



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 23, 2024

2023-2024 Board Members

President Edwin Peacock

Pres Elect Kim Brattain

Past Pres William Bradley

Secretary John Cantrell

Treasurer Craig Field

Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

Directors 2022-2024

Will Barnhardt

Glenn Bouley

Margaret Donovan

Laura Little

Mark Norman

Diego Ramon

Robert Shaw

Directors 2023-2025

Patrick Baker

Linwood Bolles

Terri DeBoo

Andy Dinkin

Donna Dunlap

David Head

Joel Ford

Membership Terri DeBoo

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Andy Dinkin



Mohammad Jenatian, President and CEO, Greater Charlotte Hospitality & Tourism Alliance

by **Bill Bartee**

Mohammad Jenatian emigrated from Iran to the United States. He made a point that it was done legally which is very difficult to do in today's climate of politics and bureaucratic red tape. Once he arrived, he fully embraced his new nation.

His career in hospitality began during his study of Civil Engineering at UNC-Charlotte. Hospitality was where he found the opportunity to make money during evenings and weekends while being a full-time student. He rose in the ranks in the hotel business and was in management before graduating college. It was during his time managing hotels in the Charlotte region that he began thinking of ways to improve tourism and hospitality for Charlotte.

The concept of a Hospitality & Tourism Alliance (HTA) came from Jenatian and other hospitality leaders in Charlotte. It began as a private membership organization with a mission to make Charlotte a tourism destination. He has been the President of the Greater Charlotte Hospitality & Tourism Alliance (HTA) since its inception in 1994. One of the crowning achievements occurred when the Charlotte Convention Center was built. When proposed by Jenatian, the response was, "What are you smoking?" according to our speaker. Since then, Charlotte's economic impact from tourism went from less than \$200 million to the current \$7.9 billion of economic impact in Mecklenburg County.

The \$176 million for the Charlotte Convention Center was raised through taxes from restaurants and hotel revenues. This way of raising money expanded the way that things have been built in Charlotte.

Currently, Charlotte and North Carolina are celebrating many successes from 2023:

- Charlotte Douglas International Airport had 53.4 million passengers
- North Carolina was recognized as one of the best states for business
- It is the #3 state in population growth in the United States
- Best year ever for conventions and events in Charlotte

Jenatian pointed out that the extension of the sunset taxes on hospitality will aid in the continuation of renovations to stadiums and the goal of keeping the Panthers and MLS team in Charlotte long-term.

Lastly, Mohammad Jenatian impressed the Charlotte Rotary meeting at Noble Smoke with the statement and slide, "It is NOT OK". This in reference to what he sees as the bad, ugly, and biggest problem in Charlotte: Public Safety.

He referenced his shock at the recent debate and conversation of elected city leaders permitting criminals and their advocates under the guise of compassion. When the question of is Uptown safety came up? Jenatian cited poor leadership that has made Uptown "not as safe as it used to [be]". We cannot allow criminals and their advocates to take over our community," he reiterated.

He implored the Charlotte Rotary, guests, and visitors to "Be an advocate for what is right."

*This week's meeting was not recorded.