

## Meeting Minutes

Pitt Greenville Convention & Visitors Authority

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Hilton (Julep Restaurant)

**Board members present:** CVA Chair Diane Taylor, CVA Secretary Bri Lester, CVA Assistant Secretary Aileen Peacock, Staci Moye, Brittany Parker, Dr. Brenda Fairfax, Chamika White, and Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker. CVA Staff members present included Andrew Schmidt, Sierra Jones, Rachel Whitten, Mary Ann Ricks, and Molly Haviland. Peyton Burgess and Kayla Brown represented the CVB's advertising agency of record French-West-Vaughan.

**Board members absent:** CVA Vice-Chair Candace Hollingsworth, Bob Sheck, Brett Morgan, Jay Bastardo, County Commissioner liaison Chris Nunnally, City Council liaison Matt Scully, and Deputy Finance Officer Jacob Joyner could not attend.

**I. Call to Order:** Chairwoman Diane Taylor called the meeting to order at 11:43am. Executive Director Schmidt recognized Peyton Burgess and Kayla Brown from French West Vaughan as well as the CVB's two newest employees, Mary Ann Ricks and Molly Haviland.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** Executive Director Schmidt reviewed the minutes of May 22, 2025, full board meeting and asked the board members to review to see if any changes that needed to be made. Staci Moye made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Convention Center liaison Rhesa Tucker and passed unanimously.

**III. Annual Report from French West Vaughan:** Peyton Burgess and Kayla Brown conducted an advertising and marketing year in review for the CVA Board going over various campaigns and documenting the success of the media plan. In one example, Brown mentioned that individuals were spending an average of 14 seconds on our home page. Chairwoman Taylor asked if that was enough time to be deemed successful. Brown stated that this amount of time on the home page is a good indicator of someone deciding to explore more about the destination.

**IV. Executive Directors Report:** Executive Director Schmidt shared the following during his Executive Directors Report:

- Schmidt shared the final 2024 travel and tourism numbers for Greenville-Pitt County. Schmidt stated that \$320.11 million was generated through travel and tourism during the 2024 calendar year, a 2.3% increase from 2023. Schmidt said that \$9.6 million was generated in local taxes helping each resident to save \$123.16. Pitt County ranks 26<sup>th</sup> in visitor expenditures out of North Carolina's 100 counties and travel and tourism employed over 2,100 of our residents.
- Schmidt gave a public policy update. Schmidt stated that he had just returned from the September Economic Development Partnership Board meeting and that funding is the biggest issue right now for both the economic development arm and travel and tourism

division. Currently, EDPNC has no funding for marketing the state and the state travel and tourism office is running on a budget equivalent of the 2006 fiscal year. Schmidt urged the board to please contact our legislators to encourage them to end the budget impasse, which is causing these funding issues.

- Schmidt gave an overview of the Chamber's inter-city visit that he will participate in next week. The Chamber's inter-city visit will take place in Chattanooga, Tennessee from September 29<sup>th</sup> through October 1<sup>st</sup>. The goal of the visit is to talk with a variety of Chattanooga city officials/departments to learn more about how they have implemented certain policies, engaged in public-private partnerships, and marketed their communities to help them grow. There are twenty-three community members from Greenville-Pitt County that will be attending the trip.

### **Staff Updates:**

Sierra Jones gave a marketing and communications update to the CVA Board of Directors.

- Jones gave an update on the web analytics for Visitgreenvillenc.com and social media statistics that covered the period of January 2025 through the present. Jones reviewed the number of users, sessions, page views, locations of viewers, and the top pages viewed for the website and number of followers and reach for the CVB's social media platforms.
- Jones shared the planning for the CVB's 2025-2026 media plan is well-underway and that it's anticipated that approximately \$280,000 will be spent this fiscal year marketing Greenville and Pitt County. Jones explained the mix of advertising methods that would be utilized throughout the year.
- Jones summarized activity thus far this calendar year associated with the First Friday Artwalk's. The number of riders on the Artwalk trolley has been excellent and the businesses within the city center are benefiting from the traffic it is creating. Jones did confirm that a new trolley had been ordered. The purchase was made possible through a collaboration between the City of Greenville, Pitt County Arts Council at Emerge, and the CVB.
- Jones explained that the hiring process for the two new CVB positions was complete and introduced both Mary Ann Ricks and Molly Haviland. Both Mary Ann and Molly took a moment to give the board members some information about their background and what their focus would be during their onboarding process.

