

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting May 16, 2012

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at Holiday Inn Express, Hillsborough

Board Members Present: Dave Gephart, Karen DeHart, Greg Overbeck, Meg McGurk, Laura Morgan, Mark Sherburne, Lydia Lavelle, Anthony Carey, Jim Parker, Lee Pavao, Jim Parker, Donna Bell, and Valerie Foushee

Members Absent: Mike Gering, Steve Brantley, Gordon Jameson, and Annette Stone

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

Others Present: Stephanie Perri, Clean Design; Stephanie Perry, Sales & Group meeting services

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gephart called the meeting to order at 8:10 am

Welcome

Chair Gephart welcomed everyone; Laurie Paolicelli informed everyone that it is Tourism Day

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Gephart requested a motion to approve the April 18, 2012 minutes. Lydia Lavelle stated she had one small correction. She stated there was a comment that attributed to her as saying "Lydia commented [the triangle may be known anecdotally and regionally but expressed some concerns about the validity of that tagline being known from visitors from further regions]." Ms. Lavelle stated she doesn't recall really expressing concerns but thought that the point she was making was that if people didn't know about it, once they flew into RDU it was all over the place; the word triangle was all over the place. Ms. Lavelle stated she just didn't want it to come across that she had a concern about that because she doesn't. Lee Pavao moved as corrected, Mark Sherburne seconded, with all members in favor of accepting the minutes as revised, the motion was passed.

REPORTS

Marketing

Anthony Carey asked the board for discussion on the new advertising campaign, specifically asking for a vote on whether this board should advise and direct that the name Chapel Hill be used as the basis for the Visitors Bureau future marketing campaign. Mr. Carey stated he requested from Laurie a timeline of recorded notes of discussions regarding the new campaign strategy (included in board meeting materials). He stated that as he reviewed the timeline he recognized that much discussion had taken place, however an official vote was not recorded. Although the goal of the visitors Bureau is to market Orange County, the marketing dollars research shows that visitors are confused or uninspired by the Orange County tagline because it doesn't communicate where our hotels are located. Instead the research reveals the name Chapel Hill and the promise of a Chapel Hill experience as having great potential to increase demand. But to be certain the board was aligned with this research, he asked for additional discussion before dollars were spent. Mr. Carey opened the floor for discussion on if this is the right direction.

Discussion:

Mark Sherburne stated that research shows that Chapel Hill has the main recognition, the strongest point to lead. Sherburne asked that we refrain from opinion and politics and immerse ourselves in smart financial decisions that would increase tax revenues. From the research, Chapel Hill is the brand differentiator and it was smart to lead with this campaign name.

Lee Pavao pointed out that we elected to change agencies for a stronger approach and he feels that Clean Designs approach is the right approach. He also reminded that in the BID process, Jennings said if they had to do it all over again, they would have pushed back on this issue and led with a name that had a strong brand identifier for overnight business, which is Chapel Hill.

Dave Gephart thanked staff for bringing the options of a new logo with all three towns included in the branding. He felt that adding Hillsborough and Carrboro to the logo made sense to many local stakeholders. He reported that he shared the new logo (listing all Orange County towns) to the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough Board of Directors. They liked the logo with all three towns in three colors however he agrees that Chapel Hill should be the lead but would like to hear from others.

Lydia Lavelle agreed that the campaign should lead with Chapel Hill based on the research. But she is supportive of the names Carrboro and Hillsborough in the copy and photos to show broader representation.

Laura Morgan commented that she was surprised that we are back at the original discussion including Carrboro and Hillsborough. She affirmed that Chapel Hill is the brand and stated that it doesn't mean that they won't visit Carrboro and Hillsborough while they are here. Morgan reminded that she often visits Brooklyn but identifies the area as New York. She suggested that we let the experts do their work and not tie their hands.

Valerie Foushee commented that the Bureau is a county wide agency however the County recognizes that the tourism brand is Chapel Hill/Orange County and that outsiders identified the hotels and tourism draw as Chapel Hill. She clarified that that was not an easy decision to come to but one that made sense. She relayed that the BOCC understands that concept

Greg Overbeck commented that on paper, it [the three town's logo and such] looks ok, but on a whole, it should be more clear and concise and he would be afraid that the message would become muddled. Mr. Overbeck then inquired on Clean Design's view...

On behalf of Clean Design, Stephanie Perri replied that their research strongly suggests leading with the Chapel Hill brand. Ms. Perri said that this issue is a challenge for a lot of destinations - she compared our branding with that of Wilmington and their surrounding beaches who all want to be recognized individually. Ms. Perri stated that each time their ads lead with Wilmington; it has a much stronger presence and focus and response because Wilmington is more well-known. Ms. Perri noted that there is very little focus when leading with all three towns (Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough).

Jim Parker agreed with that strategy, he stated however, that he does not want to lose the mission of Hillsborough and Carrboro in the messaging and trusts that is not going to happen, but noted that Chapel Hill is the big draw and he is in support of it.

