

For Approval September 16, 2020

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Virtual Board of Directors Meeting
August 19, 2020**

Board Members Present: Pam Hemminger, Dixon Pitt, Tanya Moore, Anthony Carey, Kayla Dempsey, Mark Bell, Sam Vadgama, Lydia Lavelle, Mark Sherburne, Tim Hoke, Spring Council, Matt Gladdek, Libbie Hough, Jamezetta Bedford, and Shannan Campbell.

Not Present: David Brooks

Staff Attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Patty Griffin, Tina Fuller, Susan Rice, Leslie Wilcox, Katie Murray, Steve Brantley and Sarah Parris

Also present: Jon Hartman-Brown, Economic Development Director, Town of Carrboro and Lee Davis, CEO Clean Design, Inc. and Jon Parker, Clean Design, Inc.

Call to Order

Chair, Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Chair, Anthony Carey requested a motion to approve the June 17, 2020 minutes. Mark Sherburne so moved and Lydia Lavelle seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill announces shift to remote learning on 08/17/20. Discussion of current state of emergency and recent news that the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, after just starting its semester with in-person classes, has decided to go fully online due to recent outbreaks of COVID-19 in the past week. Health is going to continue to lead the way for this ever-changing market, and that is really going to change our marketing and advertising strategy moving forward.

Executive Director's Report

- Financials
Our financial projections on Tuesday were thrown in the garbage on Wednesday. What we have been doing as staff is keeping our finger on the pulse of our revenues. Tax revenues collected by the County, our reports collected by Smith Travel Research, and discussions with all of you in terms of pace and trends and rate. The big picture budget for this next fiscal year right now is projected at about one 1,400,000. That's about a million less than last year. The actual occupancy tax we're projecting from Orange County is 1,200,000. It is easy to do the math on how much we'd have to be seeing in occupancy tax per month in order to meet that goal; a little over one hundred thousand dollars. It's not there right now.
We are cautiously optimistic. We were on Tuesday. We don't know what we don't know. The interesting part of this year is that the budget, historically best practices for convention and visitor bureaus are that, one third of a budget is spent on marketing (sales, recruitment, publications, digital ads, influencers, bloggers and just constantly spreading the word). A third is spent on salaries and

then the rest on administrative and operations. This year, we're a little bit upside down because this year, for the first time, in addition to the pandemic, we have a ten year lease on a new building. The County Manager, at the end of the day, wants to protect jobs. She wants to protect people, you know, people before programs. We're very grateful for that. Our staff is in place. We have been applying for grants for marketing.

- Advertising and marketing shift to focus more on local markets due to market demand changes. With "Group" not being able to legally meet right now, even if we could we are limited to indoor gatherings of 10 and outdoor gatherings of 25. Our "Group" market is historically where our revenue is. Sunday through Thursday "Group" market, isn't there now. We have to reorganize as a team to see how we are going to focus more on transient marketing and sales. We are more concerned with health first even more than tourism marketing. Safety is the number one investment in the future economy. After that it is really about helping our independent businesses thrive and survive. Our smaller, independent businesses and looking for new markets for our properties.

Presentations

Lee Davis, CEO of Clean Design, Inc.

- Presentation on new marketing strategy to focus on local markets, "staycations", and travel in your own backyard.
Right now it is how do we really focus on that local market? By local, how do we pull in the triangle? How do we pull in Charlotte? How do we pull in other areas of people that do want to get away for that "staycation"? To get to the point, it really is how do we really drive more local business and get people to understand that there is a market in their backyard that they can go and investigate and invest in and really try and help keep the local businesses going? These are two things that we have right now. I do think there's an opportunity to expand on some of this work and leverage it to do a variety of more jobs for us. It's all things that we just started thinking about yesterday when everything happened at the university. While the campus is closing down and all the dorms are going away, they're still going to be a number of kids that are staying in their apartments and really living in the Chapel Hill area to expand the numbers of people in Chapel Hill. More so than they had been in the past or over the summer, which is good. Is there an opportunity for us to really work with them to try and help local businesses through some of the students because all their dining options on campus are going to be shut down as well, so they're going to have to be really leveraging that it's in the city. Let's look at this work and then we can have a conversation about it afterwards and talk about some of the thoughts that we might have about expanding. This first part is about local media plan, and this does come from a grant that the County is providing. How do we maximize some of these dollars? The goals of this work are how do we raise awareness in the Triangle that Chapel Hill, Orange County, and Hillsborough are a travel destination that's right here in our own backyard? Backyard being if you're in Raleigh, if you're in Charlotte, if you're in Greensboro, wherever it is, that Chapel Hill/Orange County is a destination that's in our own backyard. Then how do we inspire the residents of the Chapel Hill area to really rediscover what's in their own backyard as well? What more does Orange County have to offer that they may not know about? The market that we're going into and, this is really just started now and is going through September, it is the Triangle, so Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and then also a focus on Charlotte, because there are a lot of people that do travel. There's a great alumni base in Charlotte. We're using that as another focus market. The way we're going about doing that is really leveraging programatic, which is the ability to buy digital space in places that's a lot less expensive than if you're going out and buying open market.

