

# Gastonia ABC Board

## Performance Audit Report



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## Alcoholic Beverage Control

August 28, 2025

**CHAIRMAN:**

Hank Bauer

Gastonia ABC Board

**COMMISSIONERS:**

La'Tanta (L.T.) McCrimmon  
Raleigh

Bobby Long, Chair

1840 S. York Rd

Gastonia, NC 28052

David Sherlin

Raleigh

Chairperson Long,

**DEPUTY COMMISSIONER:**

Mike DeSilva

On the following pages, you will find the performance audit report conducted by the staff of the ABC Commission reviewing the operations of the Gastonia ABC Board. The report consists of an overview of the objectives & background summary, financial analysis and findings, and a summary of actions recommended based upon your board's performance and related findings. Additional considerations are listed as well to provide further guidance and enhance awareness to promote ABC board success.

**LOCATION:**

400 East Tryon Road  
Raleigh NC 27610

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Raleigh NC 27699-4307

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<http://abc.nc.gov/>

Please reach out if you have any questions or require assistance in implementing any of the statute requirements, Commission rules, or other recommendations included in the report. On behalf of the North Carolina ABC Commission, I thank you and your staff for your assistance and cooperation in conducting this periodic review. We appreciate the continued efforts by your board to comply with the performance standards, as well as the board's commitment to increase profitability and reduce expenses.

If we can be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Commission staff.

Respectfully,

Michael DeSilva

Deputy Commissioner

## **OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In addition to regular and special financial audits, G.S. 18B-705(a) authorizes the NC ABC Commission to conduct performance audits of all local ABC boards in the state. Performance audits are examinations of existing operating policies, practices, controls, and activities to determine those areas in which there may be a need for improvement.

The audits are designed to ensure that all local ABC Boards comply with established performance standards pursuant to G.S. 18B-203(a)(20). The audit's scope addresses compliance with ABC laws and rules, store appearance, operating efficiency, solvency, and customer service.

To achieve the objectives of the audit, auditors:

- Review applicable General Statutes, ABC Commission Rules, and Administrative Policies
- Review applicable reports and studies of ABC Boards with similar size and geography.
- Verify compliance with Commission and Board policies.
- Verify results of previous performance audit recommendations
- Review ABC Board annual independent financial audits.
- Review ABC Board reporting and documentation reports.
- Visit the store(s)
- Interview key ABC Board personnel.

Gastonia North Carolina is a three-time All-America City and recipient of the U.S. Conference of Mayors top Livability Award, Gastonia is recognized as one of the area's best places to live and work with an ideal combination of location, size, and quality of life. Those factors, combined with the City's strategic location, just minutes west of Charlotte and midway between Atlanta and North Carolina's Research Triangle, attracts business and industry looking for an ideal site to locate, re-locate, or expand.

With major highways, interstates, railroads, and airports all within a 15-minute drive, Gastonia surely understands the importance in ease of transportation for its local businesses and residents. The city of Gastonia continues to stay proactive by pushing plans for light rail and commuter trains.

Additionally, the city council and staff understand the importance of Gastonia being a destination for people to be active, enjoy, and stay. This is why the city is investing in the FUSE District, Franklin Urban Sports and Entertainment District, between Loray Mills and our Downtown.

The FUSE District is more than a sports and entertainment complex. It is the heart of a growing commercial district that features the best of urban living: residential choices, sports and entertainment options, offices, restaurants, retail shops, services, green spaces and more. The FUSE sports and entertainment complex will be home to a variety of venues and events. It can accommodate an array of sports – baseball, football, soccer, lacrosse, even ice-skating – as well as concerts, fairs, and more.

Gastonia is in the heart of the Piedmont section of the State of North Carolina, approximately 22 miles west of Charlotte and covers an area of approximately 51.69 square miles. Also, it is the third largest city in the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia NC-SC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as identified by the United States Census Bureau. An effective transportation system is critical to the economic and social well-being of the community. The City of Gastonia recognizes the importance of developing an efficient transportation system that is environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible, while being responsive to the community's needs, remaining consistent with land use plans, and fostering economic vitality. The goal is to achieve a balanced system that meets the needs of people of all ages and abilities, while also meeting the needs of businesses, industry, and area employers.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport is less than a 30-minute drive away, which provides a portal for business and leisure around the world. Furthermore, the City of Gastonia Municipal Airport, a general aviation airport, is only a short drive from our downtown. The airport serves a growing number of corporate and personal aircraft's powerful and quiet enough to utilize our convenient and economical facility. Interstate 85 and US Highway 321 provide residents and industries with the ability to be in the mountain areas quickly or to ship a product efficiently.

