

For Approval June 16, 2021

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Virtual Board of Directors Meeting
May 19, 2021**

Board Members Present: Pam Hemminger, Aubrey Williams, Tanya Moore, Anthony Carey, Kayla Dempsey, Mark Bell, Lydia Lavelle, Beverly Jo Payne, Mark Sherburne, Daniel Mayer, Spring Council, Jon Hartman-Brown, Matt Gladdek, and Jamezetta Bedford for Sally Greene.

Not Present: Manish Atma and Sam Vadgama.

Staff Attendance: Steve Brantley, Laurie Paolicelli, Patty Griffin, Tina Fuller, Susan Rice, and Leslie Wilcox.

Also present: Rick Steinbacher, Senior Associate A.D., Capital Projects and Facilities, NC Athletic Dept. Jessica Herrschaft, Clean Inc. Barbara Foushee, Mayor Pro Tem, Town of Carrboro.

Call to Order

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

Chair, Anthony Carey requested board members to share their organization's current mask mandates.

- Anthony Carey with The Siena Hotel, a Marriott property – Associates must wear masks indoors at all times. Vaccinated associates may be without a mask outdoors. Vaccinated guests may go without a mask in public spaces. Marriott is on a COVID-19 vaccine honor system.
- Mark Sherburne with The Carolina Inn - Masks are not required for vaccinated guests or employees. Carolina Inn is on a COVID-19 vaccine honor system.
- Spring Council with Mama Dips Restaurant – All front of house staff wear masks and pretty much everyone is wearing masks but they do have the choice not to wear a mask.
- Laurie Paolicelli advised of Orange County Government policy – employees are required to wear a mask, even if vaccinated, if there is more than one person in the building and they can't socially distance. The public is required to wear masks when at Orange County Government. If public refuses to wear a mask, Orange County recommends employee(s) wear a mask and socially distance from the person to ensure the employee's safety.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Anthony Carey requested a motion to approve the April 21, 2021 minutes. Mark Sherburne so moved and Beverly Jo Payne seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Executive Director's Report

- Tourism is coming back but we are not out of the woods yet. This week's projections indicate our total revenues for 2021-2022 will be about 80% of our last good year, 2018-2019.
- Our hotels are an important bellwether for what is going on in the rest of our community, demand in our industry, and the economic impact thereof. This summer looks strong as demand is ramping-up with commencement, sports, and what we call the "Smurf" market (social, military, entertainment, reunion, fraternal) coming back. We are seeing the fastest uptake in the weddings market. That being said, if we are going to make a full recovery, we have to focus strongly on mid-week business. We know corporate businesses are not traveling yet and many governments have frozen their business travel as well. So there is only so much

within our capabilities. Mr. Chair, I would like to request a task force that analyzes how we can focus on mid-week and possibly shifting marketing funds to a mid-week marketing program.

- Mark Sherburne agreed that corporate travel is still down; both for the individual traveler as well as corporate-related groups, and those would be the mid-week demand. That demand probably won't return until 2022. Mark agreed a task force is a great idea.
- Chair Carey said he would put the task force together of hoteliers from amongst the three towns, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough adding that he would like to include the Colonial Inn in Hillsborough and see if we can get some of the market share in the north-west part of the county from Alamance County.
- The Sheraton is slated to reopen on August 2, 2021 so we have 168 rooms and nearly 20,000 square feet of space coming on the market in ninety days.
- Visitors Bureau relocation to 308 E. Franklin – When the construction contractor started removing walls as part of the renovation, they found mold in the walls around the bathroom so now the County needs to remediate the mold before the renovations can proceed. The Board of County Commissioners just approved the funds to fix the mold.
 - James Taylor exhibit update – We are working with [NanoLumens](#) out of Atlanta to create the wall-to-wall digital video display of James Taylor and his band singing “Carolina in My Mind” and a welcome to Chapel Hill message. We will go a little over budget with this exhibit but I am meeting with Senator Foushee this afternoon and I am hoping, since this is also a state attraction, we can get some support from the state in the form of ARPA funds from the state.
- Clean Design, our advertising agency, is reaching out to the local economic boosters to see if we can do a tourism campaign around this area under the title of “You’ve Got a Friend”; you’ve got a friend in Chapel Hill, you’ve got a friend in Carrboro, you’ve got a friend in Hillsborough. The data shows that many people come here because they know someone or love someone or they love their experience here. That will tie in to the James Taylor exhibition as well.
- The County Manager has asked that we not open to the public yet because she is concerned about the variants and the health and safety of staff. However, during commencement this past weekend Kristen Smith Young, Director, UNC Community Relations who also couldn't open UNC Visitors Center for the same concerns, joined me in opening the Visitors Bureau. We had about 100 people.
- Laurie motioned to nominate Anthony Carey to continue to serve on this advisory board in the open Orange County Lodging seat recently vacated by Sam Vadgama and the Colonial Inn is nominated for the At Large seat vacated by Libbie Hough. Mayor Pam Hemminger seconded. With all members in favor, Anthony Carey and the Colonial Inn are nominated to serve on the advisory board upon approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Presentations

Rick Steinbacher, Senior Associate A.D., Capital Projects and Facilities, NC Athletic Dept. gave an update on Carolina athletics.

Mr. Steinbacher shared he thinks it has been their best year ever because of how they reacted to the pandemic. They began communicating with their athletes more regularly, first as the athletic department and then the ACC schools started communication more with each other. That higher degree of communication brought the most collaboration we have ever had. Our coaches and student athletes did a great job of focusing on what matters and completely tuning out everything else and that made us stronger in many of ways.

