

For Approval November 18, 2020

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Virtual Board of Directors Meeting
October 21, 2020**

Board Members Present: Pam Hemminger, Tanya Moore, Anthony Carey, Kayla Dempsey, Mark Bell, Sam Vadgama, Lydia Lavelle, Beverly Payne, Tim Hoke, Spring Council, Jon Hartman-Brown, Matt Gladdek, Jamezetta Bedford, and Shannan Campbell.

Not Present: David Brooks and Mark Sherburne.

Staff Attendance: Steve Brantley, Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Patty Griffin, Tina Fuller, Susan Rice, Leslie Wilcox, and Katie Murray. Matthew McKerr, Orange County IT, ran videos.

Also present: Manish Atma, President, Atma Hotel Group, Kristi Kaas, Director of Sales, Hyatt Place, Monnoca Badonni, Director of Sales, A/C Hotel, Barbara Foushee, Mayor Pro tem, Town of Carrboro.

Call to Order

Chair, Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Anthony Carey requested a motion to approve the September 16, 2020 minutes. Tim Hoke so moved and Pam Hemminger seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were

Presentations

Visitors Bureau Staff

- Laurie Paolicelli – Director, Chapel Hill Orange County Visitors Bureau
“The Visitors Bureau is an interesting animal. Many people say to us, “What does a Visitors Bureau do?” “How does it work behind the scenes?” and “What is it doing during COVID-19?” As opposed to so many of our hoteliers and retailers who are there working with customers. If there are no active customers for the Visitors Bureau right now, how are we pivoting to make sure we are being good stewards of the occupancy tax dollars and raising awareness for Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, and Orange County and creating demand? There’s no question that we are in an all-time low in tourism. Not just in Orange County but throughout North Carolina and the Country. There’s no question that demand and occupancy have fallen by 70% in our key sectors. Especially, as Manish noted, mid-week business, which really sustains your tourism industry, you jobs here. People are not allowed to meet right now and that makes it very troublesome for us.
What I’d like to do today is let you hear from the staff. At any visitor bureau you will see four key areas:
 - Director – leading the bureau, meeting and working with the municipalities and stakeholders, and creating a strategic plan.
 - Sales – Cultivating leads for hotels.
 - Marketing & Communications – writing, editing, promoting
 - Visitor Services and Administration
- [Video – Just Do You](#). Produced just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Staff Presentation](#)

New Business/ Roundtable

- Manish Atma – President, Atma Hotel Group

Business is slowly, gradually creeping up but, until the University has students back, we will continue to struggle. The market is still lagging behind until groups return.

Sheraton renovations going well. Biggest challenge is keeping workers safe which means we have a skeleton crew working in order to keep everyone safe and COVID-19 free. Anticipate to be closed until the end of the first quarter.

Carrboro Hotel is struggling. Like the other local hotels, we are starting to see occupancy creep up but overall we're struggling during the weekdays.
- Monnoca Badonni – Director of Sales, A/C Hotel

A/C Hotel Downtown Chapel Hill has had a sell-out on Fridays and Saturdays the last couple of weekends in October for football games, weddings, and those kinds of events.
- Kristi Kaas – Director of Sales, Hyatt Place

Same story as Manish shared with business at Hyatt Place. Some weekend boost in occupancy with some wedding groups, small but we are thankful to see them. Midweek continues to be a struggle.
- Anthony Carey on behalf of Mark Sherburne – Carolina Inn

Similar story as the other hotel representatives have shared. Really had a struggle with the change in graduation. There were some wedding groups, at a lower rate, preventing booking of graduation rooms. Mark was able to move a few of those weddings. More of a heads up from the University would have allowed the local hotels to setup room blocks.
- Mayor Pam Hemminger – Town of Chapel Hill
 - The winter months will be challenging but stressed the importance of emphasizing how safe it is to come to our communities for dining, the arts, and shopping, especially to locals.
 - FilmFest 919 pulled together and will be spread out over several days in three different places; outdoors at the new Carraway Drive-In Theatre, Southern Village and Silver Spot.
 - Launch Chapel Hill received a huge grant. \$230,000 to help with spur on the entrepreneurship community. Also the coworking space is doing gangbusters. There is a lot going on that brings people to our community during that non-traditional game weekend. Great opportunity because it brings jobs, investors, and people here to our community.
 - Halloween will be different this year. We will not close the streets and we are encouraging people not to come downtown.
- Katie Murray – Program Coordinator, Orange County Arts Commission
 - Online exhibits have a larger reach than live, in-person events but is not as conducive for sales. Several grant programs the Orange County Arts Commission is administering. Please get the word out about NC CARES grant, which closes October 23rd. This grant is not just for the arts non-profit sector. For profit arts organizations can apply for this grant too.
 - Annual Paint it Orange Plein Air Paint-out changed to Paint it North Carolina and opened it up to artists from anywhere in the State. Check it out on our [website](#).
 - [Artist Guild Studio Tour](#) – mix of online as well as in-person.
 - [Holiday Arts Guide](#)
 - [#LoveHillsborough](#) public art project.
- Mayor Lydia Lavelle – Town of Carrboro and John Hartman-Brown – Town of Carrboro, Economic Development
 - [Carrboro Virtual Music Festival](#)
 - [West End Poetry Festival](#)

Virtual events are getting the word out to a greater audience than just locals. The hope is that these virtual events occurring during the pandemic encourage in-person attendance when things get back to normal.

 - Carrboro Public Library/[The 203 Project](#) updates.

