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, May 28, 2025

Present (Voting):	Brenda Durden, Chair; Matthew Lehman, Vice Chair; HP Patel, Larry Crosby, Lucious Wilson, Elizabeth Putnam, Himanshu Karvir, Tim Rosebrock
Absent (Voting):	Michael Lusick
Present (Ex-Officio):	Asheville Vice Mayor Antanette Mosley**,** Buncombe County Commissioner Terri Wells
Absent (Ex-Officio):	None
Staff:	Vic Isley, Tiffany Thacker, Jennifer Kass-Green, Michael Kryzanek, Josh Jones, Ashley Greenstein, Dodie Stephens, Jay Curwen, Kristen Childers, Mike Kryzanek, Connie Holliday, Allison Bashford, Sarah Myers
BC Finance:	Melissa Moore
Legal Counsel:	Sabrina Rockoff, McGuire, Wood & Bissette
In-Person Attendees:	Dan Gerlach, Dan Gerlach, LLC Chuck Cordell, Parks Hospitality Group Crystal Cumaccio, Virtelle Hospitality / The Element Dave Nutter, Connect Buncombe Chad Truitt. Morgan Sykes; Mountain Xpress John Ellis, Retiree Olivia Ward, OnWard Digital Media Megan Thorp, Tanger Asheville Randy Claybrook, Asheville B & B Association Kimberly King, WLOS Michael Rottjakob, Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association Meghan Rogers, Asheville Independent Restaurants
Online Attendees:	Emily Crosby, Khal Khoury, Mckenzie Provost, Emilie Soffe; Explore Asheville Felicia Sonmez, Blue Ridge Public Radio Summer Casiano, Tanger Outlets Asheville Jim Muth, TPDF Committee Chip Craig, Greybeard Realty Lacy Cross, Movement Bank Mason Scott, Buncombe County Diane Rogers, Pinecrest Bed & Breakfast Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times

Rick Bell, Asheville Buncombe Hotel Association
Chris Smith, Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission
Kelly Doty, WLOS News 13 Asheville
Kim Lenox, Emily Ditto, Lucy Dozier, Maddie Beischel, Megan Shields; MMGY
Kristina Kletke, Parks Hospitality Group
Elizabeth Pritchitt, Friends of the Woods
Peter Pollay, Posana
Brad Durden, Asheville Hotel Group
Kathryn Dewey, The Foundry Asheville
Stephanie Massey, Carla Trull, Jacob Chandler; First Citizens Bank

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 April 30, 2025 BCTDA meeting were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- April 2025 financials were approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Melissa Moore provided an update on Buncombe County sales tax collections.
- Vic Isley provided the President & CEO's report.
- Dan Gerlach presented on Buncombe County economic and employment impacts post-Helene.
- FY26 budget presentation was given; with an 8-0 vote. A public hearing for the consideration of the FY26 proposed budget ordinance was set for June 25.
- Two TPDF expedited funding recommendations were reviewed and approved with an 8-0 vote.
- Brief updates from Vice Mayor Antanette Mosley and Commissioner Terri Wells were heard.
- With an 8-0 vote, the BCTDA meeting adjourned at 10:45 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 ExloreAsheville.com.

Durden paused to honor the life and contributions of Highland Brewing Founder, Oscar Wong.

Introductions were made around the room.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Putnam made a motion to approve the April 30, 2025 regular meeting minutes. Rosebrock seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

Financial Updates

April 2025 Financial Reports

Melissa Moore, BCTDA Fiscal Agent, presented April 2025 financials. She reviewed operating and earned revenue funds, project funds, and year-to-date lodging sales trends by month and lodging type.

There were no questions. Patel motioned to approve the April 2025 financial reports as presented. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0.

Buncombe County Sales Tax Update
Moore presented information on Buncombe County sales tax collections as compared to prior fiscal year, noting the February increase was the most significant increase in two years.

A clarification was provided about the inability to see County sales tax by industry, the County receives tax information by article only. A discussion around the shifting of spending categories during recovery ensued. As spending from State and City HUD action plans happens, sales tax and spending patterns will vary throughout the recovery timeline.

Penalty Waiver Request
A penalty waiver request from Parks Hospitality Group was received by Explore Asheville staff on May 6, 2025. The written request for $4,166.37 to have the penalty fees waived was provided to the BCTDA to review in advance of today's meeting. Buncombe County Finance Department confirmed outstanding occupancy taxes for March 2025 and applicable penalty fees, as previously outlined, are still owed to the County.

