



January 10, 2019

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report of November Activities

December brought several initiatives to closure, including the search for a new ad agency. The process concluded with three finalists presenting in Asheville to the selection committee of myself, Marla, Chris Cavanaugh and Sarah Kilgore. Board members were also invited to participate and share feedback. The selection will be announced at the board meeting, with an accompanying request for supplemental funding.

Two talented teammates resigned in December to pursue new opportunities. Drew Pollack from HR Craft Solutions conducted exit interviews and did not identify any red flags. We continue the search for a Marketing Analyst (new position). Staff recommends adding a Director of Finance position the team and reconstituting the Operations Assistant position as Hospitality Coordinator. The Data Specialist position has been re-named Public Affairs Specialist and has been filled with an internal candidate.

A community relations initiative was implemented in December. It included the distribution of a Tourism Builds Community Fact Sheet to tourism partners, a half-page print ad and digital advertising in the Citizen-Times and USA Today network. Stephanie and Marla met with news representatives, resulting in a tourism overview piece on AVL Today. Stephanie assisted WLOS and was interviewed for a story about the positive impact of tourism on local retail businesses. Biltmore, OGPI and tourism promotion were credited for increased visitation during December.

The Marketing and Public Affairs departments teamed up to present Google training for tourism partners to learn how to optimize their businesses' presence on the world-dominating platform. Explore Asheville has also gained status as a "trusted source" for Google.

The Sales Team hosted a 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience November 13-15. The event attracted 11 planners from around the country and has already resulted in six RFPs.

The Explore Asheville Sales Team received a finalist designation in the Best CVB in the Southeast Stella Awards by Northstar Meetings Group.

A project to document the creation of the BCTDA has been initiated. Marilyn Ball will interview early stakeholders to archive oral histories and produce a historical reference.

I have been appointed by Speaker of the House Tim Moore to serve on the North Carolina Travel and Tourism Board.

NOVEMBER METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During November, the sales team posted 1,039 personal contacts (down 14%). November sales activities generated 63 sales leads (down 5%) and 52 convention bookings (up 53%), representing 6,714 rooms (down 13%). Five months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 42 percent and room nights represented are down 7 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 48 group events in November (up 41%), with revenue of \$411,298 (up 11%). The services team assisted 40 groups (up 33%).
- The PR team landed 81 significant placements in November (up 76%), with 38 media touchpoints (down 37%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$4,014,691 with reach of over 12 million. Online placements added \$277,337 in value and reach of over 367 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 336,484 visits (up 12%), including 234,007 to the mobile site (up 20%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 2,590 (down 50%) and video views totaled 62,943 (down 92%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 74 room nights (up 42%) with total room revenue of \$10,028 (up 30%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 15,098 visitors (down 8%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$46,957,244 in October, an increase of 8 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 83.4 percent during October (up 0.4%). The average daily room rate was \$191.99 (up 2.2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$160.05 (up 2.6%). Room demand increased 4.7 percent with 203,073 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 17.6 percent to total 120,060 in October.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Stephanie participated in the board meetings for the Asheville Regional Airport Authority, AIR Annual Retreat, and the NC Travel & Tourism Coalition.
- Stephanie was interviewed for Bill McClement's radio show.
- Stephanie attended the City's lighting ceremony and made remarks to represent the BCTDA's sponsorship.
- The Marketing & PR team provided an overview of Explore Asheville and its marketing and PR efforts to local PR professionals along with student and educator members of the Public Relations Society of America. This included a contingent from Western Carolina University who traveled from Cullowhee for the meeting.
- Marla attended the Asheville Downtown Association monthly meeting and assisted with the ADA annual holiday parade.
- Dodie attended a PRSA Travel & Tourism Site visit to Spokane, Washington in her role as section secretary with duties to support conference planning and site selection for 2020.
- Dodie represented Explore Asheville on the board and branding committee for the new signature culinary event. The name "Chow Chow: An Asheville Culinary Event" was approved and announced. The marketing team launched a splash page hosted on ExploreAsheville.com and weighed in on branding, marketing and web planning.
- Dianna and Joe attended Media Night at the Wedge - River Arts District.
- Staff attended Fall Client Appreciation Event at the Omni Grove Park Inn.