- Tanya Moore – Associate Vice Chancellor, UNC-Chapel Hill
 - Spring semester begins 1/19/2021. Commencement is extended a week to 5/16/2021. The hope and plan is to combine the 2020 graduating class with the 2021 on 5/16/2021. No Spring Break week off. Instead, those five days off will be scattered throughout the semester as “Wellness Days”, discouraging people from leaving campus. Coronavirus testing will be different in the Spring than it was in the Fall. It’s saliva based and students are a lot more willing to be tested and we are have much better success.
 - Kevin Guskiewicz has been installed as UNC Chancellor. You can watch his installation [here](#).
 - UNC has welcomed it’s largest first-year class ever, 5,300.
 - UNC Visitors Center is planning to open with limited hours in the spring.
- Kayla Dempsey – Director of Marketing & Develop., North Carolina High School Athletic Association

Still set to start High School Athletics officially on November 4th with practices for volleyball and cross-country and then swimming and diving will follow on November 23rd with basketball happening in December. Inside limit is 25 people at an event, not including players, officials, or essential personal. School districts and counties are allowed to be more restrictive. Schools and districts that are allowing fans, we are allowing 25. For outside events, NCHSAA is allowing 100 people in the stands given certain requirements of their stadiums. Outside events don’t take effect until February with football and men’s soccer. This is all, of course, pending guidelines from Governor Roy Cooper and guidance from the State Health Department.
- Commissioner Jamezetta Bedford – Orange County Board of County Commissioners
 - Logistics Park Development at Old 86 and Interstate 40 approved at last night’s BOCC meeting. COVID-19 cases increasing over past two weeks. Please remind everyone about the three Ws – **W**ear your mask, **W**ait six feet apart, **W**ash your hands.
 - Stressed promoting early voting.
 - Revaluation is proceeding. For more information click [here](#).

Health is a priority right now:

 - October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month so please encourage women to get their mammograms.
 - Get your flu shot.
- Shannan Campbell – Economic Development Planner, Town of Hillsborough
 - Colonial Inn is close to opening. They are planning a soft opening mid-November.
 - Many of our historic sites have opened back up with limited hours and reservations and tours, limiting the number of people. These have been popular and booking up as people are looking for fun, educational things they can do safely. Burwell School and Orange County Historical Museum have also been doing virtual programing. Looking at hybrid events for the holidays depending on gathering requirements, weather, etc.
 - Town of Hillsborough Board of Commissioners have been great in supporting local businesses with loosening signage regulations and allowing for expansion onto sidewalks.
 - [Hillsborough Hometown Holiday Festival](#) is still on. Our parade will be virtual.
- Beverly Payne – Alliance for a Historic Hillsborough

Occonechee exhibit through March 2021.

The Alliance for a Historic Hillsborough has [Regulator 250](#) and their “Streams and Screams” Tour.
- Matt Gladdek – Executive Director, Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership
 - CHDP partnered with the Town of Carrboro on a new mural at 11 N. Merritt Mill Road of [Elizabeth Cotten](#).
 - Buskers event went off without a hitch this past Saturday and we will keep doing this through the remainder of the year, weather permitting. Everyone socially distanced and it was a big boon for our businesses with people that stayed out and enjoyed the patio for a little longer than normal. Epilogue even paid for an extra hour of the buskers time to stay out there. They have beer and wine they can sell now.

- Unplanned for community involvement with a very large Meet the Moment Art Walk on Franklin Street. 4 x 4 plywood panels with art painted on them, stretched pretty much the entire length of Franklin Street downtown Chapel Hill.
- Free drive-in movies project with Carolina Union Activities Board that UNC Students are helping us put together.
- Since Carolina Inn is not doing a holiday market this year, we are seeing if we can get their vendors to do a holiday market downtown Chapel Hill.

Nominating Committee/Board Seats

Commissioner Jamezetta Bedford – Orange County Board of County Commissioners

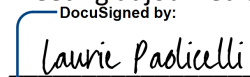
• Open Board Seats:

- Dixon Pitt – Chamber of Commerce seat. Chamber would like to nominate Manish Atma. Just one concern related to this nomination and that is there would be four hoteliers on the board that is designed for two. Input from the board requested.
- David Brooks – Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce. Aubrey Williams has been nominated to fill this position.
- Anthony Carey – Orange County Economic Development Advisory Board. Anthony’s seat expires 12/31/2020 but Anthony is eligible to serve a second term.
- Tim Hoke – Orange County Arts Commission. Dan Mayer has been nominated by the Arts Commission.
- Libbie Hough – at large.

The Board of County Commissioners reviews these periodically so the timing is important right now as you end up with open seats. I want to raise an issue that is somewhat sensitive. I want to raise the issue of the lack of diversity on all of our County advisory boards. We are working with our human relations commission to try to work with the boards about recruiting and about how to invite others to be part of boards and to apply. We as a County have joined Governmental Alliance on Race and Equity (GAR). We funded \$35,000 to start with the initial work. The goal being that race does not predict outcomes. We know that we have systemic structures in government that we can improve so that race is not a predictor. It is essential to have representatives at the table who are diverse. It’s not just race, its gender, its gender identity, we have it built into the bylaws for geographic representation, its age, ethnic background, socioeconomic status and much more. We’re doing well with gender diversity. We have nine men and eight female members. However, we have fourteen white people and one African American that are self-identified from seventeen total members. We would like to suggest, as we look at these open positions, and see if we can get some broader viewpoints, backgrounds, and approaches that will add value and will result in economic gain as well. Something to consider and to think about our changing mindsets and think about our processes as we get together to fill these seats. Chair Anthony Carey will put a nominating committee together to fill our open seats with an eye to diversity.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, November 18th*

Meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

DocuSigned by:


Minutes reviewed by:
 Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

11/19/2020

 Date

DocuSigned by:


Minutes accepted by:
 Anthony Carey, Chairman

11/19/2020

 Date