



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

Explore Asheville – 27 College Place, Asheville

Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 28, 2024

- Present (Voting):** Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; HP Patel, Kathleen Mosher, Larry Crosby, Michael Lusick, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam
- Absent (Voting):** Scott Patel
- Present (Ex-Officio):** Asheville Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore, Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
- Absent (Ex-Officio):** None
- Staff:** Vic Isley, Dodie Stephens, Tiffany Thacker, Julia Simpson, Ashley Greenstein, Josh Jones, Ali Wainright, Kimberly Puryear, Luisa Yen, Mike Kryzaneck, Jennifer Kass-Green, Jay Curwen
- BC Finance:** Melissa Moore
- Legal Counsel:** Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
- In-Person Attendees:** Randy Claybrook, Asheville Bed & Breakfast Association
Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media
Meghan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurants Association
John Ellis, Prior BCTDA Board Member
Pat Moran, Mountain Xpress
- Online Attendees:** Carli Adams, Sha'Linda Pruitt, Anna Harris, McKenzie Provost, Sarajane Case, Connie Holliday; Explore Asheville
Megan Roush, MMGY Global
Jim Muth, TPDF Committee
Angel Holloway, Lion's Mane Consulting
Andrew Celwyn, Herbiary
Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Summer Casiano, Tanger Asheville
Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group
Lacy Cross, Movement Bank
Felicia Sonmez, Blue Ridge Public Radio

Executive Summary of Meeting Minutes

- Durden 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 July 31, 2024, BCTDA meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- The July 2024 financial reports were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- An update was shared regarding a penalty waiver request received from Cloud 9.
- A Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) amendment request from the City of Asheville and WNC Nature Center was referred to the TPDF Committee with an 8-0 vote.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Dodie Stephens presented a marketing update.
- Brief updates were provided by Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore and Commissioner Terri Wells.
- Outgoing board members, Kathleen Mosher and Scott Patel, were thanked for their service; BCTDA board member appointment updates were provided.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:26 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 9:03 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

Lusick made a motion to approve the July 31, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Mosher seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

July 2024 Financial Reports

Melissa Moore, BCTDA Fiscal Agent, presented July 2024 financials, noting that collections are delayed by two months so there was very little to report for FY25. She reviewed operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

Discussion followed about the BCTDA's current investment strategy and a request was made for more regular updates on the performance of investments.

HP Patel then motioned to approve the July 2024 financial reports as presented. Lehman seconded the motion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

Penalty Waiver Update – Cloud 9

Durden said Explore Asheville staff received a penalty waiver request on August 22, 2024, from Cloud 9 for the sum of one-time late filing and payment fees. She noted the owners' rationale for the late payment of occupancy taxes for July 2024 was a technical glitch with the county's online portal. Buncombe County staff verified a failed payment attempt was logged by their system; they also confirmed there were no other records of late filings or payments for the property. The supporting documentation and correspondence were shared with the board in advance for review.

Durden then explained that precedent was set that gave authority to the president & CEO to approve penalty waiver requests if the amount was \$500 or less and it was the property's first late offense.

Since Cloud 9's request met those criteria, Durden said Isley would manage the two-step process. The waiver request would need to be reviewed by the Buncombe County Commissioners next.

Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) Contract Amendment Request – WNC Nature Center

Tiffany Thacker, director of grants for Explore Asheville, gave background information about the TPDF-supported "Gateway to Southern Appalachians" enhancement project, saying the City of Asheville and the WNC Nature Center were awarded \$567,000 through TPDF in October 2022.

Thacker noted the project is on track to be completed on schedule by May 2025. She explained the project cost has increased by \$225,000 since the initial award due to an increase in construction costs and some minimal changes in scope resulting from the bid process. To cover the difference, each stakeholder has been asked to contribute additional funds. The BCTDA was asked to contribute an additional \$144,000, which would bring the BCTDA's total contribution to a total of \$711,000 (50% of the total project cost). Thacker answered all questions about timeline, scope, and process.

Lehman made a motion to approve referring the City of Asheville's request for increased funding for the WNC Nature Center project to the TPDF Committee to review and make a funding recommendation to the BCTDA. Lusick seconded the motion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

President & CEO Report

Vic Isley summarized the 2023 visitor contributions to the local economy analysis by Tourism Economics and spoke about the benefits of the industry and growth in visitor spending since 1983. She then introduced KeyData as a source of additional insights for vacation rentals before presenting a lodging performance update for the first half of the year (January – June 2024). The report considered trends in occupancy, supply, demand, RevPAR, and ADR, as well as competitive markets' performance.

Isley reviewed July occupancy and demand and said total roomnight demand is up for the first month of FY25. Isley added context of national and local travel trends impacting the community. She outlined a few destination promotion strategies Explore Asheville is employing based on the circumstances.

Discussion followed about how strategic capital investments in the destination could make an impact. Isley explained that an analysis is currently underway to evaluate the BCTDA-supported projects, and a report would be shared back with the board and could inform future decisions.

Isley reminded the board about the McCormick Field Groundbreaking Ceremony and Travel & Hospitality Night happening later in the day. She provided details about the BCTDA Annual Meeting on September 16. She then concluded by sharing festivals and events Explore Asheville supported in the current and upcoming month.

Marketing Update

Dodie Stephens, vice president of marketing for Explore Asheville, began her update with an overview of the market strategies and media investments planned for FY25. Stephens played the Sounds of Asheville commercial spot to showcase the latest example of destination storytelling.

She spoke about creative partnerships that involve an in-market component, including the recent Bal Harbour Shops fashion photoshoot, Town & Country wedding feature, Garden & Gun's Champions of Conservation event, and Travel + Leisure's Reader Trip.

Stephens provided a status update on the new, mobile-first website and explained the launch timing aligns with Asheville's peak visitation season of fall. She concluded with examples of how the team is proactively pitching to earn press coverage and attract both leisure and business visitors.

Asheville City Council Update

Vice Mayor Kilgore recapped action taken at the prior night's council meeting and referred people to the city's online engagement hub for additional information.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Wells thanked Isley for her annual presentation to commissioners earlier in the month. Then she shared recent county-related updates, including information about the short-term rental ad hoc committee and the county's development of the 2030 strategic plan.

Board Member Updates

Durden acknowledged outgoing board members, Kathleen Mosher and Scott Patel, for their volunteer service; they will be honored during the BCTDA Annual Meeting. Mosher will continue to serve on the Legacy Investment from Tourism (LIFT) Fund Committee.

Durden said Tim Rosebrock, Biltmore's Vice President of Compliance & Legal Services, was appointed by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce to replace Mosher on the board, effective September 1, 2024. She also shared that the Buncombe County Commissioners would be appointing a replacement for Scott Patel following candidate interviews in September.

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.

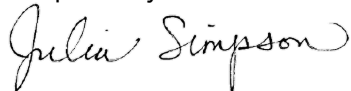
Adjournment

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, September 25, 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 10:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Simpson, Manager, Executive & Strategy