We're doing it all programmatic so we can make sure that these dollars go as far as we can. We're also putting a boundary around these markets so the people in those markets are the ones seeing it outside those markets. We were only really paying for the people that we're trying to reach, which is a great way to extend our dollars as far as we can. Then we're partnering with local media, so right now, WRAL, the Daily Tar Heel, INDY Week and then also Walter Magazine are ones that we're partnering with. Here's a look at the media plan, so WRAL, INDY Week, Daily Tar Heel and Water magazine out over August and September, really breaking down with that twenty-five thousand dollars, how it's being spent across the board. Then the direct media buys in our programmatic media plan. I think it's fantastic that there's a whole map that was drawn of Orange County and then each one of these little digital ads focuses on a different area. I'll play Chapel Hill for you first. Then there's another one for the Riverwalk. Then one last one for the Carrboro Farmer's Market. These are all done in a variety of sizes to try and take advantage of the spaces that we can online. You'll also see Walter Magazine, we did a full page ad for Walter Magazine, that really highlights that entire map. It calls out some of the great destinations. There are opportunities here within this map and maybe even to get more detailed, some sections with some illustrations to try and extend the life of this into something else. How do we keep moving beyond what's here and leverage what we currently have to help get people in the local market to understand what all is in Orange County? Calling out many more destinations, things that people just realize that they're in their own backyard. We have that opportunity to call those out in a way that's engaging people and makes them see it differently than what they've probably seen it before. There is a landing page too so when you go to plan your day, there's a landing page that's been put up that helps you plan what it is that you want to do in Orange County. Whether you want to take tours, get outdoors, shop, dine whatever it is you want to do, there's a way to help you plan that day for you or two days if you're going for a weekend and a little staycation in town.

- Previous marketing plan focusing on "Getting Back to Normal" shelved. We thought we'd be at a place with the virus that we could promote getting back to normal but we're just not there yet. The real focus currently needs to be on how do we ensure our local businesses are getting the support they need to have as much business coming their way that we can get them. That's going to come from the local market. We're highlighting different places within Orange County that locals may not know exist. For example, Riverwalk in Hillsborough. I'm sure there's a lot of people that don't know that Hillsborough has a Riverwalk. We are trying to drive people to day outings that hopefully, include a restaurant for lunch or dinner.
- Jon Parker, Associate Design Director, Clean Design, Inc. Presented safety campaign.
- Mark Sherburne, General Manager, The Carolina Inn
Question on whether this current scaled-back marketing program is costing us less so there are more funds available for when we need a ramp-up marketing program? Also, what are the ratio of our expenses relative to the whole budget?
Laurie responded that the current, scaled-back, "Staycation" local promotion is funded through a grant the Visitors Bureau received from the County. In regards to expenses, salaries remain the same and are approximately a half million, which is about a third of our overall budget. Amount available for marketing is significantly less, about half of what we had last year. Therefore, our marketing is concentrating on messaging. We will not be doing as many publications. We will not print a 2021

Visitors Guide, Neighborhood Guide, or Meeting Planner Guides, etc. We will produce a quarterly newsletter with what is open.

- Matt Gladdek, Executive Director, Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership
Sidewalk expansions on Franklin Street in downtown Chapel Hill to allow restaurants and retail to expand to allow for social distancing and outdoor dining to encourage increase patronage of downtown businesses.
Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership has contracted with Kaze Thomas to help organize events that incorporate social distancing so more events can occur in Chapel Hill.

