



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, July 31, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; HP Patel, Kathleen Mosher, Larry Crosby, Scott Patel, Michael Lusick, Lucious Wilson
- Absent (Voting):** Elizabeth Putnam (attended online)
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore, Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Julia Simpson, Penelope Whitman, Mike Kryzaneck, Dodie Stephens, Jennifer Kass-Green, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Shelby Pearsall, Connie Holliday, Tiffany Thacker, Shawn Boone, Tina Porter
- BC Finance:** Melissa Moore
- Legal Counsel:** Richard Kort, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
- In-Person Attendees:** Colleen Swanson, Meetings Database Institute (MDI)  
John Ellis, Prior BCTDA Board Member  
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media  
Tim Rosenbrock, Biltmore  
Micah Pulleyn, Beacon Foundation  
Pat Moran, Mountain Xpress  
Jay Curwen
- Online Attendees:** Carli Adams, Ali Wainright, Anna Harris, McKenzie Provost, Emily Crosby, Kimberly Puryear, Nick Kepley, Holly Watts; Explore Asheville  
Chip Craig, Greybeard Realty and Rentals  
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee  
Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission  
Tina Kinsey, Asheville Regional Airport  
James Dick, Rahim Shah; RSA Hospitality, LLC  
Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association  
Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast  
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group  
Megan Shields, MMGY Global  
Felicia Sonmez, Blue Ridge Public Radio  
Kevin Beattie, WLOS

### **Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes**

- Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the BCTDA, Public Authority, and BCTDA, Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:09 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.
- Minutes from the June 26, 2024, BCTDA meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The June 2024 preliminary financial reports were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Explore Asheville leadership reviewed fourth quarter progress toward the strategic imperatives.
- Michael Kryzanek and Colleen Swanson presented on business development efforts.
- County-related updates were read out on behalf of Commissioner Terri Wells.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

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

Durden called to order the joint regular meeting of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA), a Public Authority, and BCTDA, a Nonprofit Corporation, at 9:09 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**

Lusick made a motion to approve the June 26, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Crosby seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

### **June 2024 Preliminary Financial Reports**

Melissa Moore, BCTDA Fiscal Agent, presented preliminary June 2024 financials, reviewing operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type. Moore noted that June 2024 financials would be revisited later this year after final accruals.

There were no questions. Mosher made a motion to approve the June 2024 preliminary financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

### **President & CEO Report**

Vic Isley presented June 2024 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years. She reviewed fiscal-year-to-date combined roomnight demand for hotel and vacation rentals and said it was up 1% compared to FY23. A lodging performance analysis of the first half of calendar year 2024 is planned for the August BCTDA meeting.

She listed festivals and events Explore Asheville supported in the current and upcoming month. She also reminded the board about the McCormick Field Groundbreaking Ceremony and Travel & Hospitality Night on August 28.

Isley concluded with information on the latest commercial "The Sounds of Asheville". Due to technical difficulties, a preview wasn't possible, but a link to view was circulated following the meeting.

## **Quarterly Highlights Report**

### *Fourth Quarter Review (April 2024 - June 2024 Highlights)*

Isley invited department heads to review initiatives from the fourth quarter of FY24 (April 2024 – June 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 – Q4 Initiatives*

Dodie Stephens, vice president of marketing, gave an overview of a partnership with Garden & Gun to promote AVL Fest, explained efforts to capture digital assets of sports venues to support recruitment of events, and highlighted a new field guide collaboration with Wildsam. Stephens recapped the performance of the campaign amplifying the Asheville area's legacy as a summer camp destination. She shared noteworthy social posts, earned media clips, accolades, and press coverage of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail.

### *Business Development – Q4 Initiatives*

Michael Kryzaneck, vice president of business development, reflected about the team hosting AdventureELEVATE, attending US Travel's IPW, aims to increasing business for outlying hotels, and outcomes from the quarter.

### *Partnership & Destination Management – Q4 Initiatives*

Penelope Whitman, vice president of partnership and destination management, opened with information gleaned from a partner survey and an action plan to address cited challenges. Whitman spoke about destination stewardship efforts and Outdoors NC Trail Town program participation. She gave an update on the workforce development initiative. Whitman also recapped partner events, Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund grant investments, and recent event grants and sponsorships, and new partner recruitment.

### *Culture & Business Affairs – Q4 Initiatives*

Jennifer Kass-Green, vice president of culture and business affairs, announced the organization hired a social media manager, continued office composting as an internal sustainability initiative, supported numerous nonprofits through staff volunteering, and completed an all-team Unity Blaze certification and training process through Black Folks Camp, too.

The complete Quarterly Highlights Report (April 2024 – June 2024) is available on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

## **Business Development Performance Report**

### *Business Development Overview*

Michael Kryzaneck reviewed the guiding principles for business development. He explained the business development cycle and specific efforts of the department. He gave an overview of team members, recapped FY24 achievements, and showed lodging performance to competitive markets.

Kryzaneck then shared about the Asheville Business Events Council collaborations and successes securing impactful events like IndieConfab and the MO Summit. He celebrated the team's successes in

recruiting sporting events and highlighted the Southern Conference Women's Volleyball Tournament 2024-2026 would be held in Asheville. Finally, he announced a new addition to the team: Jay Curwen, director of sports, film, & entertainment.

#### Meetings Database Institute Analysis

Colleen Swanson, executive vice president for Meetings Database Institute (MDI), provided a brief background on MDI and their services. Swanson then presented trends for group business contracted by the Explore Asheville team; her analysis considered market segments, feeder markets, group sizes, arrival months, lead times, etc. for bookings in FY25 (July 2024-June 2025).

#### Board Discussion

Following the presentations, it was clarified that data analyzed was only representative of group business booked through staff at Explore Asheville. Discussion ensued about whether a broader analysis could be conducted if hoteliers would share information about groups booked independently. Interest was expressed by the board that staff further explore execution of the idea of an analysis of the impact of group business to the community.

#### **Asheville City Council Update**

Vice Mayor Kilgore was absent, so no city-related updates were presented at this meeting.

#### **Buncombe County Commission Update**

Durden shared county-related updates provided by Commissioner Wells, which included a reminder that applications for the county's short-term rental ad hoc committee closed today, July 31, and information about the relocation of some public-facing departments.

#### **Miscellaneous Business**

There was no miscellaneous business presented at this meeting.

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

There were no comments made by the public at this meeting.

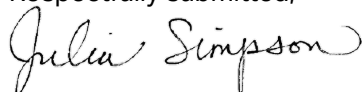
#### **Adjournment**

The PowerPoint presentation and relevant documents are on file with Explore Asheville and are posted on [AshevilleCVB.com](https://www.ashevillecvb.com).

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Crosby made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Lusick second the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy