

Approved April 15, 2015

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting March 18, 2015

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
Residence Inn Chapel Hill

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

Not Present: Libbie Hough, Mark Sherburne

Staff attendance: Steve Brantley, Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Martha Shannon and Tina Fuller

Also present: Stephanie Perri, Tom Hickey with Clean Design

Call to Order

Chairman Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Carey requested a motion to approve the January 21, 2015 minutes. Lee Pavao so moved and Penny Rich seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Welcome from Host

General manager Andrew Strickland welcomed the group and gave a brief update on the Residence Inn. Mr. Strickland stated that the hotel sees a strong weekend business from city wide events, as well as mid-week from consulting groups; averaging about a 4 night stay overall. Future plans include a 6-12 month renovation and bringing in local restaurants for the managers reception.

Public Art Discussion

Martha Shannon opened the discussion with a brief history of the proposed public art project, noting that the project was originally approved in 2009 where the site was originally planned for the front of the public library in Hillsborough. Shannon referred board members to a handout packet she provided. Shannon continued, stating that the site had to be moved due to historic district zoning ordinances. Since then, the area behind the new courthouse has been designated as the new placement location. Ms. Shannon explained that funding in the past was provided through the County's general fund as a capital investment line item. However the capital investment threshold has changed where this type of project would not be eligible. She was instructed to bring this proposal for funding before this board last fiscal year, which she did. Shannon went on to explain that hotel/motel tax is already funding art programs such as the "call for art for the North Carolina Emergency operations Center building in Raleigh" and their "call for 30th anniversary poster design". Ms. Shannon stated that the arts commission has never been a fund raising board but perhaps they could raise funds from small grants however they do not foresee raising the full \$25,000. She noted that the \$25,000 request would be from Orange County's collection of hotel/motel tax and not from any one municipality. The floor opened for discussion.

Mike Gering commented that he thought there would be a policy on funding public art presented first.

Laurie Paolicelli commented that she recalls discussion about the manager moving the OCAC under the Visitors Bureau budget...

Mr. Gering stated he remembers proposing that a policy be drafted.

Ms. Paolicelli commented that this board approved a 40% fund capped at \$8,000 and the Arts Commission would solicit the remaining funds elsewhere, but she did not remember a formal policy discussion.

Mr. Gering commented that he would like to see a policy established first.

Anthony recalls inquiring about what the commissioner's viewpoint would be to the proposed location and amount request for just one piece of art.

Penny Rich noted that there is only one commissioner left on the board since the 2009 proposal and leaves no historic memory on the call for art. Ms. Rich stated she would like to hear the proposal and also agrees that that a formal policy makes sense. She commented that she is not sure which would come first, but feels there should be more discussion particularly where there is concern that the proposed location is a geothermal hotspot.

Lee Pavao also agreed that there needs to be a parameter as this may become a continuing request.

Ms. Paolicelli inquired if it is the expectation for the Visitors Bureau to write the policy?

Ms. Rich volleyed to Steve Brantley as head of EDC. Mr. Brantley recommended that the policy begin with recommendations from the OCAC board and EDC staff. He agreed that the location is a hindrance and agrees that requests would be ongoing. Mr. Brantley informed members that the county manager has tasked the OCAC board to fund raise and that may have to be part of the policy. Mr. Brantley also commented that he didn't think creating a policy would burden the Bureau's goals.

Penny Rich reiterated that there is need for more discussion. Ms. Rich inquired if there has been a line item established for this project in the past or now. Ms. Paolicelli replied no.

Chairman Carey motioned to draft a policy designing the framework for a public art project sponsorship with input from a collaboration committee consisting of the Orange County Arts Commission board of directors, Orange County Economic Development staff and partners that would outline its benefits to the arts community, the county and to tourism. Mike Gering seconded. With all members in favor the motioned was passed.

Marketing Update

Stephanie Perri with Clean Design reviewed current and new print and digital marketing initiatives including NC Beer month, Weddings/LGBT all inclusive campaign and Foodie campaign in Garden & Gun. Ms. Perri stated they readdressed call to actions and added Home of UNC Chapel Hill locator.

Tom Hickey spoke on marketing strategy as well as the costs of media and how these costs correlate to the current media plan. Mr. Hickey stated that they are now in the budget planning stage.

Sales Report

Marlene Barbera presented an overview of the group sales role, positioning and strategy which showed 2013-2014 statics for group business including lost business. Anthony Carey inquired if Ms. Barbera could compile for the board, the reasons for the lost business. Ms. Barbera concurred. Laurie Paolicelli commented that this information is critical to show that not all visitor dollars are spent on hotel rooms. Ms. Paolicelli stated that in 2006 with the help of DMAI, a dollar amount was established for overnight and day guests for ROI purposes. She informed members that the Bureau plans to purchase an event impact calculator software package to bring us up to date. Annette Stone inquired about the report that shows dollars spent by visitors. Ms. Paolicelli replied that the Department of Commerce produces the report

and it is aggregate for the whole county. Ms. Barbera concluded her report with anticipated trade shows and target market segments. Ms. Paolicelli informed board members that at this point it makes more sense to contract a sales position, possible in the Charlotte area. Given current technology, the position does not need to be office based. She stated she would bring more on that at the next board meeting.

Budget Update

Penny Rich reported that expenditures are on target and revenue is ahead of projection. Spending fund balance down wisely by supporting sports and other events. Ms. Rich concurred that the ROI rates need revisited. Ms. Paolicelli agreed stating she would add it to next month's agenda.

Executive Director Report

Laurie Paolicelli reported on current initiatives; the visitor center, video production, and a new website. She also reported that the LGBT ad had a huge response and some local hoteliers received top awards. Ms. Paolicelli commented on the Hillsborough Chamber's initiatives and challenges to generate growth.

Other Business:

Mike Gering reported that the [Hillsborough] tourism board is in a major revamping stage; looking to get more community involvement and looking at contracting a position for visitor services.

Karen DeHart reported that the high school basketball championships, which were all played in Chapel Hill, saw 18k to 20k people over the course of the games. Ms. DeHart stated she is hopeful that local restaurants benefitted and she would have ROI information soon. Six hotels were selected for team stays. Ms. DeHart also reported that bad weather has postponed the move back into their offices. She also informed that the current NCHSAA Commissioner [Whitfield] has been selected chief operating officer of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) effective July 1, 2015

Meg McGurk spoke on the streetscape changes on East Franklin Street which is allowing for sidewalk dining. Ms. McGurk announced there will Live & Local will happen every Friday through June as well as outdoor movies.

Annette Stone talked about upcoming events in Carrboro, mentioning Sylvan Esso will return to Carrboro April 3, could sell about 3000 tickets. Ms. Stone also mentioned the ArtsCenter's Spring Craft Fair and Open Streets in Carrboro.

Rosemary Waldorf reported they are hopeful that May 2015 will see the ground breaking for the Hyatt Place in Southern Village

The next board meeting will be held at PHE in Hillsborough.

With no other discussion or business, Chairman Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:30 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman

Date

Date