The executive director is responsible for the oversight of all daily operations, inventory management, accounts payable, human resource organization and other administrative decisions for the board. The board's FO assists with payroll, financial reporting, and other bookkeeping duties as needed. The Board hired an external accountant that generates the annual audit reports. All store employee's primary responsibility is to provide friendly customer service to all customers, store upkeep and stock maintenance.

A mixed beverage referendum occurred on September 19, 1967, and it passed. *Currently, the Gastonia ABC Board appoints a chairman, four “4” additional board members and an Executive Director to serve on the ABC board.* The Gastonia ABC Board currently operates six (6) retail stores. The board staffs forty-eight (48) in total personnel. These include thirty-nine (39) part-time and nine (9) full time personnel. The executive director is responsible for daily store operations including supervising personnel, inventory management, and various retail functions. The board’s Executive Director provides the board with fiscal management, administrative support, and oversees routine operations of the ABC stores. Sales associate responsibilities include, selling products, daily stocking, and floor upkeep & maintenance.

*The last performance audit for the Gastonia ABC Board occurred in 2016.* The Commission audit serves as a continuous way to provide local boards with information and best practices that target areas for improvement.



1840 S. York Rd, Gastonia, N.C.

## **OPERATIONAL OBSERVATIONS, FINDINGS, REQUIRED ACTIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS**

On Tuesday, June 24, 2025, ABC Board Program Analyst II Eric McClary, visited the Gastonia ABC Board and interviewed David Fish. (Executive Director). Below is a financial analysis followed by operation observations, findings, and recommendations related to the performance audit.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

### PROFIT PERCENTAGE TO SALES & OPERATING COST RATIO

- In fiscal year (FY) 2023-2024, the Gastonia ABC Board had a profit percentage to sales ratio of 9.51%. The NC ABC Commission profit to sales standards for ABC Boards with gross sales greater than \$10M is 9.0%.
  - Gastonia ABC Board's gross sales totaled \$18,312,678, which was an approximate 0.4% increase from the previous fiscal year.
- Gastonia ABC Board operates six retail stores with mixed beverage sales. The operating cost ratio for the board was .58 in FY 2023-2024. The NC ABC Commission standard for ABC Boards with three or more stores and mixed beverage is .63 or less.
  - Operating cost ratio is calculated by dividing total operating expenses less depreciation by the gross profit on sales (Total operating expenses less depreciation/Gross Profit).

Thus, the Gastonia ABC Board met the profitability standard and met the operating cost standard set by the NC ABC Commission. Below is a chart showing gross profit on sales and income from operations for the previous two years.

	FY 2023-2024	FY 2022-2023
<b>Gross Profit on Sales</b>	\$4,475,612	\$4,455,096
<b>Income from Operations</b>	\$1,742,413	\$1,916,149

*Factors affecting profitability and cost include:*

- Surrounding areas with other ABC systems which are within a 25-mile radius include Mount Holly ABC, Cramerton ABC, Cherryville ABC, Bessemer City ABC, Belmont ABC, Lincolnton ABC, Kings Mountain ABC and Shelby ABC.
- An ABC Board's average cost of goods sold (COGS) is between 52% & 54% per year.
- The Gastonia ABC Board's cost of goods sold was approximately 52.5% in FY 2024.
- The board currently has approximately 69 active mixed beverage customers.

### BUDGET ANALYSIS

	FY 2023-2024 Budget Projections	FY2023-2024 Actual	Variance	Variance %
<b>Sales</b>	\$19,042,000	\$18,370,823	(\$671,177)	(3.5%)
<b>Revenue over or (under)</b>				
<b>Expenditures</b>		\$242,612		

In reviewing the budget to actual analysis of the FY 2023-2024 financial audit, actual sales revenues were less than forecasted projections by 3.5%. After reconciliation, the change in the Board's end net position was \$5,641,241.

## DISTRIBUTIONS

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G.S. 18B-805 (b) requires the board to pay from gross receipts, all expenses, excise, and rehabilitation taxes. G.S. 18B-805(c)(2) requires the board to *typically* distribute at least five percent (5%) of applicable gross receipts to law enforcement and *typically* at least seven percent (7%) for alcohol education. *Before assigning these percentage distributions, G.S. 18B-805(c)(1) requires the board to first make a minimum quarterly distribution of the 3.5% markup & relevant bottle charges to certain county/municipal recipients. Some of these distribution percentages are designated by an official local enabling act (and thus distribution requirements and recipients are subject to vary).*

Gastonia ABC made a total of \$4,228,329 in primary distributions and other taxes were paid to the NC Department of Revenue (NCDOR), NC Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS), and the county commissioners of Gaston County.

*Per the local enabling act, the distribution formula for recipients of net profits is as follows:*

- One Hundred five percent (100%) to City of Gastonia.

## WORKING CAPITAL

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G.S. 18B-805(d) allows the board to set aside a portion of the remaining gross receipts, within the limits set by the rules of the Commission, as cash to operate the ABC system.

- o NCAC 15A .0902 sets a working capital maximum standard for boards with annual gross sales greater than \$1.5M as an amount equal to three (3) months of gross sales.
- o G.S. 18B-702(g)(3) defines "Working Capital" as the total of cash, investments, and inventory less all unsecured liabilities. As it pertains to working capital computation, gross sales mean gross receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages less distributions as defined in G.S. 18B-805(b)(2), (3), and (4).

Based upon the existing rules, as of June 30, 2024, the Gastonia ABC Board is required to maintain a minimum working capital of \$541,706 with a maximum working capital amount of \$3,521,087.

- o The Gastonia ABC Board had a working capital balance of \$3,519,185 which is more than the minimum and less than the maximum Commission requirements for this section (\*).

**\* FY 2023-2024: Working Capital (WC) graphic**





- Under G.S. 18B-805(d), with approval of the appointing authority for the board, the local board may set aside a portion of the remaining gross receipts as a fund for specific capital improvements whenever working capital is exceeded.

## **PERSONNEL, OPERATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE**

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*The findings for personnel, operational & administrative compliance are as follows:*

The board holds board meetings the last Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM, records regular meeting minutes, and provides public notification and awareness of these meetings. The meeting minutes are organized in a very organized three ring binder for each month for review. They record regular meeting minutes and provide public notification and awareness of these meetings. The meetings are organized by session and kept in said three ring binder. Board meetings were viewed and followed the order of proceedings, providing sufficient detail that a reasonable person would be able to follow what transpired.

° Training Records: Board members and board personnel are fully compliant on ethics training referencing GS 18B-706.

- Oath of Office: All board members have taken an oath per discussion and verification with the general manager and all Oaths are onsite. All board members should take an oath before taking office or before the execution *website*.
- General Manager (GM) Salary and Board Member compensation: GM salary fully adheres to 18B-700(g1) statute requirements. The Board member compensation complies with statute 18B-700(g) requirement. Employees' salaries exceed the statute requirement, and the salaries have been approved and the Commission has verification on file.
- Board website review: The board's login website was updated by the Commission in 2022 for board member term tenure information (*begin dates & end dates*). **Special note**: As part of a revalidation effort, the Commission has worked to revalidate term tenure information for all ABC boards across the state, working directly with the appointing authorities. As a value-added measure for all ABC boards and Commission records tracking in summer 2022, the term begin dates as well as term end dates were entered on all individual ABC board websites.
  - *The expectation going forward is that ABC boards will better manage this information online, and work to communicate with the Commission particularly when new members are added, or whenever any current serving members resign before a term has ended.*
- Board Personnel & Board Members: The general manager is very detailed and meticulous with oversight and recordkeeping including keeping board meeting minutes in heavily reinforced binders and all record keeping is numbered and organized. The Finance Officer provides board members with monthly sales information and previous year's applicable sales and operational concerns along with financials from the accounting firm. Board members are heavily encouraged by the Commission to use checks and balances to ensure that cash management practices are upheld; also, boards should routinely review any notes and recommendations provided by the CPA firm on annual audits.
- POLICIES: The board does have a personnel manual. For travel policy, Commission records indicate the board adheres to the municipal/local policy and the Commission has documentation of the requires approval.
- Additional policies could be considered and provided to the Commission for record keeping including but not limited to, tastings or employee tastings, and social media.

- **FINANCIAL INSIGHT:** Invoices are processed monthly by the Finance Officer. Invoice records for recent liquor purchases reflect them as being paid routinely well inside of 30 days. Taxes and distributions are paid in a routine and timely manner. The board's accountant uses Dalcom for routine journal entries.

## **PERSONNEL, OPERATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE (cont.)**

- Bank deposits are routinely made each business day per review of bank Statements and discussion with Executive Director. For safeguard measures and adherence to *Commission rule 15A .0905 Daily Deposits*, the board utilizes a locked fireproof safe for integrity of funds that remain at the board at any given time.
- All board members and applicable personnel are each bonded for \$50,000 per G.S. 18B-700(i).
- Law Enforcement (LE) Contract: The board has an active contract on file, dated 1996. The commission will require an updated LE contract. The board also has been submitting LE reports since January 2024 and fully compliant.
- The annual CPA audit was received and logged by the Commission on September 17, 2024.

➤ **STATUTORY DISTRIBUTIONS:**

- Net Profit Distributions - The Gastonia ABC Board has routinely made the minimum mandatory distributions to the designated recipients over the last three years referencing NCGS 18B-805(c)(1). **The table below references distributions calculated by CPA on the left and total net profit distributions made by the ABC Board for the last three (3) years on the right.**
- Law Enforcement Distributions: Have been properly disbursed at or above the regular 5% statute amount over the last three (3) fiscal years.
- Alcohol Education Distributions: Have been properly disbursed at or above the regular 7% statute amount. This distribution category has been increased moderately annually.

<b>NC GENERAL STATUTE: 18B-805 (c)(1)</b>			
<b>Calculation of Minimum Mandatory Distribution for Net Profit to Designated Recipients</b>		<b>Gastonia ABC Board Net profit distribution made annually by fiscal year</b>	
<b><u>Note:</u> Referencing CPA Audit Reports</b>			
<b>CPA Calculated Amount</b>		<b>Total paid to recipient(s)</b>	
<b>FY-2024</b>	<b>\$1,800,556</b>	<b>FY-2024</b>	<b>\$1,337,945</b>
<b>FY-2023</b>	<b>\$1,443,113</b>	<b>FY-2023</b>	<b>\$1,034,082</b>
<b>FY-2022</b>	<b>\$451,308</b>	<b>FY-2022</b>	<b>\$1,337,617</b>

## **PERSONNEL, OPERATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE (cont.)**

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- LAW ENFORCEMENT (LE) REPORTS: Reports have been submitted online routinely since January 2024.
- LAW ENFORCEMENT (LE) CONTRACT: The Commission does have an electronic copy of a law enforcement contract however this contract is dated 1996. The Commission will require an updated copy.
- INVENTORY: Full store inventories are conducted quarterly. Outside of this, spot checks in certain categories are conducted at random intervals.
- INTERNAL CONTROLS:
  - The board has a Finance Officer, and forty-eight total employees. The board has thirty-nine part-time (39) employees and 9 (nine) full time employees to support the Executive Director.
  - The board has 3 tills, all are funded with \$200.00 in each
  - The opening manager gets loan out of the safe for the clerk. The manager will then gauge how much and what change is required.
  - The Finance Officer prepares monthly financial statements for the board. The Executive Director reviews the statements and makes these available for the monthly board meetings.
  - Invoice information is entered Dalcom, cash requirements are printed for the truck shipments and the Purchase Orders History from the computer system and is utilized to balance totals to make sure invoices / inventory match the system.
  - Bank Deposits are made each day by the on-duty employee designated by the Executive Director. Personnel review deposits and the general manager compares deposit slips with bank statements and the Finance Officer reviews at monthly reconciliation. *For safeguard measures and adherence to Commission rule 15A0905 Daily Deposits, the board utilizes a locked fireproof safe for integrity of funds that remain at the board at any given time.*
- EXPENSES:
  - Total operating expenses increased 7.6% from the last fiscal year.
  - Board salaries were roughly 9.7% of total annual sales.
  - Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) were an impressive 52.5%.

## STORE INSIGHT & OVERVIEW

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*The findings for store insight & overview are as follows:*

- Store has a modern layout, good ergonomics for shoppers, and plenty of inventory on the shelves.
- Sales associate interactions with customers are attentive, courteous, and all are eager to meet the needs of the customers.
- The board has 69 MXB customers as of June 18, 2025.
- A random sample of approximately 120 items were selected to determine if uniform pricing is displayed. Of those selected, there were none that required updating. Every item reflected the correct quarterly or monthly SPA price. The board highlights the monthly SPA products very well with visual aids.
- Besides closing on the two (2) required annual holidays and every Sunday, the board may opt to continue closing on New Year's Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, and Labor Day annually.
- The store displays the required Fetal Alcohol Syndrome poster required by G.S. 18B-808.
- Products are placed within the designated categories; premium products are found at eye-level or top shelf and very organized and very detailed oriented, bottles were also neatly fronted and dusted. However, bottles are organized from right to left in size.
- Outside area surrounding the store is well-maintained and free of debris or trash.
- Security systems are in place and functional in all designated areas.
  - *Sixteen (16) cameras work to cover the property footprint with eight outside and eight interior cameras.*

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (PER STATUTES OR COMMISSION RULES)

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- In connection with the periodic audit, a Certificate of Accountability attestation form should be reviewed and signed by board members and applicable personnel. A signed copy would then only need to be emailed to Commission personnel for recordkeeping.
- Please ensure all newly adopted policies or any updated policies are submitted electronically to the Commission for recordkeeping and review per NCAC 15A .1102 Rule. Electronic copies of the personnel manual should be emailed to Commission personnel for recordkeeping.
- The board is recommended to forward a current law enforcement contract. Please provide a copy to the Commission *per G.S. 18B-501(f)*.
- Local boards shall establish and maintain a shelf management plan per Commission Rule 15A .1708 Shelf Management. While mostly followed, the board could work to rearrange liquor inventory on the shelves to follow shelf management requirements, in particular ensuring bottles increase in size from left to right where applicable.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS & GUIDANCE ....

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- The Commission's primary focus for ABC board members:
- ABC board members are highly encouraged to meet monthly for the best formal oversight and review of board operations, routinely recording meeting minutes (*adhering to closed meeting requirements where applicable*) and ensuring either no conflicts of interest are present or that they are addressed appropriately when presented. Monthly sales should be reported to the Commission at beginning of next month, providing annual budgets, budget amendments, miscellaneous financial reporting to Commission following timelines, and ensuring Commission has annual CPA audits by Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.
- ABC boards are highly encouraged to keep term begin dates & term end dates updated on the Commission's board login website for all ABC board members and other information such as store hour changes, pictures, email updates, etc. *Moreover, liaising with the Commission when new members are appointed or when member resign early before term has ended is very important for recordkeeping efforts of the Commission.*
- ABC boards are highly encouraged to find straightforward ways to lower any recurring expenses. *A very tangible way to lower operating costs is to fully maximize monthly special purchase allowance (SPA) liquor products that routinely sell well in the store to lower cost of goods sold (COGS).* ABC Boards can limit the number of personnel travelling to conference and convention events across the state. Other ways to try to improve expenses include requesting bids annually from various vendors to get the best rates possible on financial audits, various utilities, maintenance contracts, and *credit card processing companies.*
- ABC boards are encouraged to closely review financial statements monthly, comparing with the annual budget forecast, approving budget amendments when necessary and submitting copies to the Commission for anticipated sales increases as well as other adjustments for budgeted accounts.
- ABC Boards are required to operate within a balanced budget each fiscal year. Budget amendments must be approved by the board before any funds are transferred between accounts and utilized, occurring at the actual point of time an adjustment of funds is necessary. This would include the point in time during the fiscal year when the board will exceed its annual forecasted sales budget. *Ensure budget amendment copies are submitted to the ABC Commission as required per NCGS 18B-702(h), to include a final reconciliation budget amendment for the fiscal year end.*
- Cross training opportunities for personnel should be maximized to ensure solid continuity of operations occurs for ABC boards. Also, training opportunities can work well to develop store employees for increased responsibility roles and serving to make both the routine operations and employee morale stronger.
- NCAC Rule 15A .1701 requires quarterly reports be submitted for any unsaleable merchandise (breakage) and retain original copies for three (3) years. *All breakage reports should only be transmitted via email submission to Commission staff; copies should not be mailed.*
- As a reminder, remove all faded posters and replace with new ones when applicable. Reach out to the Commission to provide fetal alcohol syndrome posters, NC Dept of Labor can provide wage & hour posters, and OSHA can provide some applicable federal posters if any are needed.
- ABC boards can explore additional training opportunities periodically available through the ABC Commission as well as partnering with other ABC boards on specific areas such as best retail and marketing practices.



## Gastonia *ABC* System

*Bobby Long (Chairman)*  
*Melvin E. Burris (Vice-Chairman)*  
*Thomas L. Summer, Jr. (Treasurer)*  
*Keith Tidwell (Secretary)*  
*Michael R. Dean (Law Enforcement)*  
*David Fish (Executive Director)*

August 27, 2025

Dear Eric,

On behalf of the Gastonia ABC Board, we would like to thank you for attending our August 27, 2025 Board meeting via phone conference to present your final performance audit report. We always strive to exceed expectations with the North Carolina ABC Commission as well as the City of Gastonia. Please find below our responses to the findings and recommendations.

Item 1:

In connection with the periodic audit, a Certificate of Accountability attestation form should be reviewed and signed by board members and applicable personnel. A signed copy would then only need to be emailed to Commission personnel for recordkeeping. **A signed copy of the Certificate of Accountability has been sent to the NC ABC Commission.**

Item 2:

Please ensure all newly adopted policies or any updated policies are submitted electronically to the Commission for recordkeeping and review per NCAC 15A .1102 Rule. Electronic copies of the personnel manual should be emailed to Commission personnel for recordkeeping.

**All newly adopted policies or any updated policies will be submitted electronically to the NC ABC Commission for recordkeeping. To date, all current policies have been sent.**

Item 3:

The board is recommended to forward a current law enforcement contract. Please provide a copy to the Commission *per G.S. 18B-501(f)*.

**A signed copy of the new law enforcement contract has been sent to the NC ABC Commission.**

Item 4:

Local boards shall establish and maintain a shelf management plan per Commission Rule 15A .1708 Shelf Management. While mostly followed, the board could work to rearrange liquor inventory on the shelves to follow shelf management requirements, in particular ensuring bottles increase in size from left to right where applicable.

**All recommendations will be followed.**

We appreciate the professionalism, communication, and transparency you provided throughout the entire process. Going forward the Gastonia ABC Board will continue to strive to be a model Board for the State.

Regards,

*David Fish*

David Fish  
Executive Director  
Gastonia ABC Board



08      27      2025  
Month      Day      Year

Gastonia  
ABC Board

## Certificate of Accountability

This document assures this Board and the State of North Carolina that the following statutory duties required of local ABC Boards have been properly performed.

1. The system has complied with all State uniform pricing requirements pursuant to NCGS §18B-804.
2. That all alcoholic beverages sold have been approved by the Commission for sale in this State pursuant to NCGS §18B-800.
3. That all "gross receipts" pursuant to NCGS §18B-805(a) have been properly accounted for and are lawful.
4. That all taxes due and board expenses have been properly and timely paid pursuant to NCGS §18B-805(b).
5. That all distributions pursuant to NCGS §18B-805 have been properly and timely paid.
6. That the finance officer for the board has properly performed all duties as required pursuant to NCGS §18B-702(k).

Daniel C. Fish  
General Manager

Kimberly W. Spencer  
Financial Officer

Gary Lay  
Chairman

Michael R. Dean  
Board Member

Keith L. Liddell  
Board Member

James L. Scumacher  
Board Member

Mark E. Burns  
Board Member