Karvir made a motion to approve the penalty waiver request from Parks Hospitality Group in the amount of $4,166.37. Putnam seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken; the motion carried 8-0. This approval will be sent to Buncombe County Commissioners for review and vote.

President & CEO Report

Vic Isley presented April 2025 lodging occupancy and demand compared to previous years, as well as fiscal-year-to-date combined demand for hotel and vacation rentals.

Isley recapped recent activities and events, including Heroes of Hospitality, the inaugural hospitality scholarship awards, and the ribbon cutting for Phase 2 of the Black Cultural Heritage Trail Mural.

A request was received to view what supply looks like in direct comparison to demand. Isley reported that this will be shown in July annual lodging recap. A conversation followed around whether it is possible to view breakdown of contract vs. leisure travel in our monthly lodging figures, which is not possible. In July, staff will present midyear data including comparative markets and submarkets.

Economic and Employment Data
Dan Gerlach, LLC presented on the economic and employment impacts of Helene, specifically looking at physical capital, financial capital, and human capital. Gerlach noted the substantial losses in Buncombe County, totaling almost a billion dollars, stating that over half of all Helene damage was felt in Buncombe.

Gerlach spoke to the hospitality-specific employment damage, indicating that even as the economy is recovering in the three-county area, hospitality and leisure employment lag, with hospitality jobs taking more than three times their share of unemployment insurance claims. Gerlach and Isley answered questions and provided clarification.

Proposed FY26 Budget

HP Patel, Treasurer of the nonprofit, shared the makeup of the Finance Committee and the rationale behind the FY26 budget presentation and considerations.

Jennifer Kass-Green, vice president of culture and business affairs for Explore Asheville, expanded upon the budget considerations for the upcoming fiscal year. She reminded the Board of the original FY25 operating budget and forecast, the ensuing amendment, and the anticipated year-end actuals by fund and department. Kass-Green reviewed the BCTDA financial management policy and the lodging tax revenue split before presenting the FY26 proposed operating budget with revenue forecast with budget considerations in the areas of salaries and benefits, marketing, business development, partnership and destination management. Kass-Green also provided information around fund balances for TPDF and LIFT and earned revenue forecasts.

A conversation ensued and all questions were answered. Karvir motioned that the board direct that the presented budget ordinance be made available for public review and that a public hearing be set for the consideration of the ordinance for the next board meeting on June 25 at 9:00 a.m. Crosby seconded the motion. A vote was taken; motion carried 8-0.

The proposed budget presentation and ordinance is on file with Explore Asheville and posted on ExploreAsheville.com

TPDF Expedited Recommendations

Tiffany Thacker, vice president of partnership and destination management, reviewed the board's strategic priorities set in the March planning session and provided an overview of this year's TPDF timeline and process, including fund amounts, number of applications received, and next steps.

Thacker shared the full project requests, scope for expedited approval, timeline, justification for the expedited approval, and committee recommendations for the two expedited recommendations: Enka Youth Sports Organization – Bob Lewis Ballpark Updates and Asheville Buncombe Youth Sports Association – JBL Soccer Complex restoration.

Clarifying questions were fielded by Thacker and Isley. Putnam made the motion to approve expedited funding for these two projects as recommended and presented by the TPDF Committee. Wilson seconded the motion. A vote was taken; motion carried 8-0.

Asheville City Council Update

Asheville Vice Mayor Antanette Mosley reported on recent city-related business, including the reopening of riverfront parks and greenways, the HUD workplan approval, and the development of a temporary activation program with expedited permitting so residents can use public property for art, signage, or cleanup information. Mosley noted repairs to two parking decks (Rankin and Wall St.) will start this summer, with 10-week closures each. Mosley concluded with the announcement of the RFP issued for Azalea Road. Design and engagement should take two years.

Buncombe County Commission Update

Commissioner Wells reported on recent county-related business, including pools opening, the upcoming FY26 budget vote, committee openings for the Swannanoa small area plan, and Town Halls starting in the region – the first is June 26 at North Windy Ridge.

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 ExploreAsheville.com.

The next joint BCTDA meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 25, 2025 beginning at 9:00 a.m., in the Explore Asheville Board Room, located at 27 College Place.

Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Crosby seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion carried 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarah Myers, Manager, Executive & Strategy