

## MINUTES

### Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting March 21, 2012

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at Durham Tech, Orange County Campus, Hillsborough

**Board Members Present:** Dave Gephart, Mike Gering, Donna Bell, Greg Overbeck, Jim Norton, Mark Sherburne, Lydia Lavelle, Lee Pavao, Annette Stone, and Anthony Carey

**Members Absent:** Karen DeHart, Laura Morgan, Jim Parker, Gordon Jameson and Valerie Foushee

**Staff Present:** Laurie Paolicelli, Linda Ekeland, Patty Griffin, Martha Shannon and Tina Fuller

**Others Present:** Clean Design staff; Stephanie Perri, Scott Scaggs and Tom Hickey

#### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gephart called the meeting to order at 8:03 am

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Gephart requested a motion to approve the February 15, 2012 minutes. Annette Stone so moved with Mark Sherburne seconding. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as written.

#### REPORTS

Mr. Gephart gave the floor to Mike Gering for an update on financials

##### Finance Reports

Mr. Gering reported that the current fiscal year budget is on target at the 62% mark for the year. Mr. Gering also reported that the 2012-2013 proposed budget would include an appropriated fund of \$150,000; Mr. Gering then gave the floor Laurie Paolicelli for further explanation.

Ms. Paolicelli explained that occupancy revenue always runs a little higher than budgeted and any surplus left at the end of the fiscal year goes back to fund balance. Ms. Paolicelli informed members that she met with the county finance director to discuss requesting funds from the fund balance in advance and include \$150,000 in the VB's 2012-2013 proposed budget to the manager. The requested funds would be used for special event funding which would be discussed later in the meeting. Ms. Paolicelli also informed members that she met with the Town of Chapel Hill manager, Roger Stancil, to request \$200,000 of support for 2012-2013.

Mike Gering commented that he would like to know what the current total fund balance is.

Ms. Paolicelli agreed to inquire on that information. She also commented that the County has supported tourism and the Bureau's requests for tourism development. Ms. Paolicelli informed that the budget would be presented to the board in April.

Concluding the finance report, the floor was given to Anthony Carey for the marketing report.

### **Marketing Report**

Anthony Carey proposed a later discussion (after Clean Designs presentation) on whether an extra \$20,000 for a local marketing plan would be a good idea, specifically Carey felt that a new branding campaign should be carefully unveiled to local constituents who could add support and promotion if they were on board and with that, Mr. Cary handed it over to Clean Design for their portion of the marketing report.

### **Clean Design Report**

Stephanie Perri reported that they have made some updates to the creative; they would be presenting that along with a detailed media strategy plan. Ms. Perri asked for input from the board afterwards.

Scott Scaggs informed members that revisions included incorporating Hillsborough and Carrboro as well as Meeting Planner execution into the creative design. He reported that at this point, "Seek Unique" will not be used as part of this platform. He proceeded to show the revised creative that included a logo, and media and digital banner ads.

Tom Hickey presented the media strategy proposal. Mr. Hickey reminded the board that the objective is to increase group sales, mid-week travel and leisure travel. Mr. Hickey noted that most of the media would be digital citing that it is more accountable. Mr. Hickey noted that their strategy is to go after the mindset of the traveler which, as research shows, is an explorer through channels. Channels being search engines, friends and family, meta-search and travel sites, along with their organization and review on social sites. Mr. Hickey also presented in detail; tactical objectives, media mix, geographic focus, media timeline and considered partners.

### **Q& A**

Mike Gering asked Mr. Hickey to explain Meta-Search in which he replied that it is a search engine for On-line Travel Agencies, i.e. Travelocity.

Lydia Lavelle inquired on why the geographical area focused on West Virginia rather than more towards the coast and DC? Mr. Hickey responded that the focus is flexible but noted that the cost in reaching out to DC is considerably more expensive.

Laurie Paolicelli asked Mr. Hickey to explain in more detail the *search media* plan. Mr. Hickey explained that they would bid on key words that are inclusive to our area. The search plan would also include retargeting people that have logged onto visitchapelhill.org

Annette Stone asked if a person has to be within the targeted geography in order to see the display ads. Mr. Hickey replied yes.

In conclusion, Ms. Perri reported that the next steps would be to develop a detailed tactical media plan and creative campaign with extended touch points for April and possibly have in-market dates by then. Laurie also noted that there is much work needed with regard to the website, signage, etc. to complement the roll out of the new campaign.