- Dianna, Joe and Connie attended Renaissance Renovation Celebration.
- Dianna, Joe, Shawn, Leann and Tina attended the USTA Viewing Party at New Belgium on Saturday, November 10 with local, state and USTA Officials.
- Team members toured the Foundry Hotel.
- Pat attended a feedback session hosted by the Asheville Area Arts Council focused on planning ideas for the 2019 Creative Sector Summit. The theme of the event to be held in April will be equity and inclusion.
- Pat coordinated a meeting with the Citizen Diplomacy Program at International House in Charlotte, NC for Marla Tambellini to present a tourism industry overview for a group from Macedonia.
- Pat attended the Urban Speaker Series featuring Mitch Silver, NYC Parks Commissioner and attended a dinner hosted by the Asheville Downtown Association afterward.
- Pat attended the monthly Local Living Economy sub-committee meeting.
- Pat attended the Boston Way Street Lighting Ceremony in Biltmore Village.
- Pat attended the City Council work session focusing on revenue options.
- Glenn attended the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's annual update.
- Glenn attended a follow-up debriefing at Hillman Brewing with the leadership team of "Sweet Dreams Full Plates". "Sweet Dreams Full Plates" was the very successful initiative carried out by local hotels in September that raised \$40,000 and 140,000 meals for Manna Food Bank.
- As Board Chair, Glenn attended the Black Mountain Center for the Arts Board Meeting.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: The two-pronged holiday campaign got underway in late October. The pre-Thanksgiving campaign, dubbed "Falliday" with creative that evoked the blend of fall and early holidays ended on November 19 and immediately transitioned to traditional holiday creative which will run through December 23. Tactics for this campaign include digital display, sponsored content, retargeting, and paid social. As of November 30, the campaign had driven 21,000 sessions on ExploreAsheville.com with an average of 2.5 pages/session. A modified winter campaign will launch in January.

Paid Search: Paid search in November generated over 59,000 site visits from Google and Bing combined. Paid search also netted 10 hotel bookings this month for nearly \$3,300. Other highlights:

- Sessions are up 13 percent (compared to paid search efforts in November 2017)
- Bounce rate has improved by 14 percent (compared to paid search efforts in November 2017)
- Click through rate has increased by 32 percent year-over-year
- Pages per visit was at 3.2 for November
- Average time on site was 2:45 in November
- 274 Visitor Guide Requests were generated by paid search in November

Fall Marketing Efforts: A round up of PR, social and content efforts for fall were detailed at the November BCTDA meeting and results were noted in the marketing update presentation.

General Media Relations: The PR team logged 38 media touchpoints, initiated 55 targeted pitches and hosted five media on the ground in Asheville in November. Supported site visits included media representing *Canadian Geographic Traveler*, *Oxford American* and *Lonely Planet*. Story support also included *USA Today*, *Sunseeker Magazine*, *Hemispheres*, *Carolina*

Parent and a AAA publication. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *Preservation Magazine*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *CraftBeer.com*, among others.

Cozy Winter Campaign: The Explore Asheville PR team crafted a winter press release in November focusing on why Asheville is a cozy winter destination, and new and unexpected visitor experiences for the season. The release was distributed via PR Newswire and picked up 226 times with a potential audience of 81.2 million. The potential audience stat received a big boost via a *Yahoo! Finance* pick-up of the release. It was also distributed via MailChimp to 520 subscribers and media friends of Explore Asheville. Work was then performed in TrendKite to pinpoint outlets and writers who have covered winter travel destinations in the past. From that research, 40 additional journalists were pitched individually.

