

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting October 17, 2012

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

Board Members Present: Dave Gephart, Gordon Jameson, Jack Schmidt, Jim Parker, Karen DeHart, Lydia Lavelle, Meg McGurk, and Mike Gering

Announcements

With the passing of William Friday, several board members were out today

Committee Reports

Finance

Mr. Gering reported that revenue is on track with the norm. He reported that the budgeted \$175,000 support from Chapel Hill could increase to \$200,000 if the Bureau's performance reaches over a million in occupancy revenue. Gering reported that occupancy receipts are 1.35% ahead of last year for year to date through August

Marketing

Linda Ekeland presented on conferences to Orange County noting specific trends, sectors that were performing well and challenges inherent with bookings conferences in Orange County. Highlights of Ekeland's report are included as an attachment. Group business—including anything over a party of 10 up to 350, is a critical part of Orange County's tourism industry because it sustains the hotels Sunday through Thursday at a higher rate and longer stays. Weekend business is solid but mid-week is a challenge with 1400 hotel rooms, 30,000 square feet of meeting space and being a County that is situated near Raleigh and Durham—both at very competitive rates with RDU airport service in greater quantity and availability.

Last fiscal year the Visitors Bureau helped book \$2.5 million worth of conference business at area hotels ranging from corporate groups and associations; to education, healthcare, technology and social business (reunions, weddings and fraternal gatherings).

Some area properties were dated. The Hampton Inn on Fordham just lost its "flag" and is now a Quality Inn because it does not offer interior corridor entrances and other amenities that are required under the Hampton Brand.

Ekeland emphasized that high school athletics require interior entrance corridors and, as a result, Orange County was losing much of this business. Airport transportation was a challenge, especially since the loss of Super Shuttle. Ekeland reported that she has been the sole sales director for fourteen years and she hoped to add a part time person to pursue the religious market, which held high potential for area facilities.

Ekeland said that Hillsborough was in need of group meeting facilities. Carrboro’s new hotel would offer 3,000 square feet of space and 142 rooms. She is at work on a Topping Out party with the hotel, for November 1st.

Ekeland was pleased with the results of the new advertising campaign and website and felt that increased marketing would positively impact demand.

Measures	2011/2012 Confirmed	2012/2013 (as of 6/28/12 meeting w/ Linda)
Bookings	51	60
Leads	76	85
Room Nights	3,808	4,400
DeleSpending	\$2.4 million	\$2.5 million
Number of Delegates	6809	6000 (loss of 100 rooms at Carolina Inn beginning Sep 2012- May 2013)

Executive Director’s Report

Paolicelli provided updates on the approved budget and plans for a research study in 2013 that would address two visitor segments including conference planners and individuals. The study would be conducted on-line, using a professional research company and survey awareness of area, whether visitors are choosing Chapel Hill/Orange County over other destinations; recognition of new ad campaign; satisfaction with destination and changing perceptions of destination. Report would begin in February.

Paolicelli updated board on Ekeland’s sales presentation which focused on Chapel Hill only. Paolicelli confirmed that group conference business in Orange County relied on Chapel Hill hotels and meeting space. They resonated with the brand Chapel Hill, and the meeting space in Chapel Hill. To this end, the new hotel in Carrboro would use the Chapel Hill name as well. Hampton Chapel Hill/Carrboro will open in May with 142 rooms and 3,000 square feet of meeting space and rely on the national brand recognition of Chapel Hill to fill that space.

Orange County Visitors Bureau worked with Hillsborough on a different scope: spending \$50,000 a year on event support, photography, videos, promotions, restaurant promotions and day-trip campaigns.

Community Updates:

Downtown Partnership reported on new PARKING campaign the town would embrace, fashioned somewhat around [Charlotte's Park It](#) campaign.

The Partnership was updating its website, working with the town on Halloween communication (continuing its efforts to curtail Halloween risks) and also working on Project Connect.

Lydia Lavelle reported a great success with Carrboro Music Festival and told a story about a happy tourist who was experiencing Carrboro for the first time from Cary.*

Jim Parker updated board on the desire to promote the upcoming Fresh Roots Festival and Handmade Parade and the Chamber's recent success with its membership drive.

The Alliance for Historic Hillsborough is getting close to hiring an executive director.

Gordon Jameson of the Arts Commission updated board on concerns he had on the fiscal health of FRANK, the downtown Chapel Hill gallery and efforts to protect it moving forward.

New Business:

The November meeting of the Visitors Bureau was moved to November 14th due to Thanksgiving Holidays. It will be held at Greenbridge and a report on the marketing research program will be conducted.

Adjournment, 9:30am.

Minutes reviewed by: Laurie Paolicelli,
Executive Director

Minutes accepted by: Dave Gephart,
Chairman

Date

Date