

Approved May 18, 2016

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting April 20, 2016

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
The Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce, Chapel Hill, NC

Board Members Present: Andrew Strickland, Jeffrey Strickler, George Cianciolo, Tim Hoke, Rosemary Waldorf-Chair, Mark Sherburne, Karen DeHart, Aaron Bachenheimer, Lee Pavao-Vice Chair, Nitin Khanna, Penny Rich, Annette Stone, Lee Storrow,

Not Present: Shannon Campbell, Allison Nichols-Clapper, Michelle Johnson, Mark Bell, Laurie Paolicelli

Staff attendance: Marlene Barbera, Allison Chambers

Also present: Kristen Smith, Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce. Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager

Call to Order

Chair Rosemary Waldorf called the meeting to order at 8:08 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Waldorf requested a motion to approve the March 16, 2016 minutes. Lee Pavao so moved, Penny Rich seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted. She expressed her appreciation to the board for all the work that they do on behalf of Orange County.

Guest/host speakers

The Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce hosted our meeting and they were represented by Kristen Smith. Their focus is to make it easier to do business in the community. She reminded us that the room we were meeting in is rented to groups as a community resource space. The Chambers is planning their intercity visit, which they do every two years. This year they will be visiting Boulder Colorado. She offered the Chambers assistance to the board as an ongoing resource.

Chair Waldorf welcomed Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager to the meeting. She will be presenting the budget on May 5th, two weeks earlier than in the past, giving the Board of County Commissioner more time for deliberation. She offered background on her decision to form the Community Relations and Tourism department, of which the Visitors Bureau is a division, and her desire to have Ms. Paolicelli lead that department. She expects to see an increase in revenue due to the occupancy tax but the property tax revenue that feeds the general fund remains mostly flat. She stated that she understands the Visitors Bureau Board would like to see the Arts Commission funded by a different source than the County's occupancy tax, but she is recommending that it continue to be funded from that tax. She sees it as an eligible use of those funds and believes it will become less of a burden on any fund in the future as the Arts Council looks at alternative types of funding going forward. She has created functional leadership teams among the county's twenty-eight departments to break down existing silos. The result thus far is that they are all more aware of the challenges the other directors face in managing their resources. The county government also faces the challenge of trying to make up for the school districts what the State has taken away. She is looking to the Visitors Bureau to be a partner in sharing resources. She stated that moving forward department staff and advisory board members should be part of these teams, there by evolving into a broader outreach. She shared that local government is always about two to

three years behind any recovery. The county manager asked if there were questions and Lee Storrow made the statement that Visitors Bureau dollars should be used to increase revenues in the county and that he would like to see increased alignment and more of a partnership involved in the structure of the Arts Council in the Visitors Bureau budget. The manager says she thinks there is opportunity to blend some efforts between the Visitors Bureau and the Arts Commission. Tim Hoke reported that, at present, they have an extremely active board. He reported that Martha Shannon will be retiring effective June 30, 2016. He directed board members to the Arts Commission's online survey, <http://artsorange.org/>. They hope to increase their outreach as there are 179 different arts organizations in Orange County. They want to make contact with each one through personal contact with their board members. George Cianciolo asked the Manager if she saw any cuts to the county coming out of this year's short session. She responded that most affected will be school funding and the limiting of what the county can and cannot do. Lee Pavao stated that he was appreciative of the open communication we are experiencing with the Manager. In response to Mr. Sherburne's question about economic indicators showing a downward trend she said that the County is working with UNC on formulating a five year projected forecast. This forecast will be used as a tool for the county commissioners. The county is being more aggressive in its investments. In 2006 the county earned \$500,000 on its portfolio and in 2015 the county earned only \$37,000 on an even larger portfolio. The Manager stated that there will be funds in the upcoming budget to do a SWOT analysis in regards to economic development to define what the county should be focusing on. As the Manager reviews her upcoming budget recommendations she will be reviewing the amount of indirect cost the county collects from the Visitors Bureau fund as reported by Maximus, the county's indirect cost analysis firm. Chair Waldorf stated that she believes that our fund is somewhat different than other funds, i.e. Solid Waste, in that we generate income for the county.

Executive Directors Report

As Executive Director Laurie Paolicelli is out of town, Chair Waldorf offered the report. She updated the Board on the upcoming space study. A consultant has been chosen and will be meeting with the sub-committee on May 19. The meeting will focus on scope of work, and the plan is to begin work immediately. She stated this will be a two part study, the first to determine a need for this space and a second to look at possible locations.

Sales Report

Marlene reported that she traveled to Oxnard CA to attend this year's North American Travel Journalists Association conference. She reported that she addressed House Bill 2 in her presentation to the group and explained that as a community we do not support the legislation, and that we participate in the fight against social injustice and welcome all people. She was able to track over four million impressions on twitter the week after the conference regarding Orange County. She also stated that a year out from their 2015 conference, articles are still being published as a result of the conference. She will be tracking media generated by the conferences meeting in Oxnard. The conference will be here May 16-19, 2017. Chair Waldorf shared with the Board that she, Laurie, Marlene and Lee Pavao will be hosting Orange County's hotels General Managers at a round table on Thursday, May 12 at the UNC Basketball Museum.

New Business/Roundtable

Chair Waldorf acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

Marlene Barbera reported that she had contacted all county hotels to see if they had been affected by House Bill 2 and that they reported they had not. She was contacted by Alice Wertheimer at UNC who has had a conference cancelled and the Friday Center reported that they had had two events cancelled. These cancellations have affected the Courtyard. The County is documenting this. Aaron Bachenheimer suggested she speak with some entertainment venues as well. Kristen Smith requested this data be shared with the Chamber.

Chair Waldorf reported the Laurie Paolicelli recommended adding advertising through Clean Design to state that everyone is welcome here. Mark Sherburne asked if this was a shift in planned advertising or additional advertising. The consensus on the board is that it should be additional advertising.

County Commissioner Penny Rich suggested that the board pass a resolution in support of repealing House Bill 2.

Chair Waldorf asked that a motion be made that “we are open to all and that everyone is welcome here and that we respect everyone’s civil rights”.

George Cianciolo reminded the Board that this is also an Economic Development issue and suggested that their Boards help with this monetarily.

Chair Waldorf stated the resolution is “to ask staff to come up with a specific plan that has a defined cost and then take that plan to the towns to ask the local Economic Development boards for their support in funding this campaign” The motion was made by Chair Waldorf and seconded by Lee Pavao. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Waldorf would like to see this effort in the national media and that this reporting focuses on the positive about N.C., noting that a great many of our citizens are opposed to this legislation.

Chair Waldorf adjourned the meeting at 9:25.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Rosemary Waldorf, Chairman

Date