Significant Placements:

1. *Automobile* - "Seven Favorites from the Grovewood Village Antique Car Museum"
2. *Boston Globe* - "These cities may be small, but they're mighty appealing"
3. *Conde Nast Traveler* - "Hotels We Love this Month"
4. *Country Living* - "20 Best Christmas Towns in the USA"
5. *Courier* - "Don't Stop Till You've Shopped"
6. *Food & Wine* - "Take a look at This Year's National Gingerbread House Competition Winners"
7. *Garden & Gun* - "Christmas at Biltmore, By the Numbers"
8. *House Beautiful* - "You Can Enjoy More Than 50 Decorated Trees at the Biltmore Estate This Christmas"
9. *Matador Network* - "Why Asheville is the best getaway you can take this winter"
10. *My Itchy Travel Feet* - "Tips for Experiencing a Biltmore House Christmas in Asheville"
11. *PeterGreenberg.com* - "Travel Tip: Winter Wonderlands"
12. *SmarterTravel* - "9 Insanely Affordable Winter Vacations for 2018-19"
13. *Travel Pulse* - "20 Destinations Guaranteed to Get You in the Holiday Spirit"
14. *USA Today* - "'America's Favorite Drive': Beautiful Scenes along the Blue Ridge Parkway"
15. *USA Today* - "Tattoos on vacation: 10 great parlors for that forever souvenir"
16. *Vogue* - "An Insider's Guide to Asheville, the Arts-Filled City Where Pottery is Thriving"

Content Development Projects: The content team worked on several projects in the month of November, with much focus on holiday season content.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of November, 11 new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: photo tour blog posts from Christmas at Biltmore and the National Gingerbread Competition & Display, a story about Santa on the Chimney, a round-up of local restaurants serving Thanksgiving meals, an announcement of upcoming sporting events, the what's new for 2019 news release, a blog post promoting the Oxford American shows, and four "things to do this weekend" posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 22,577 new pageviews, followed by 8 Ways Asheville Sparkles for the Holidays, which received 13,545 pageviews.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- November saw 2,590 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 281,078.
- There were 46 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of November.

- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was Jason's photo of the Biltmore Christmas tree arriving as part of the annual Tree Raising. It has reached 184,538 people organically, generating 12,516 total reactions, including 1,267 comments. This was also the most engaging post of the month, with 11 percent of users reached interacting with the content in some way.

Foodtopia page

- November saw 30 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,091 likes.
- There were 2 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of November. The most popular was a share of a link to a Citizen Times story on new restaurant openings. It reached 1,497 people.
- The channel sees limited engagement. With a multitude of other priorities in November, there was a conscious decision to focus time and resources elsewhere.

Video:

- There were 8,395 new, organic YouTube views in November. The most popular video by organic views this month was the fall time lapse, which received 1,760 non-paid views. The Spirit of Asheville came in second with 472 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 62,943 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook.

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 5,093. Foodtopia accounts for 1,420 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,673.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 52,325 followers.
- There were 21 new posts in November. The most popular was Jason's photo of the Biltmore Christmas tree arriving during the annual Tree Raising. It received 3,599 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,675 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,704 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 122,247 active subscribers.
- **Opens/Click-throughs:** In November, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 122,981 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 14.9 percent and a click-through rate of 2.2 percent.
- We sent our final Fall Color Report email this month. It was sent to 13,723 subscribers and saw an open rate of 31.8 percent and click-through rate of 6.9 percent.
- We also sent a holiday-specific email, highlighting events and offerings of the holiday season that we felt deserved to be promoted well ahead of the December newsletter. This special send went to 122,590 subscribers, had an open rate of 14.5 percent and a click-through rate of 1.9 percent.

Google Partnership Program: The team moved forward with the Google DMO Partnership Program with Miles, hosting a partner webinar in late October as an introduction to a pair of in-person educational workshops in mid-November. The webinar and workshops both had 62 registrations, with several additional partners attending the workshops or watching the recorded

webinar online. The workshops were led by Patrick Rodgers, content director with Miles, and covered many of the features offered by Google My Business listings, as well as some best practices for improving business visibility. Patrick also spent several days in town capturing flat and 360-degree imagery of Asheville-area locations for upload to Google. More than 100 images have been uploaded to Google and the marketing team has been busy working on other aspects of the partnership that better leverages the Asheville area. Explore Asheville has become a Google trusted verification partner. Additionally, the team has been answering questions in knowledge panels, developing blog posts and upvoting and downvoting which leads to a higher Google ranking for Explore Asheville.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in November increased 12 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was up three percent year-over-year in November. Social media traffic was up 12 percent year-over-year in November. Referral traffic was up 69 percent year-over-year, and traffic from eNewsletter clicks were up 77 percent year-over-year in November. Display ad traffic was down eight percent year-over-year in November.