Ms. Paolicelli thanked the Clean Design staff and with that they left the meeting. Dave Gephart gave the floor to Anthony to continue with his marketing report.

Anthony Carey proposed that the board discuss the possibility of rolling out a local marketing campaign separate but

complimentary to Clean Designs, in conjunction with the local chambers. Laurie commented that she would lean on the board for advice on this request. Mr. Carey remarked that Durham took a lot of business away. Greg Overbeck questioned whether it was because of advertising or if they have something better to offer. Mr. Carey replied both. Mr. Carey went on to say that we have comparable offerings such as The Depot in Hillsborough, the BBQ place next to that, cat's cradle, etc. Lydia Lavelle stated she would like to see those dollars spent locally. Mark Sherburne suggested we tap into the fund balance reserve to roll out the local initiative. Chair Gephart asked if that was a motion. Mark Sherburne motioned to use fund balance reserves for a local initiative, Lee Pavao seconded. "How to enjoy the Edge" was given as an example for the initiative that would be distributed to local stakeholders. Laurie Paolicelli agreed and stated that Clean Design could come back with a proposal. The motion included to use \$20,000 from fund balance if available, to add a local campaign. All members were in favor and the motion was passed. And concluding this discussion, Ms. Paolicelli proposed that a plan be presented next month. Linda Ekeland suggested incorporating our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the local campaign, noting that the VB would be 20 years in June. It was also noted that the local initiative could run during national tourism week in May.

On another subject, Anthony Carey reported on the results of the special events committee meeting. Mr. Carey stated that the committee is interested in granting media funds to local event groups at the Commissioners approval and devising a point system to qualify applicants - some of the proposed criteria would include questions like: whether the event will put heads in beds; drive up retails sales; and would the VB receive co-branding? Ms. Paolicelli commented that Chapel Hill is becoming a festival town and the VB gets many requests. Mr. Carey continued, stating that the committee proposes to allocate \$50,000 to the Special Events Fund and decide annually where to distribute those funds. Mr. Carey stated that one of the criteria for sponsorship would be that the grant recipient send a follow up report after the event. Linda Ekeland inquired if there were certain dates during the year that they would apply for funds. Mr. Gephart replied possibly in the future but not in the inaugural year. And with that, Chair Gephart requested a motion to approve, Annette Stone so moved, Mark Sherburne seconded.....discussion ensued...Annette Stone stated she would first like to see a list of the events we sponsored in the past before proceeding. Jim Norton cautioned on what criteria to include suggesting that the sponsorships should be occupancy driven. Ms. Stone disagreed, stating that local events bring day trippers while Anthony Carey commented that both were important. Martha Shannon commented that grant requests denied by the Arts Commission usually seek out the VB for sponsorship. Laurie Paolicelli stated she would also like more information including the weight system and how critical it would be to add room nights as a criterion. So with those notations, the motion to approve the \$50,000 and the **concept** of a special event sponsorship application program was again seconded by Mark Sherburne and approved by all members.

### **Announcements**

Annette Stone announced the ground breaking for the new Hampton Inn would be on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 11 am. She stated that area would be under construction for about 12-18 months and her department is working with the adjacent property owners to help keep customers. Laurie inquired if the VB should invite the new town manager to a Visitors Bureau board meeting. Ms. Stone and Lydia Lavelle thought it would be a good idea.

### **Sales Report**

Linda Ekeland thanked the board members that attended the UNC Blitz and reported they had a great turn out. Ms. Ekeland reported that Extraordinary Ventures has already received a booking from the event. Board members and Visitor Bureau staff both agree that a huge appreciation goes to The Carolina Club for hosting the event, noting that their staff was fantastic. Ms. Ekeland commented that the total cost to participants was only \$57 each.

Ms. Ekeland also informed members on the recruitment of Stephanie Perry to help bring in other markets to Chapel Hill. To date they have a meeting with Rev. Nichols for a possible conference at the Sheraton; proposing 900 room nights, tents, video conferencing in May of 2013. Also in 2013, Forget Me Not, an Alzheimer's group, is proposed to meet at the Sheraton. And concluding her report, Ms. Ekeland reported on the upcoming Collaboration show in April which

Stephanie Perry will be on hand to assist with profiles.

**Next meeting venue**

The Cedars at Chapel Hill

And with no other business to discuss, Dave Gephart adjourned the meeting at 9:34am.

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Minutes reviewed by:  
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

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Date

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Minutes accepted by:  
Dave Gephart, Chairman

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Date