

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting September 17, 2014

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
North Carolina Botanical Garden, 100 Old Mason Farm Road

Board Members Present: Anthony Carey, Dave Gephart, Lee Storrow, Debbie Hepp, Greg Overbeck, Jim Parker, Karen DeHart, Aaron Bachenheimer, Michelle Johnson, Mike Gering, Penny Rich, Annette Stone, and Meg McGurk

Not Present: Lee Pavao and Mark Sherburne

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

Also attended: Bonnie Hammersley, Orange County Manager, Natalie Perkins, Travis Conte and Stephanie Perri with Clean Design

Call to Order

Chairman Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:11 a.m.

Welcome from the Botanical Gardens

Jim Ward welcomed everyone and thanked the Visitors Bureau and board members for their efforts in promoting the meeting space at the educational center. Mr. Ward also spoke the miles of nature trails attached to the Garden, programs for kids, the current art exhibition; Following in Bartram's Footsteps and the upcoming Sculpture in the Garden which begins September 20th.

Budget Update

Penny Rich reminded board members that \$1,079,400 in occupancy receipts and \$200,000 from the Town of Chapel Hill is budgeted for revenue this 2014-15 fiscal year. Discussion commenced regarding Mike Gering's previous mention of the need for a policy in managing the fund balance. Gering inquired on what the next step would be. Laurie Paolicelli recommended reconvening the sub-committee of Anthony Carey, Lee Pavao, Penny Rich (replacing Mike Gering as Finance Chair) and herself to discuss the request after the County Manager has had time to understand the department's budget. Paolicelli proposed to have a plan in place by November to present. Gering commented that he was not looking for anything specific, just a basic plan on how and what to fund.

Dave Gephart reminded Paolicelli that the fund balance was requested to be listed on the occupancy receipt report for board meetings. Paolicelli replied that she would again ask Clarence for that information.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Carey requested a motion to approve the August 20, 2014 minutes. Lee Storrow so moved and Penny Rich seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Presentation of Tracking Study

In lieu of the Executive Director Report, Clean Design presented an overview of findings from the June 2014 follow up to the February 2013 benchmark survey. Clean Design president, Natalie Perkins explained the methodology and screening criteria to be at least \$35,000 income, ages 20-60, lives in NC but not in the Triangle, enjoys traveling for quick getaways to new destinations or has traveled for business 2 or more times in the past 12 months with Awareness, Consideration

and Perception the key metrics for questions. Ms. Perkins summarized the overall findings as Awareness is up and people are likely to recommend the destination, we are making headway in with business travelers, and perceptions are moving. Concluding her presentation, Ms. Perkins noted some implications from the study; recommendations included a stronger call to action in appropriate media, evaluate leisure vs. business traveler focus and continue to expand digital and social efforts.

Ms. Paolicelli emphasized that people do not have an immediate sense of Chapel Hill/Orange County as a leisure destination and there is a need to add call to actions in the marketing mix. She also reiterated the Brand NC Project findings that the Piedmont (compared to the mountains and the beaches) is a gray area and adding a location identity would help improve that perspective, and lastly the print vs. online deliberation may call for an increase in digital advertising, particularly in niche markets. Q&A followed:

Penny Rich inquired if there are statistics that show what is today's travelers preferred method for planning a trip. Ms. Perkins replied that it is both print and on-line; print for promoting the idea of destination travel, and on-line for booking.

Annette Stone asked what skewed or changed the perception of those surveyed from the original benchmark. MS Perkins replied they really cannot attribute the results to anything specific.

Dave Gephart asked if the answers were segmented by location. Travis Conte answered yes there were a lot of splits like that but nothing that jumped out by any specific city or region, but they some interesting perception differences in male vs. female responses, but overall Charlotte was pretty representative of Greensboro and the western part of the state. Keep in mind, there was heavier media that went out in Charlotte than in the mountain areas. Gephart inquired about Wilmington. Travis replied nothing that stood out and reminded that it was a sample of 400.

Laurie Paolicelli commented that it is important to know that the marketing plan is not a positive correlation to the findings of this study but consists of all involved in promoting the destination.

Laurie Paolicelli expanded on the study with hotel and website performance. Paolicelli showed a comparison of hotel weekday and weekend business from fiscal years 2012-13 and 2013-14. Paolicelli explained that overall numbers have increased considerably in all key metrics: Occupancy, ADR and RevPAR, accentuating mid-week business. She also showed website traffic has increased significantly in 2014 compared to the previous year. [Preview Study Here](#)

Paolicelli explained that overall, we are happy with the campaign, she noted some criticism received specifically mentioning that there is not enough featured ethnicity in the photos. She stated that we have met with our photographer to concentrate on adding more photos that depict our diverse community, and the 'more artsy less fartys' was found offensive. She also discussed where and when the Visitors Bureau logo should be used as well as Orange County's and possibly mention UNC Chapel Hill. There was also discussion on when and where we should use town logos.