VP of Sales & Services Rachel Whitten gave a convention, and meetings update to the CVA Board.

- Whitten gave an update on the meeting and convention leads that were generated during the months of May through August of 2025. Whitten also shared the number of

service opportunities that the CVB was involved in, thanking Josh for all his hard work in ensuring our groups have a positive experience while visiting and meeting with us.

- Whitten summarized the conferences and events that she has attended and plans to attend over the next few months as well as her community and industry engagement efforts. Whitten also highlighted the professional development opportunities that she has been able to participate in.
- Whitten reviewed an updated list of both planners and tournament services that the CVB is offering to planners bringing their events to Greenville-Pitt County. Whitten explained that these services are complimentary and key in helping to add value for both the planner and attendee.
- Whitten shared some new items that the CVB has recently purchased to bring additional value to groups that meet in Greenville-Pitt County. These items are designed to create additional entertainment opportunities and things to do for both adults and children. Whitten did say that there is a comprehensive procedure for those who are wanting to borrow our items for their events.

Executive Director Andrew Schmidt gave a sports complex update to the CVA Board

- The City of Greenville and East Carolina University have approved a lease whereby the City of Greenville will utilize the North Recreational Campus for resident activation and sports tourism beginning in January of 2027. A 15-month transition period begins October 1<sup>st</sup>. Schmidt stated that he will be involved in several planning sessions to iron out staffing and marketing and an update will be given to the City Council at their January 2026 planning retreat.

## **V. Finance report:**

- Executive Director Schmidt gave the occupancy tax report. July 2025 collections totaled \$130,092.58 which was a 22.61% decrease from collections in July 2024. Schmidt said that there were a few hotels that were late in getting their payments in so the total should be much better than it was. Schmidt continued that Pitt County has asked to delay reporting for two weeks so that all the hotels have ample time to get their payments in. As a result, the August occupancy tax report will come out in the first week of October. Schmidt said this delay will result in more accurate reporting and make it easier to plan and budget. During this report, Dr. Brenda Fairfax asked why the hotel rates were so very high during a football game weekend. CVA Secretary Bri Lester explained that special weekend events are often higher and rates are set based on supply and demand.
- Schmidt reviewed the current year-to-date budget report. The report, which was run on September 22, 2025, showed that the CVB has spent 21.2% of its yearly budget thus far.

Schmidt stated that the CVB should not expend more than 25% of its yearly budget by the end of September.

- Executive Director Schmidt gave an update on the CVB's current cash balance as Finance Director Jacob Joyner was unable to attend the September meeting. Schmidt shared that as of August 31, 2025, the CVB currently had an operations reserve of \$997,067. GCC's marketing reserve is \$421,321 and the Capital Reserve account stands at \$3,039,763. Schmidt said that the Capital Reserve balance reflects the initial payment that has already been made to ECU for the sports complex lease.

#### **VI. Old Business**

- Schmidt shared that the CVA's budget amendment for \$140,000 for new creative advertising was approved at the September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, City Council meeting.
- Executive Director Schmidt shared that he shared the CVB's 2025-2026 Program of Work to the CVA Board via email earlier this week. Schmidt asked if any board members would like to further discuss the plan he would love to have a conversation with them at a mutually convenient time.

#### **VII. New Business:**

- Executive Director Schmidt brought up the fact that the CVB will be expending the last ARPA payment of \$150,000 within this fiscal year. Schmidt shared that he will be focusing on working to try and establish additional funding sources and may need to call on the board to help with some of these conversations as they begin.

**VIII. Adjournment:** With no other business, CVA Chairwoman Diane Taylor closed the meeting at 12:53pm.

Respectfully submitted

Bri Lester  
CVA Secretary