

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting May 21, 2014

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
The Franklin Hotel
Hosts: Jay Patel and Jennifer Beranek

Board Members Present: Penny Rich, Aaron Bachenheimer, Lee Pavao, Karen DeHart, Anthony Carey, Mike Gering, Annette Stone, Mark Sherburne, Jim Parker, Lee Storrow, and Dave Gephart

Not Present: Greg Overbeck, Michelle Johnson, Debbie Hepp and Meg McGurk

Staff attendance: Steve Brantley, Laurie Paolicelli, Linda Ekeland, and Tina Fuller

Also attended: Tom Hickey, Dickens Sanchez, and Nancy Woody with Clean Design and Cheri Szcodronski, Director Preservation Chapel Hill

Call to Order

Chairman Anthony Carey welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:12 am. Mr. Carey introduced Jay Patel and thanked him for hosting this meeting. Mr. Patel briefly spoke about the growth in downtown Chapel Hill and plans to build residential space for graduate students. He acknowledged Jennifer Beranek, Director of Sales

Chairman Carey then recognized attending staff members from Clean Design as well as Cheri Szcodronski.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Carey requested a motion to approve the April 16, 2014 minutes. Penny Rich moved and Mike Gering seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Mark Sherburne asked to discuss the planned exit strategy for Linda Ekeland's retirement which he deemed urgent. Paolicelli stated that the challenge here is with the county's policy on the hiring procedure; the Visitor Bureau cannot advertise for this position until July 1 putting us behind on the start date to September or October based on the new hire having to give notice.

Anthony Carey questioned whether they (board members) could have conversations with possible candidates and questioned if there is a minimum time the ad would stay posted. Paolicelli replied yes, it is four weeks, and she anticipates that it will be 3-5 months before someone is on board

Anthony Carey inquired if there were anything this board could do to move forward, stating he thought it was imperative to start this process now. Carey continued stating that we are under budget compared to surrounding counties and under staffed in sales and for the first time we get permission to have two position we're down to zero. He stated that it takes some six months (to get someone trained). Mark Sherburne agreed, saying that he's been looking for a Sales Director since December and it is a long hard path to hiring. Sherburne stated that his company just did a report that stated for every month without a sales person on staff there is a potential to lose \$80,000.

Mark Sherburne replied if we are unable to post for the position now, would Linda be available to work with the new hire. Paolicelli explained that the way the county retirement structure works is after putting in for retirement, you cannot legally come back to work so we would definitely lose Linda.

Gering inquired on what the reason was for not being able to advertise for the position. Paolicelli replied that the county has to have the 2014-15 budget approved first before advertising. Gering stated that he recently went through this with the Town and suggested to do a budget amendment, possibly out of reserves to cover the deficit.

Gering motioned to make a request to the county commissioners to adopt a budget amendment to pay for the advertisement of Linda's replacement. Lee Pavao seconded

Lee Storrow commented that while he wants to move this forward as well, a budget amendment might make it more complicated. In addition, inquired if maybe Laurie along with Penny Rich might have a conversations with Barry (Jacobs) and the interim manager explain the situation and we really need to do this, and this is a position that already exists.

Gering amended the motion to give Laurie direction to speak with the new county manager and commissioner. Penny Rich interjected reminding that the new county manager would not be in position until June 25 and that the interim manager should be the one involved.

With that, Gering re-amended the motion to say this board recommends for Laurie to petition for a budget amendment to advertise for the sales director position as soon as possible.

Lee Pavao inquired if this position would be offered internally first? Paolicelli replied that she thought since this is a position that is not held by anyone else in the county, that it would not be the case.

Chairman Cary clarified Mike Gering's motion is to direct the executive director of the Visitor Bureau to push discussions with the interim county manager, HR and those officials that have the power to make this modification up to having this board supportive of a budget amendment if its recommended. Carey asked for a second motion. Lee seconded. The vote was unanimous to approve the motion.

Reports

Budget/Finance

Penny Rich reported that as the fiscal year winds down, everything is coming together. Revenue is up 15% over all, having a good year. The \$35,000 budget amendment has been applied to advertising; there is \$400,000 in the fund balance. Penny stated she would work with Laurie on the new hire. Following up on the rent issue, Ms. Rich reported that they would go before the BOCC on Tuesday June 10. Ms. Rich stated that the town of Chapel Hill has again offered \$175,000 for fiscal year 2014-15 and commented that they may look into extra funds from other towns.

Update on Preservation Symposium

Moving on to agenda item V. the floor was given to Cheri Szcodronski for an overview of the upcoming Symposium: Szcodronski briefly gave background history on her past experience. She then talked about a recently adopted 5-yr preservation plan. Finally, Ms. Szcodronski spoke in detail on the symposium to be held May 30 and 31 at various venues in the county.

Media Plan Review for 2015

In Lieu of the Executive Directors Report, Clean Design's Tom Hickey and Dickens Sanchez reviewed past and future media plans. Mr. Hickey spoke on future continued focus on arts, agricultural awareness and event ads. Foremost priority would be midweek business, secondly leisure with additional initiatives in food, Hillsborough and Virginia markets, and possibly a TV ad as an added component to the mix. Q&A followed. Karen DeHart inquired about data collected relative to past campaign. Mr. Hickey explained that data is collected through website traffic and digital efforts. He also mentioned that they are in the first phase of the follow up benchmark study with findings scheduled for presentation during the August board meeting.

Aaron Bachenheimer – inquired on what we are doing to extend UNC market? Laurie Paolicelli replied that this would be one focus during the upcoming inter-city visit to Athens; Athens contributes a large part of their budget to promote university events, while we allocate more towards leisure and meetings.

Lee Storrow commented on Carolina Performing Arts as a focus in next year's plan. Paolicelli explained the need to concentrate as much on the arts as on sports.

In conclusion to the media update, Lee Storrow announced that he plans to take a staycation in Chapel Hill with a visitor's perspective.

Before continuing with the agenda, Laurie Paolicelli announced that with Laura Morgan's resignation, this board entertain the idea of nominating a new vice-chair. Dave Gephart announced that he would like to nominate Jim Parker for the position. Anthony Carey suggested waiting until the June meeting when more board members are present. Present board members agreed.

New Business Round Robin

Carrboro

Arts District data collection by interns WIP, TDA, merge records expects 4000 people at summer event, now have a walking map

Hillsborough

Jim Parker announced that the Chamber has shifted its focus on supporting local businesses, planning a summerfest in mid- August to celebrate Riverwalk and downtown is really seeing benefits: Yum, Radius, and LaPlace. Dave Gephart announced that Hog Day is scheduled for June 20-21 at the Efland Ruritan Club. Mike Gering inquired on the status of the Visitors Bureau move. Laurie Paolicelli replied that a meeting with Aaron and Gordon to discuss the options of moving to 123 West Franklin determined that UNC would not have a part in leasing, therefore no rent discounts.

NCHSAA

Karen DeHart reported that the NCHSAA they would bring all the basketball championships here next season, UNC gave permission to use facilities. NCHSAA building is undergoing renovations.

Other Business

With no other business to discuss, Chairman Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:39 AM.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman

Date

Date