



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

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Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 24, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; HP Patel, Kathleen Mosher, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Scott Patel, Michael Lusick, Larry Crosby
- Absent (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair (attended online)
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore, Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Tiffany Thacker, Jennifer Kass-Green, Michael Kryzaneck, Dodie Stephens, Penelope Whitman, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, John Dawson, Luisa Yen, Sarajane Case, Emily Crosby
- BC Finance:** Mason Scott
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette/BCTDA Attorney
- In-Person Attendees:** Kyle Highberg, Barbara Benisch, Shelton Steele; LIFT Committee  
City Manager Debra Campbell, City of Asheville  
Tim Love, Commissioner Brownie Newman; Buncombe County  
Lisa Raleigh, RiverLink  
George Ivey, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation  
Lacy Cross, Rubi Molina; Movement Bank  
Chris Corl, Harrah's Cherokee Center  
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association  
Kyle Samples, LaZoom  
Dave Nutter, Community Member  
Felicia Somez, Blue Ridge Public Radio  
Greg Parlier, Mountain Xpress  
Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times  
Kim King, WLOS
- Online Attendees:** Scott Kerchner, LIFT Committee  
Anna Harris, Sha'Linda Pruitt, Carli Adams, Khal Khoury, Shelby Pearsall,  
Glenn Ramey, Nick Kepley, Elizabeth White, McKenzie Provost, Emilie Soffe,  
Shawn Boone, Kathryn Dewey, Mia Brown, Tina Porter; Explore Asheville  
Meghan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurant Association  
Amanda Bryant, Asheville Museum of Science  
Zach Wallace, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Cassidy Moore, Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity  
Chris Smith, Madison Davis; Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission

**Online Attendees  
(continued):**

Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport  
Carolyn Ward, Kevin Brandt; Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation  
Superintendent Tracy Swartout, Blue Ridge Parkway  
Roy Harris, Community Member  
Senator Julie Mayfield, NC Senate  
Summer Casiano, Tanger Outlets  
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee  
Elaine Smyth  
Kevin Beattie, WLOS

**Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes**

- Lehman called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:03 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the March 21, 2024, BCTDA meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Minutes from the March 22, 2024, BCTDA annual planning session were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The March 2024 financial reports were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The FY24 audit contract with Mauldin & Jenkins was approved with an 8-0 vote.
- \$9,988,903 of Legacy Investment From Tourism Fund grants were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Explore Asheville leadership reviewed third quarter progress toward the strategic imperatives.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

**Call to Order of the Joint BCTDA Meeting**

Lehman called to order the joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority, and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:03 a.m.

Information was provided about the meeting livestream and document access on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

Introductions were made around the room.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

*March 21, 2024, Meeting Minutes*

Mosher made a motion to approve the March 21, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Lusick seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

*March 22, 2024, Annual Planning Session Minutes*

Putnam motioned to approve the March 22, 2024, annual planning session minutes. Crosby seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

**Financial Updates**

*March 2024 Financial Reports*

Mason Scott of Buncombe County presented March 2024 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

There were no questions. Lusick made a motion to approve the March 2024 financial reports as presented. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

FY24 Audit Contract

Scott provided background on the recommendation of the FY24 auditor, noting that Mauldin & Jenkins was approved for a three-year contract in 2023. Scott presented the anticipated cost for the second year and the proposed timeline.

Putnam made a motion to approve the Mauldin & Jenkins FY24 audit letter and contract as presented. Wilson seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

**2024 Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund Grant Cycle Update**

2024 LIFT Fund Grant Cycle Overview

Tiffany Thacker, director of grants, gave background on the LIFT Fund, recognized volunteer committee members, noted \$9,988,903 was available, and summarized the two-phase grant cycle.

