

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting April 15, 2015

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
PHE, INC in Hillsborough

Board Members Present: Anthony Carey, Libbie Hough, Lee Storrow, Debbie Hepp, Rosemary Waldorf, Karen DeHart, Aaron Bachenheimer, Lee Pavao, Michelle Johnson, Nitin Khanna, Mike Gering, Penny Rich, Annette Stone, Meg McGurk

Not Present: Jill McCullough, Mark Sherburne

Staff attendance: Steve Brantley, Laurie Paolicelli, Tina Fuller, Martha Shannon, Amanda Garner

Also present: Sara Stephens & Kim Tesoro, Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce and Eric Hallman, Town of Hillsborough.

Call to Order

Chairman Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Carey requested a motion to approve the March 18, 2015 minutes. Lee Pavao so moved and Penny Rich seconded.
With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Welcome from Host

After introductions from members of the board, Adam & Eve's Director of Public Relations, Katy Zvolerin, gave a brief overview of PHE's community involvement and the organizations history

Town of Hillsborough/Hillsborough Orange County Chamber of Commerce Update

CEO Sara Stephens shared some upcoming new endeavors by the Chamber: new website, Riverwalk, event focused initiatives i.e., Connect the Dots promoting weekend happenings and Chopped – Local Food Meets Chef, a business expo with Chapel Hill/Carrboro Chamber, as well as a strong Christmas holiday destination promotion. Kim Tesoro commented that their first point of business is to spread information; the Chamber is in a good position to help Hillsborough. Sara added that 28 new businesses just joined.

Eric Hallman commented that Sara is doing a great job. Mr. Hallman talked about Riverwalk and the connecting greenways in Alamance, Wake and Durham counties, stating that the gap is Orange County. He is hoping that this could be a topic of discussion at the next joint meeting, noting that Durham did a study on the economic impact of greenways and trails where the findings were very positive. A comment was made that there has been discussion on what type of trail(s) it should be, such as, should horses and bikes be allowed as well as walking. Penny Rich added that now is the time to talk about it as an item for the upcoming bond referendum. Hallman reported that a bridge connecting to Occoneechee Speedway will be completed by this fall.

In other news, Mr. Hallman spoke on Hillsborough's growth factor, stating that they predict a 31% increase in population over the next 5 years; the Town received a request to annex the property behind Daniel Boone; DOT has proposed to provide funding for the new rail station off Orange Grove Street which would be served by Amtrak – looking at 2018-2019.

Mr. Hallman also briefed board members on the individual tourism boards and authorities: the tourism board deals with grants and is funded through F&B tax, whereas the tourism authority is funded through occupancy taxes and is currently reviewing ways to use the occupancy tax revenue. Mr. Hallman reported that the town is adding staff member(s) to help with tourism. Libbie Hough commented that there is a need to integrate services seamlessly without so much overlap and to align their missions as a whole in order to use their funds most effectively. Laurie Paolicelli commented that a concern would be that the occupancy tax would erode to things not benefitting hotels. Mike Gering commented that each board has enabling legislation with separate objectives and it would be a huge risk to get that legislation changed. Libbie Hough commented that two people from the tourism board serve on the TDA board but boards cannot meet together.

Budget Update

Penny Rich reported that February occupancy receipts are up from last year. Anthony commented and reiterated Nitin Khanna's concern that Epic rooms are gone; curious as to how March, April & May will look but noted that hotels are bringing in a higher Occupancy rate and RevPAR. Ms. Rich reported that the Bureau is spending down the fund balance. Ms. Rich reported that next year's budget request is 1.4 million and Laurie Paolicelli will review in her report. Penny expressed concern about Orange County Arts Commission's public art placeholder of \$25,000 – stating that the petitioned Ad-hoc committee has not been created yet. Rosemary Waldorf inquired if the occupancy tax came from just the Chapel Hill hotels. Laurie Paolicelli replied that it comes from all Orange County hotels.

Executive Director Report

Laurie Paolicelli alerted the Visitors Bureau board about an upcoming story in Chapel Hill News about the possibility of the Visitors Center one day relocating to the Old Town Hall on MLK. Although the newspaper article was reporting on a meeting Roger Stancil had with local groups, at this point everything was discussion only and many moving parts were involved, although the subject was prudent and one that should take place said Paolicelli.

Paolicelli turned discussion to the 2015-16 budget being proposed noting that because this board requested that the fund balance be spent this current year, the budget actually looked as it were less than the current fiscal year. In fact it reflects 5% growth with noted projects being: Advertising, which appears less because of the large amount of appropriated fund balance to advertising this year. However now that the Foodie and LGBT promotions were created, the advertising placements will remain steady. A new position of social media coordinator will be added; and a sales contractor will be hired to build leads with sales director. Other highlights include an overhauled website, publications, a mobile visitor kiosk and rural and foodie promotions. Although the OCAC has a line item of \$25,000, this has not been discussed by BOCC or the Manager. Mike Gering wants to be sure we are not reducing advertising. Anthony Carey asked for a sales report next month to review sales expenditures.

New Business/Roundtable

Debbie Hepp/ Arts Commission reported on the dates for the next grant cycle; a new website is on the horizon; and a call to artists for public display at the new EMC building in Raleigh.

Meg McGurk/Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership updated members with new summer planned events: Live & Local and Music under the Stars. She also reported that Carolina Square (123 West Franklin- old University Sq.) will undergo a 5 month deconstruction and new construction should begin in September – Granville Towers will remain and house summer campers as usual. May 10 is UNC Commencement.

Aaron Bachenheimer reported that the Grad Orientation will shift from a Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri schedule to a Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu schedule and invited feedback from the hoteliers on any changes in occupancy due to the change in days.

Annette Stone/Town of Carrboro reported that approximately 4500 attended the Sylvan/Esso concert held at Town Commons; the TDA is working hard on coming up with promotional swag; installation of a public art planter.

Lee Storrow/Town of Chapel Hill reported there would be a bond referendum discussion, announced he is running for re-election; upcoming council discussions include long term plans for infrastructure, greenways, and cultural arts. Storrow also announced that after a 10 year absence, the Young Democrats Convention was recently held in Chapel Hill where he was tasked with planning an evening at The Strowd and DSI – about 200 people collectively joined him. Laurie Paolicelli commented that the VB provided transportation for the group.

Karen DeHart/NCHSAA reported that they are finally moving back into their offices at 222 Finley Golf Course Rd this week, about 30 people will be staying in Chapel Hill May 4-7 for a board meeting and open house; Rick Steinbacher confirmed that High School football would return to Kenan Stadium in December.

Libbie Hough/Town of Hillsborough announced the Alliance's Civil War commemoration – The War Ends at Home, with many events planned throughout April.

Other Business:

The next board meeting will be held at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Carrboro

With no other discussion or business, Chairman Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:39 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman Lee Storrow, Vice
Chair

Date