New Business/ Roundtable

- Tanya Moore – University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Today is the first day of remote instruction as one of the ways to de-densify campus. The other way is we are working to move students out of the residency halls. We have had 850 cancellations and we are asking students to let us know by Tuesday whether they are cancelling or if they are going to need to stay for a hardship reason (lack of safe alternative housing, lack of reliable internet, high-risk family members at home, athletes, international students). There are a lot of reasons students may still be on campus. They may be moved to different residence halls so that there is a single residence as opposed to doubles and in those halls that have the least amount of bathroom sharing.
- Mayor Lydia Lavelle – Town of Carrboro
Mayor Lavelle introduced the Town of Carrboro’s new Economic Development Officer, John Hartman-Brown.
Proclamation allowing Carrboro businesses to expand dining onto sidewalks and/or parking lots.
Most restaurants haven’t opted for expanded dining, probably due to financial constraints.
Outreach to Carrboro minority businesses.
Virtual events in Carrboro.
Enforcement of COVID rules with students within the community.
- Shannan Campbell – Town of Hillsborough, Economic Development
Keeping marketing focus local and with usual regional partners in the mountains, Winston Salem, Greensboro, and Raleigh.
Hillsborough also struggling with consumer confidence and getting the message out that it is safe to visit.
Many Hillsborough businesses have opened back up with limited capacity and sanitizing between customers.
Different events still evaluating whether they can do their events with socially distancing. The Garden Club is still planning on holding their garden tour in May 2021.
Hillsborough Visitors Center still closed but providing materials on the porch.
Hillsborough Organizations doing virtual programming.
- Katie Murray, Director, Orange County Arts Commission
Love Hillsborough community art project.
Virtual Arts Guide for Fall.
Poster series in partnership with the Orange County Health Department and Orange County Library.
Keep local artists in-mind to hire for projects and support.
Support our local organizations!
- Spring Council – Mama Dips Restaurant

Mama Dips is fortunate to have outside space to expand.

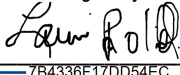
Still mostly curbside service.

Adding ecommerce and selling products online.


- Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director, Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
The Graduate Hotel is open.
Sheraton still under construction.
Aloft is in Chapter 11.
Visitors Bureau was open for past two weeks from 8/8/2020 to 8/22/2020 but closing again.
- Kayla Dempsey – North Carolina High School Athletic Association
Last Wednesday we released our 2020-2021 calendar. This obviously is pending depending on what Governor Cooper says in the coming weeks and months.
The school districts have the right to practice any kind of off season workouts.
Volleyball and Cross-Country start back on November 4th.
Swimming and diving start back on November 16th.
Basketball will start mid-December culminating with the state championship mid-February.
Football will start February 8th culminating with the state championship after April 3rd.
- Commissioner Jamezetta Bedford – Orange County Board of County Commissioners
Besides students and outbreaks, there is continuing increase in community spread.
County budget – Capital improvement on-hold for first quarter (except Visitors Bureau new building)
Department of Social Services is open for one-to-one employment counseling. Please spread the word and encourage any laid off employees to contact DSS and see what they are eligible for.
We have served over eight thousand meals to seniors.
We continue to do food distributions in partnership with the towns.
Economic Development with ABB and Medco out on 40 West is continuing.
Orange County has a hiring freeze.
Orange County has a healthy fund balance and is prioritizing protecting services for residents which means protecting jobs. It is imperative we focus on the health of our County and the economic sustainability.
Prioritizing funding for foster children.
Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) has payment plans and some financial aid available for any local businesses struggling with their water bill.
Skills Center won't open until November.
Please push the Census.
Encourage breakfast or lunch with early voting.
- Steve Brantley, Director, Orange County Economic Development
Collaborating on a business recovery survey.
Two rounds of COVID- related small business financial loan and grant programs.
Article 46 Collaborative Outreach memorandum of understanding.
Unemployment rate has tripled since February.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, September 16th virtually via Go To Meeting*

Meeting adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

DocuSigned by:

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Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director
9/16/2020

Date

DocuSigned by:

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Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman
9/16/2020

Date