ExploreAsheville.com continues to outperform industry averages with 28 percent more total pages per visit, 37 percent longer visit duration, 30 percent more organic pages per visit, and 39 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of November.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In November, Simpleview and Explore Asheville staff continue to work on efforts to improve site conversion rates based on established goals and KPIs. Several pages continue to perform particularly well in driving organic traffic, including Things to Do in Asheville This Weekend and 50 Things to Do in Asheville.

Online Reservations: There were 49 orders for 74 room nights in November with a total of \$10,028 in booking revenue and \$445 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in November were Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina and Ohio.

November 2018	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$10,028	\$7,696	30.30%	\$88,416	\$71,652	23.40%
Commission	\$445.14	\$348.91	27.58%	\$4,125.77	\$3,277.28	25.89%
Orders	49	34	44.12%	346	268	29.10%
Room Nights	74	52	42.31%	546	419	30.31%

Visitor Guide: The Explore Asheville team and SagaCity Media, the publishing partner, wrapped up production of the 2019 guide and sent it off to the printer for delivery at the end of December.

There were 2,218 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in November, an 85 percent increase over last year. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 14,626 travel guide requests.

BCTDA Community Relations: Explore Asheville developed new creative assets highlighting the benefits of tourism for use in a one-time print ad in the Citizen-Times on Dec. 5 as well as a digital campaign deployed across the Citizen-Times and the USA Today network that reaches local zip codes throughout December. The remaining allowance from the added value that was offered as part of a national Gannett buy in the spring made the promotion possible. Additionally, several interviews have been scheduled to update media and their audiences on

new tourism impact information and to answer questions regarding the recent announcement of the development of a long-term strategy for the Tourism Product Development Fund.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 52 definite group bookings in November, a 52.9 percent increase over the prior year. Of these group bookings, 25 were for meetings & conventions, 19 were group tour and eight were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 6,714 room nights, a 13.1 percent decrease over the prior November. Sixty-three leads (50 for meeting/conventions, four weddings and nine motorcoach) representing 14,147 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in November. Leads distributed were down 4.5 percent and rooms represented were down 37.3 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,037,177, a 45.8 percent decrease over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$411,298 an 11.4 percent increase over the prior year. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,039 contacts, a 14 percent decrease from last year. Indirect outreach totaled 2,592, an 8.7 percent increase over the prior year.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- Kathryn Dewey attended back-to-back Luxury Meetings in Charlotte and Raleigh. Collectively, 16 one-on-one appointments were conducted. Kathryn also attended Meeting Professionals Internationals of the Carolinas networking/meeting in Spartanburg.
- Connie Holliday attended Luxury Meetings in Columbia meeting one-on-one with three planners. Due to the low show turnout, the organizer will comp our attendance at Luxury Meetings Tampa in February 2019. One RFP resulted from the show for a golf retreat group. In addition, Connie made sales calls in Greenville calling on five corporate/association buyers.
- Kathryn and Dianna presented to 15 staff of Lenoir-Rhyne University to promote partnering with the CVB to bring future professional association conferences and symposiums to Asheville.
- Beth McKinney attended National Tour Association Exchange, meeting one-on-one with 33 tour companies. Four RFPs were received. In addition, a pop-up client event was held after the close of the Exchange with 11 buyers attending. Hampton Inns/Homewood Suites of Asheville and Biltmore were partners in hosting the client event.
- Shawn Boone traveled to DC for appointments, meeting with 10 DC/Virginia based clients
- Tina Porter attended Women in Sports Tourism, a three-day educational/networking event.
- Dianna Pierce attended Travel South International in Nashville, conducting 38 one-on-one appointments with FIT buyers and participating in numerous networking event. Biltmore partnered with the CVB again this year.