LIFT Committee's Capital Project Investment Recommendations

Thacker gave a project-by-project overview of the twelve requests that the LIFT Committee recommended funding in this grant cycle. The committee's investment recommendations totaled \$9,988,903. Thacker recapped the investment recommendations in a table as follows:

Applicant	Project	Investment
Buncombe County	Ferry Road Community: Affordable Housing, Conservation, and Public Recreation	\$4,000,000
City of Asheville	Coxe Avenue Complete Street	\$2,983,890
City of Asheville	ExploreAsheville.com Arena Capital Maintenance	\$675,000
City of Asheville	Aston Park Tennis Center Court Rebuild Design	\$40,000
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation	Blue Ridge Parkway: Improving Visitor Experiences at Craggy Gardens Year-Round	\$750,000
Hood Huggers Foundation	Blue Note Junction - Phase 1 Construction	\$500,000
RiverLink	Gateway Park: Resurrecting a public park on Riverside Drive	\$270,018
Asheville Museum of Science	Growing Together - Museum Repair and Expansion Plan	\$250,000
Media Arts Project (MAP)	Supernova Immersive Experience Project Design	\$200,000
University Botanical Gardens at Asheville, Inc.	Building on Our Legacy: Uplifting BGA Facilities to Better Serve Tourists and Residents	\$150,000
Swannanoa Valley Fine Arts League (DBA Swannanoa Valley Gallery and Studios)	Expanding Visitors and Artists Experiences in Downtown Black Mountain (Red House Gallery and Studios)	\$92,495
Black Wall Street AVL	Black Wall Street AVL Visitor Experience Upgrade	\$77,500

Thacker stated this would be the most projects ever awarded in one grant cycle. She also noted that 77% of funds were to municipal partners. The proposed project completion timelines were shared.

Thacker and Isley fielded questions about the recommendations and the committee's rationale. Crosby then motioned to approve the grant investment funding for each project as recommended by the Legacy Investment from Tourism Committee. Lusick seconded the motion. A vote was taken; with all in favor, the motion carried 8-0.

Isley expressed appreciation for the variety and dispersal of investments; board members concurred. It was acknowledged that continued efforts were necessary to address housing inventory issues in the community, including updated development requirements.

### **President & CEO Report**

Isley spoke about visitor spending, specifically lodging tax, being the source for the funding for LIFT Fund investments. She then expanded upon the additional financial benefits of visitors to the community, noting visitor spending figures for 2023 would be received this summer.

Isley presented March 2024 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years, as well as the fiscal-year-to-date combined demand for hotel and vacation rentals. She highlighted the success of the Earth Day cleanup and listed festivals and events Explore Asheville supported in April and May.

### **Quarterly Highlights Report**

#### *Third Quarter Review (January – March 2024 Highlights)*

Isley invited department heads to review initiatives from the third quarter of FY24 (January 2024 – March 2024) that were aligned with the strategic imperatives of Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth, Encouraging Safe & Responsible Travel, Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences, Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit, and Running a Healthy & Effective Organization.

#### *Marketing, Content, and Public Relations – Q3 Initiatives*

Dodie Stephens, vice president of marketing, celebrated that the Always, Asheville storytelling efforts were recognized with an Adrian Award and that Asheville's ad recall was highest amongst AFAR readers. Stephens also recapped recent meeting planner engagement efforts, local content creator collaborations, and earned media coverage and accolades.

#### *Business Development – Q3 Initiatives*

Michael Kryzaneck, vice president of business development, shared about impactful connections made through attending trade shows and hosting industry events, 48-hour meeting planner familiarization tours, and Southern Conference (SoCon) tournament takeaways.

#### *Partnership & Destination Management – Q3 Initiatives*

Penelope Whitman, vice president of partnership and destination management, reflected on The Year Ahead and Hospitality Outlook events, key findings from the annual resident perspectives on tourism survey, recent event grants and sponsorships, and new partner recruitment.

### Culture & Business Affairs – Q3 Initiatives

Jennifer Kass-Green, vice president of culture and business affairs, announced the organization hired a marketing manager and received an achievement award for culture for the second consecutive year.

The complete Quarterly Highlights Report (January – March 2024) is available on AshevilleCVB.com.

### **Asheville City Council Update**

Vice Mayor Kilgore provided a recap of the council meeting from the previous night and said that there was extensive public comment about the proposed business improvement district.

### **Buncombe County Commission Update**

Commissioner Wells thanked the board for the LIFT Fund investment in the Ferry Road project and read a statement from Commissioner Brownie Newman. Wells shared key dates for the county's budget process and noted the county is undergoing a strategic plan update.

### **Miscellaneous Business**

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

### **Comments from the General Public**

No one from the public signed up to make virtual or in-person comments during this meeting.

### **Adjournment**

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Mosher made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Putnam seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy