

MINUTES

CHAPEL HILL/ORANGE COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

The Bureau met at 8:00 A.M. at [Greenbridge](#) in Chapel Hill

Board Members Present: Annette Stone, Anthony Carey, Dave Gephart, Gordon Jameson, Greg Overbeck, Jack Schmidt, Karen DeHart, Laura Morgan, Lee Pavao, Lydia Lavelle, Mark Sherburne, Meg McGurk, and Mike Gering

Board Members Absent: Gene Pease and Jim Parker

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

Other: Stephanie Perri, Clean Design

Call to Order

Dave Gephart called the meeting to order at 8:15am

Approval of Minutes

Dave Gephart asked for an approval of minutes Lydia Lavelle moved to approve with amendment, Mike Gering seconded, and with all members in favor, the minutes as amended were approved.

Gephart turned the meeting over to Michael Parker, resident of Greenbridge and member of the town of Chapel Hill's transportation committee. Parker talked about the status of Greenbridge, including its projected sales price, occupancy and projected future noting that units are selling again.

Budget Update

Mike Gering reported that the budget was on target with projections. Revenues were down slightly in October however the number represented just \$4,000 in actual differences on receipts collected. Year to date receipts collected were \$254,897 which was trending 0.62% under last year. Gering reminded that Carolina Inn was in the process of taking nearly 100 rooms off-line and the projected tax variance would represent an estimated \$40,000 as detailed per information from the Carolina Inn.

Gering asked if research dollars had been appropriated for a study to determine if the new campaign was working with the expectations we set forth. Paolicelli reported that it had been approved and that staff was in the process of launching the new study and she would discuss this in more detail in her report. The dollars allocated were \$25,000.

Gering also requested a formal discussion on recommended uses of the fund balance; a plan for spending this down in the future but asked that his discussion be deferred until a new county commissioner was appointed to the board.

Gephart asked Paolicelli for the Executive Director's Report

Paolicelli reported that staff is preparing to launch a new research study which would focus on the BRAND as opposed to destination perception. The purpose of the study was to gauge whether this new campaign was impacting attitudes and making a difference to the bottom line, i.e., behaviors. Board members asked

Laurie to include Hillsborough and Carrboro in the study in an effort to ascertain perceptions about other Orange County communities.

Paolicelli reported that she was part of a Hillsborough marketing team to launch an effective tourism marketing campaign surrounding one of their most important tourism draws: holidays. The campaign used advertising dollars to place ads in the Indy, on WUNC radio and a billboard on I-85. Paolicelli was working with the Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce and Alliance for Historic Hillsborough to place the ads.

In summary, Paolicelli reported that the sales team, which focuses on group business into Orange County (meetings and gatherings of 10-300), was revamping its sales goals to focus on adding a part time telemarketer and prospector that could help it meet its increased sales goals. Additionally, the sales team, cognizant of a growing hotel room inventory reality and slipping group sales in the Sunday through Thursday period, was strategizing with the ad agency to enhance marketing efforts, including increased search engine optimization, coverage in the Visitors Guide, sales blitzes and Familiarization tours (FAMs) and additional activity.

Paolicelli asked hotels if they would be willing to serve on a sales committee to form a strategy for the near and long term sales goals. Jack Schmidt, Carolina Inn; Anthony Carey, Siena Hotel; Mark Sherburne, Aloft hotel agreed to serve, meet and provide a report at the January meeting.

Paolicelli deferred her Overview on special event sponsorships to the next meeting for the sake of time.

Marketing Report

Anthony Carey, Chair, of the marketing committee, introduced Stephanie Perri from Clean Design who gave an update on the campaign's success to date.

Update from Clean Design, ad agency for Visitors Bureau

Stephanie Perri reported that Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau would like to assess the effectiveness of its new marketing campaign that was launched on June 19, 2012. Since several of the larger hotels in the county will be undergoing renovations, the impact of the campaign cannot be measured by occupancy alone. Critical elements of the campaign that will be evaluated include:

Awareness (unaided & aided)

Attitudes (overall brand perception)

Usage (actual & intent to use, willingness to recommend)

This will serve as a benchmark for an annual tracking study.

Methodologies:

Since there are two major target audiences for the new campaign, we recommend addressing each of them with a separate study.

Quantitative: Online Surveys for individuals (N = 400)

The agency recommends conducting the survey using a web-based research resource. Clean Design will construct the survey and analyze the results and we will outsource the execution of the survey to a professional research partner to provide the random sample based on our criteria.

Qualitative: Online Focus Groups for groups and meeting planners

Clean Design recommends one (1) online focus group. Each online focus group will be facilitated with guided questions and unscripted probes. The groups will include eight to ten participants with experience in organizing group travel and meeting planning. Clean Design will design, recruit, moderate the focus group and provide the findings. Sample for recruiting will be provided by the client.

The board asked if they would be involved in formulating the questions for the research study. Paolicelli said that was a function of staff, in its contract with the Ad Agency, and she'd recommend that staff, not the board formulate questions and timetables but that she would share via email the questionnaire before it was distributed.

With no further questions, Perri concluded her update.

At the conclusion of the Marketing Report, Gephart asked the Towns and UNC, along with the Arts Commission for an update:

Hillsborough - An update was provided on the upcoming holiday promotion. Paolicelli reported that plans were in place to form a tourism summit in early 2013, led by the Alliance

Downtown Chapel Hill - Meg provided an update on holiday events

Carrboro - Lydia provided an update on the new hotel

Arts Commission - Gordon Jameson provided an update on FRANK and the upcoming collaboration between the Visitors Bureau and FRANK to launch its new book, the 2013 Food Lover's Guide to the area, at FRANK as part of an effort to bring new audiences into the gallery.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:33 am.

Minutes review by: Laurie Paolicelli

Minutes accepted by: Dave Gephart,
Chairman

Date

Date