The 48-Hour Experience:

The 48-Hour Experience FAM was held November 13-15, with 11 planners attending. Planners came from Virginia, Minnesota, Montana, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, California, Arizona, North Carolina and Wisconsin. Most planners in attendance had not personally been to Asheville nor hosted a meeting here. Attendees were vetted using a qualifying questionnaire, requiring a verifiable history of their ability to place a meeting in the southeast. Renaissance Asheville Hotel was the host for this event. Six RFP's totaling 2,469 room nights have already been received from the FAM, with more expected. Additionally, staff has secured a January presentation in Charlotte with a significant incentive house for approximately 15 organization planners.

AAA Initiatives:

The CVB hosted eight AAA Carolinas staff/drive vacation specialists for a two-night mini-FAM in Asheville. The Doubletree by Hilton hosted overnight accommodations. AAA staff toured the North Carolina Arboretum and Biltmore, hiked with Appalachian Mountain Adventures, zip-lined at the Adventure Center and participated in a walking history tour with Asheville by Foot.

Leann Swims represented Explore Asheville at the AAA Carolinas Superbowl of Knowledge trade show in Concord, NC. Partnering with the CVB was Herb Arnold from Biltmore Farm Hotels. More than 150 agents stopped by the Asheville booth during the annual training event. Leann also attended the Saturday evening closing dinner. We used this event to push interest in the twice annual AAA webinars hosted by the CVB.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted six area site visits this month. They included: 2019-2020 Voyageurs du Monde (France) FIT rooms; 2019-2020 Comptoir Des Voyages (France) FIT rooms; 2019 SFIREG Region 4 – 80 room nights; 2019 Calypso Fall Meeting – 200 room nights; 2019 National Council for Marketing and Public Relations – 100 rooms; Professional Construction Estimators Association – 103 rooms.

A total of seven wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month as compared to 12 in November 2017.

November bookings for future years include (but not limited to):

- 2018 DDAA Winter Board – 37 rooms
- 2019 Duke University – 100 rooms
- 2019 USTA Fed Cup (team / spectator / group specific) - 738 rooms
- 2019 Southeastern Electric Reliability Corporation (FAM related)
- 2019 NC Conference of District Attorneys – 50 rooms
- 2019 ABYSA Riverside Girls – 465 rooms
- 2019 Riverside Kickoff Boys – 500 rooms
- 2019 Carolinas Credit Union League – 40 rooms
- 2020 Road Scholar Series – 2,000 rooms
- 2019 Bon Beer Voyage Tour – 25 rooms
- 2019 SETA Overflow (original booked through EA too) – 50 rooms
- 2019 Encore Regional Dance Competition – 250 rooms
- 2020 National Council of Architectural Registration Boards – 20 rooms
- 2020 Personal Administrators of NC – 375 rooms
- 2019 NEIL Meeting – 215 rooms

Group Sales Communications

In November it was announced that Explore Asheville was judged as a finalist in the Best CVB/DMO Southeast category in the 2018 Northstar Meetings Group Stella awards. A new article about air travel and the expanded flight options at AVL was published on the meeting planner section of ExploreAsheville.com.

Media Coverage

- Staff provided information and images to a writer with *Successful Meetings* for an article about what second or third-tier cities can do for meeting groups. The story will focus on mid-market cities that also offer unique experiences and knowledge hubs that groups can leverage to enhance their events.

- Staff provided extensive destination information and were interviewed by a writer with *Meetings Today* for a possible future article about Asheville.
- Staff provided information on group tour attractions, a quote from staff and Asheville information for tour operators to *Group Tour Media* for a premier 2019 Group Tour North Carolina planning guide.

Mass Communications

- An email was sent to 2,186 D.C. area clients announcing the new flight from Washington Dulles. Open rate: 19 percent, Click to Open Ratio: 27 percent
- An invitation to a client event was sent to 195 Raleigh area corporate clients. Open rate: 35 percent, Click to Open Ratio: 45 percent
- An email invitation to apply for the Asheville 48-Hour Experience was sent to 4,192 Meetings Today subscribers. Opens: 409 Clicks: 39

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

Contracts for the six projects awarded funding in the 2018 cycle that were announced last month are in development. The grantees are Buncombe County Recreation Services, Center for Craft, Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, LEAF Community Arts, North Carolina Arboretum Society, and River Front Development Group.

Pat is in the process of developing a process and timeline for the development of the African-American Heritage Trail. She is also gathering resources to establish a stakeholder group and has had meetings with Dr. Darin Waters of UNCA, the leadership of the East End Valley, Shiloh, and Burton Street Neighborhood Associations.

The WNC Nature Center project is complete and the disbursement review is in process.

Partner Engagement:

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted the November CVB 101 orientation with six industry partners in attendance, including staff from Diamond Brand Gear Company, Blomkraft Studio, Namaste In Nature, and Curve Studios.

Upcoming Events:

Explore Asheville CVB Holiday Party: Planning is under way for the annual holiday party to be held at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel on Thursday, December 6. We will be presenting our 6th Annual CVB SuperStar Awards to recognize and honor partners for outstanding contributions and support throughout the year. The Swing Step band has been booked for the occasion, and we will have the TapSnap Photobooth available for partners. US Foods is providing food, and Biltmore, Omni Grove Park Inn, and Asheville Brewing are providing the wine and beer.

New Partners: Brit created 24 new partner accounts in November – Jennythreads, TreeRock Social Cider House, Nora Julia, Torno Foto, Lakeview Putt and Play, HTV Jewelry by Pamela White, Fly Coop Studios, Olivia de Soria Jewelry, Cassie Butcher Ceramics, Symbology by Alice Scott, AVL Lit Map Tours, Asheville Retrocade, Mani Designs, Timmer Designs, Button and Co. Bagels, Maria Andrade Troya Pottery, Rare Exotic Vehicles, Land of the Sky Event Venue, Ivy Creek Family Farm, Azalea Bindery, White Duck Taco Shop – Downtown, White Duck Taco Shop – South, and Tukit Tour Co. The increase this month was due to a push to get partners listed in the Visitors Guide. The public affairs team continues to reach out to qualified

partners to submit information for a listing as well as service the partners who request listings. And Brit maintains regularly scheduled communications to Music Venue partners to ensure they are submitting their events to the Live Music Calendar.

Projects & Community Outreach: Pat continues focusing on the final steps of the Wayfinding Assessment project with MERJE. A final budget and program update recommendations were presented to the board at the November meeting. An additional \$70,000 was approved to fund the additional maintenance and sign program updates as a result of the MERJE Assessment. Pat and Glenn will begin the process of coordinating orders and installation with Geograph.

Brit dedicated significant time and effort for the completion and review of partner listing content for the 2019 Official Asheville Visitor Guide.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Administration: Glenn continues to meet bi-weekly with Drew Pollick of HR Craft Solutions to build a professional HR Department through the implementation of new policies and procedures, development and design of new documents, and organization of the core materials of the Department. Draft edits were made to the Employee Handbook and the checklist for onboarding new employees was refined.

On November 2, the President & CEO, three VPs and Directors who manage staff (8 total) participated in the Hogan Assessment review, facilitated by Drew Pollick. Discussions focused on management style commonalities, how to strengthen those styles and strengthening communication. Developing a stronger process-oriented approach to leadership and general staff meetings was also identified. The President & CEO and VPs convened separately that afternoon with Drew. The discussions delved deeper into the team's leadership styles, associated skills and potential obstacles. These discussions will continue in the future

Wayfinding Signage: Many hours were spent in November cross-referencing the Geograph Maintenance list with the system recommendations received from MERJE. Glenn and Pat went through MERJE's 112-page document, page-by-page, reviewing all recommendations for adding and deleting destinations from the system, adding new destinations to existing signs and adding new signs to the system. Ultimately, a table was created with the system changes agreed to by Explore Asheville staff.