Anthony Carey recommended that the Visitor Bureau staff lead with Chapel Hill and when possible the County or the towns may be incorporated in other campaigns but the lead is Chapel Hill. Lee Pavao moved to approve the recommendation with Greg Overbeck seconding. With all members in favor, the motion to have Chapel Hill as the lead brand was approved unanimously.

And with that, Dave Gephart gave Stephanie Perri the floor for an update on digital/on-line and website creative. Ms. Perri explained to board members that they will be working on a new website, reminiscent of the actual campaign with internal pages having the ability to interact with the brand.

Paolicelli commented that an official roll-out of the brand, locally, will be happening in May or June.

With that, Dave Gephart showed the new Hillsborough video that Ms. Paolicelli would be presenting to Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Paolicelli discussed the ongoing tourism related campaigns that the Visitors Bureau is committed to in Hillsborough and Carrboro and the entire Orange County and that leading with a Chapel Hill tourism sell in outside advertising does not diminish other programs in place to support the tourism assets of the rest of the county.

Sales Report

Ms. Paolicelli informed the board that they often bring-on sales professionals to help with bookings. She then introduced Stephanie Perry who has over 20 plus years in the business. Ms. Perry reported on several leads that she has been working on in the association, non-profit and religious sectors; The Abundance Foundation that could bring in 900-1000 people in 2013, St Paul AME Church which could bring in 800-900 people for a one week long convention in 2013, and finally, Forget Me Not for a two-day project at Memorial Hall for a possible 1200 people.

Linda Ekeland gave an update on the outcome of her attendance at the Collaborate conference.

Lydia Lavelle inquired if the Visitor Bureau could use marketing strategy around the recent GLBT amendment passing to get the word out to folks that want to come out here to Orange County – people from other states might look at our state a little differently now - but Orange County is still a welcoming inclusive open place.

Ms. Paolicelli agreed it is a great point and added that in the past we have had a GLBT plan because it is the best growing sector of the travel market and Chapel Hill offers that collegiate, progressive great experience. Ms. Paolicelli stated that the Visitor Bureau has an ad in place and inquired of the board if it would be wise to remind travelers that we are gay friendly. A motion to resurrect the ad was requested, Lydia Lavelle so moved with Donna Bell seconding. All members were in favor.

Budget

On behalf of Mike Gering, Laurie Paolicelli reported that the budget is intact and on target, no surprises. The focus is on next budget year and she is working on a strategic plan of action. She reported that the Town of Chapel Hill will collect one million this year as will Orange County. Ms. Paolicelli stated that she has asked Chapel Hill for \$200,000 in support.

Other Business

Donna Bell will be leaving the board. Ms. Bell reported that another Town Council member (Gene Pease) has a scheduling conflict with the current board he resides on and will switch with her. Ms. Bell commented that Mr. Pease is very entrepreneurial and a balanced reasonable person and will fit well with this group. Ms. Bell stated that she will still watch tourism in her role as councilwoman.

Dave Gephart presented the parking petition (time consistency) to the Town of Chapel Hill and is waiting on a response.

Karen DeHart reported on recent high school events and their visitor impact. She also reported on some lost events to other cities due to scheduling issues with university events.

Laura Morgan reported on the outcomes of UNC graduation, stating that some 32,000 people attended and NY Mayor Bloomberg gave a great speech. Ms. Paolicelli inquired to Mr. Carey and Mr. Sherburne, if the hotels had to cut back to a two night minimum in which the reply was yes.

Town Updates

Lydia Lavelle reported that the hotel construction in Carrboro is moving fast, Greensboro Street is getting repaved, and Weaver Street construction is complete and Carrboro Day had a good turnout. The next major event will be July 4th festivities. Linda Ekeland added that Manish Atma is expecting to have the new hotel open for May 2013 graduation.

Jim Parker reported that Hog Day is this weekend (in Hillsborough) and will have 36 groups cooking BBQ.

Ms. Paolicelli informed that the Farm to Fork event at Breeze Farm will have 36 restaurants participating. Tickets are \$100 with proceeds helping local farmers.

As of last week Meg McGurk has the role of Director of the Downtown Partnership. Bobby Funk moved up to Assistant Director. Ms. McGurk reported that a more targeted marketing initiative is ahead.

Arts Commission

Reported that the grassroots grant deadline is tomorrow – given to non-profits – about \$30,000 this budget year. AFTA economic impact results are in but embargoed until major announcement is given in San Antonio. Friday is the artists' salon, Laurie Paolicelli speaking.

Next meeting venue

Carolina Inn – Plan of Action will be on the agenda.

And with no other business to discuss, Dave Gephart requested a motion to adjourn the meeting, Lee Pavao moved to adjourn with Jim Parker seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Minutes accepted by:
Dave Gephart, Chairman

Date

Date