the sites will take place by the TPDF Committee this fall, prior to making final recommendations to BCTDA in October.

The City of Asheville submitted a request to amend the scope of its Riverfront Redevelopment project, due to rising construction costs. City staff presented the change in scope to the TPDF committee at its June 21 meeting, and to the BCTDA at the June 28 board meeting. The committee recommended the change in scope, and the BCTDA approved the request to amend its current set of project contracts, totaling \$3.5 million.

Update on Major Works Projects: TPDF Committee Chair Robert Foster presented a recommendation on the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project at the BCTDA's board meeting on June 28. The BCTDA voted unanimously to support the Town of Woodfin and Buncombe County government with a \$2.25 million TPDF award. The project is a \$13.9 million recreational infrastructure project that will add five miles of new greenway trails, the new Silverline Park on the French Broad River, and the in-stream Whitewater Wave feature along with other park updates and improvements. The committee directed

staff to analyze options for structuring the contract and determined to move forward with a recommendation to fund the project this year in one contract. Pat will work with the applicant to finalize the contract.

TPDF Project Ceremonies: The City of Asheville is hosting a grand opening at the new 14 Riverside Drive Arts & Culture Center on July 21 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. The BCTDA funded construction of the center as part of the Riverside Development projects, and will be recognized at the ceremony.

The Asheville Community Theatre is hosting a donor recognition ceremony on August 8, and will recognize the BCTDA with a check presentation.

Partner Engagement: “Asheville Visitor Research Update” Partner Forum – June 22

Fifty-two partners attended the June forum. Stephanie Brown presented the new Asheville visitor stat reports, including Visitor Profile, Economic Impact, and the Assessment of Impacts on Buncombe County. A postcard highlighting key economic impact stats was distributed, and reports are available in the Research section on AshevilleCVB.com.

2017 BCTDA Annual Meeting – September 13: Plans for the annual meeting are underway. The event, generously hosted by the Omni Grove Park Inn, will be held in Omni’s Country Club from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., and will include a report of the past year, a look ahead as a new independent organization, followed by a networking social.

Projects: Brit created ten new partner accounts in June – LOOM Imports, Ascend Adventure Wellness, Asheville Premier Transportation, Tangogypsies, FOX-N-OTTER Adventure Puzzle Rooms, Whistle Hop Brewing Company, Barbara’s Ceremonies, Well Played Board Game Café, Land and Lore Ecotours, and Hampton Inn and Suites Asheville – Biltmore Village. Brit and Pat continue to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing as well as service the partners who request listings.

Acting as the Buncombe County liaison to VisitNC, Brit began updating the accommodations and attractions listings for VisitNC’s annual travel guide through the VisitNC Extranet.

Pat & Brit, with creative input from Carli and Joe, developed a postcard communication about the office relocation. Additional materials including web content, Facebook posts, and information sheets for the both the visitor center staff and walk-ins are in development.

Partner Outreach: The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Open Door session on June 9 with three partners attending from Enter the Conundrum and Hillman Beer. The session included a presentation on the structure of the CVB and provided an orientation on the CVB’s programs of work, highlighting ways to connect and best utilize the free marketing services.

Community Outreach: Pat continues to attend community meetings for the South Slope Neighborhood Association to assist with their branding efforts, and meets monthly with City of Asheville's Dana Frankel. She also attended Leadership Asheville's Breakfast Buzz meeting and the West Asheville Business Association's Quarterly meeting.

Pat coordinated details with the United Way on the upcoming industry's back-to-school backpack drive this summer. The drive will take place from July 24 to August 4. Partners can drop off donations at the Explore Asheville office or make an online donation. As part of the CVB Service Day efforts, staff will be holding a Backpack Packing event on Thursday, August 17, at 3:00 p.m. where we hope to break last year's record and help 2,000 students walk into their first day of school fully prepared.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Organizational and Administrative Transitioning: Once again, June was a busy month with more of a focus on relocating and less on employee benefits. Glenn met with Martin Lewis and Brad Edwards, of Edwards Equipment, to discuss the external and internal security cameras and card readers for the doors. Martin was very supportive in providing us with readers for all doors in addition to adequate camera coverage both outside and inside the new building. Regular meetings most weeks with County IT occurred to cover our questions, making sure we are on track and fully prepared to transition all emails, calendars, contacts, and document files into the Cloud via Office 365.

On June 9, all emails, calendars and contacts were transferred from the Chamber server to the Cloud based Office 365. Overall, the move was a success. On June 16, the first data transfer was attempted. This try was unsuccessful due to download interruptions and the size of the data source. Ultimately, the next attempt was pushed into July.

All appliances were ordered from FRS and Best Buy, meeting ADA specifications where required. Finally, numerous emails and meetings related to the building's physical space and needs, including the aforementioned appliances, laminates for the lectern, paint colors, breakroom table, IT cabling, signage, construction timelines, and more were addressed.

Stephanie, Jonna and Glenn continued to meet with HR Mavens to address our new human resources, and personnel file needs. During June, we addressed a transition letter for staff; a change-form related to personnel changes, including payroll; new hire checklist; government required employment posters and E-verify compliance.

Sara with HR Mavens assisted in selecting a screening company for new hires. Timing was important as Marla was hiring a Marketing Assistant who will start the first of July. Wolfe, Inc. was selected. We successfully used their services of a background check and drug screening to onboard Megan Howard.

A notebook was built for Stephanie, Van Winkle Law and Glenn containing all legal and corporate documents tied to the creation of the new BCTDA Non-Profit.

Wayfinding: Glenn joined Pat for a meeting in the RAD with City staff to determine the location of a new kiosk in the RAD on the site of the new 14 Riverside Drive Arts & Culture Center (formerly the Dispensary). The location of the kiosk will be near the front ramp and accessible to all visitors. We agreed to use the cog River Arts District brand on the lower 1/3 of the kiosk.

New Hire: Glenn worked with Marla to set interviews for a new Marketing/PR Assistant with job notices placed on AshevilleCVB.com, LinkedIn and Craigslist. An applicant table was created for Marla as a single go-to document with contacts and other pertinent information. Lead applicants were narrowed down to two, with Marla ultimately deciding on Megan Howard, a recent UNC Chapel Hill School of Journalism graduate.

VISITOR SERVICES

The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 24,322 guests during the month of June 2017.

The volunteers attended performances at NC Stage, Magnetic Theatre, and Flat Rock Playhouse. Mount Mitchell Golf Course invited them for lunch and to play a round of golf.

Navitat Zipline Canopy Adventures invited the volunteers to experience a day on their ziplines.

Future events include NC Stage Co., Albemarle Inn, Urban Orchard, Attic Salt Theatre and Magnetic Theatre.

Training for the volunteers continued with email updates along with “on the job” daily briefings from staff members.