Greg Overbeck stated that we need to be clear in our messaging.. we muddle the message a little bit when we try to include Carrboro, Hillsborough, Orange County and Chapel Hill. Overbeck said that what most people recognize and associate to this area is the University of North Carolina and Chapel Hill is part of that. Overbeck stated that as a marketing person he would say, let's make this real clear and have a call to action and not muddle the message with trying to include everybody, may hurt feelings sometimes but let's look at what's effective to bring people to the area.

Michelle Johnson said she thinks it is important for the town's name to be mentioned, as each town is unique.

Laurie Paolicelli proposed the whole board do a marketing study. Greg Overbeck suggested bringing in someone from the outside who is experienced in marketing maybe from UNC Kenan-Flagler School of Business. Paolicelli agreed.

New Business

Chairman Carey introduced the Bureau's new sales Director Marlene Barbera. Ms. Barbera gave a brief account of her first week with the Bureau. She stated she has been in the industry for 19 years and brings a different perspective to the Bureau.

Anthony Carey reported that the nominating committee convened to discuss the board's vice-chair position and they recommend Jim Parker. With that, Anthony Carey motioned to nominate Jim Parker. Dave Gephart seconded the motion. Carey opened the floor for discussion. With no discussion, the board favored the motion and the motion was passed.

Martha Shannon reported the Orange County Arts Commission is now accepting applications for the Fall Arts Grants program; the deadline is November 20th. Shannon also reported that the Piedmont Laureate program is accepting applications from authors of speculative fiction for 2015. Authors must be residents of Wake, Durham or Orange. Debbie Hepp reported five new members were elected to their board of directors.

Jim Parker reported that the Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce is still looking for a CEO. He also spoke about Riverwalk. Dave Gephart informed members that 500-600 people attended the Hillsborough Jazz Festival at Moorefields and about 100 people attended the Bluegrass Festival at Moorefields.

Annette Stone reported that the Town of Carrboro's website is up and running. Stone announced a few upcoming events: the annual Carrboro Music Festival September 27-28 and The Peoples Peppers at the Farmers Market. She also mentioned an alliance between Carrboro business that stemmed from the Think Local First initiative that would focus on Carrboro events.

Meg McGurk announced WCHL will begin broadcasting their pregame show from downtown. Other announcements included Live & Local begins this Friday for their fall schedule, the TerraVITA Small Plate Crawl is Sept 25-27, three empty storefronts have new artists displays, Festifall is Oct 5th, and Halloween is on a Friday this year.

Lee Storrow spoke on the current towing ordinance where the Town does have the authority to enforce however, there were a few restrictions; one, they cannot regulate the pricing. He spoke on recent discussion about what could be done outside the ordinances to alleviate some of the issues, particularly with predatory towing companies; how can we of raise awareness about slight changes might get made to the ordinance. Maybe proactively talk about how we can improve the experience of visitors and citizens. Ms. McGurk noted that some of the things they here is the not knowing a lot is private - some lots are not attached to a private business i.e. around Vespa and Noodles. It is confusing to visitors whether they can park there. She mentioned having better, thoughtful signage that explains accountability. McGurk said they have been working with the community and private property owners to explain to them what's going on without overstepping boundaries. McGurk warned that we have to be careful as not to get in between the contractual relationships between property owners and contractors. She stated they have had some success with that approach. Anthony Carey requested Meg to list hi-risk parking lots for their concierge to give to their guests. Laurie Paolicelli offered any help needed from the Visitors Bureau. Lee Storrow told Ms. McGurk that he would forward the signage restrictions to her and seek helpful suggestions.

New County manager Bonnie Hammersley thanked the Visitors Bureau and Board for all that they do. She explained some of the challenges she faced in her previous job in promoting that area. Ms. Hammersley said she would attend as many meetings as her schedule allowed.

Karen DeHart announced that NCHSAA executive staff is traveling throughout the state right now for regional meetings that reach out to schools, 402 members in all. Ms. DeHart reported that the Oct 18th Football game is designated as NCHSAA game day; 8-10 inductees and their families will stay the night. The NCHSAA Board will be in town for a few days, staying at the Residence Inn. DeHart said she would be working with Marlene Barbera on the BB championships.

Other Halloween events announced the Myers House NC in Hillsborough set up like the movie set, ACME pig pickin', \$10 plate and the Spirits of Hillsborough Halloween tours.

Other Business:

With no other business, Chairman Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:28 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman

Date