We brought our staff back June 1, 2020. A few weeks later, we started slowly bringing back our student athletes. We brought our fall sports back first and then we brought all our sports teams back. Then we started thinking about how we could have competitions during a pandemic. Firstly, how do we do it safely with our participants: the coaches, the players, the officials? Then, how do we do it with fans? We used to try to cram as many people in to every space that we possibly could. Now we had to think about how we keep people seated six feet apart. How do we make it easy for them to sanitize their hands? How do we disinfect our facilities as frequently as we have to?

The first football game we had 25 people, the parents of senior players. By the second football game, we were able to go up to about 3,500 fans. Most of the basketball season, the only people we could have there were the parents of our players. The last two games we were able to go up to about 4,000 fans in Smith Center. Therefore, when we played Florida State and Duke we were able to have 4,000 fans there. We had our last home baseball game last night. We will host one more event on campus, this Saturday, our women's lacrosse team will play in the NCAA quarterfinal. The NCAA rule is still at a 50% cap. Therefore, we will have up to about 2,000 people there. Then we will start planning for the fall. We are very, very hopeful, obviously, for full capacity stadiums. We are budgeting at 60% capacity, we are hoping for at least 80% capacity and we are prepared for 100% capacity this fall.

The other final COVID-related topic I will touch on is the NCAA instituted a "COVID dead period" for recruiting. That means recruits cannot meet with us and our coaches are not allowed to meet with recruits. That ends June 1. So imagine for 14 months, no high school athletes have been able to visit universities. That is all changing June 1. There is so much pent-up demand and pent-up energy for student athletes to get out and visit universities. So we are making sure that we are ready to do that and host those folks as safely as we possibly can. We have student athletes that have signed to play at Carolina or have committed to play at Carolina or have an offer and are very interested, they have never even met our coach, and coaches have not met them. So starting June 1, we will start welcoming folks back to campus for summer camps where they actually participate in the sport and then official and unofficial visits.

It has been a great year for us in terms of communication and collaboration. It has also been a good year in terms of results. We have had our highest GPAs ever across the athletics department and within individual sport programs. We had a football team meeting last night in which we celebrated the team's total GPA for the most recent semester was almost a 3.2. So we are really proud of how our student athletes are doing in the classroom.

What they are doing in competition has been amazing. We have already won three national championships this year. We won both the men's and women's tennis indoor national championship. Karen Shelton won her ninth field hockey championship. That is fifty-five total team championships now for our department. We could win four more this spring. Women's tennis plays Duke tonight and if they beat Duke, we will be in the women's tennis final four. Men's lacrosse is the number one seat in the NCAA tournament. That game for the national championship, if they play in it, will be May 31. Women's lacrosse is the number one seat by far in the NCAA tournament. If they get to the national championship game, that game will be on May 30. We also have our men's golf team and our baseball team that still have a chance.

The COVID impact on us financially has been huge. We are very much focused now on how we emerge from this in a financially responsible way but also in a way that allows us to continue to do what we do. If you look at the Power Five universities, the 65 highest-level universities in the country, there are only five schools that sponsor as many sports as we do. We have 20 teams and we have a high level

of success across all of them. We very much want to remain that way. We want to be committed to having over 800 student athletes every single year versus many other schools that maybe only have 400 and only spots with a minimum number of sports, which I think is either 16 or 17, in the NCAA.

If you look at the amount or resources we have for student athletes, we are in the bottom three schools of those 65 schools. Because we have so many teams and so many student athletes which spread our resources out as widely as we can so we can afford as many people the opportunity to compete at the college level.

If you follow college athletics right now, there is an ongoing discussion of whether student athletes should be paid. It is called name/image/likeness and whether they should be able to make money off their own name. There is talk about all the finance related with college sports. From our vantage point, the finances are important but they are nowhere near as important as our core values are. For us that is providing a Carolina education to over 800 student athletes every single year, having broad-based opportunities for them to compete in many different sports, and then for them to have choices about the future of their career. Whether it is to go pro, which very, very, few of them do. We always want to make sure they have the choice to go on to a great career after they leave Carolina.

We are going to lose a lot of money this year due to COVID. Thankfully, our donors, the Ram's Club, have stepped up. We created something called the Carolina Victory Fund. About half of our loss will be covered through the Carolina Victory Fund. We are going to have to take on some additional debt to cover the other half. We will have to pay that back over time so that is going to put a tremendous amount of stress on us to reduce expenses and grow revenue everywhere we possibly can. Ticket sales is our largest source of revenue, which we have budgeted at 60% capacity next year, so we are looking at another significant loss next year. Therefore, we are going to be very focused over the next several months and years in continuing to eliminate, maintain, and restrict our expenses as much as we possibly can and grow revenue as much as we can so we can come out of this crisis in a strong position.

Many people said to us and challenged us by saying, "Why don't you just cut sports then?" And many universities decided to do that over the last nine months. Every single one of them is embroiled in tremendous legal battles and is being dragged through the mud PR-wise. Even Stanford, the gold standard of college athletics. They have 36 sports teams. They announced about six to nine months ago they were going to cut eleven of them. They have four or five lawsuits that they are dealing with right now. Just yesterday they announced they are going to re-instate those eleven sports programs. That just affirmed the decision we made last summer not to cut sports. We are always going to be about twenty teams. We are always going to be about eight hundred students. We are always going to be about excellence. However, excellence is expensive so we are going to have to find ways to rethink our financial model over the next several years.

Laurie asked Rick when the [Carolina Basketball Museum](#) will reopen and he answered June 1, 2021. Mark Sherburne commented about the excitement he's seeing in people coming to Chapel Hill to see games, especially the parents and participants and that there is a huge pent-up demand for the upcoming football season this fall. The Carolina Inn is sold out for every single home game except the last.

Mayor Hemminger commented on how great UNC was in working with the Town of Chapel Hill through the COVID pandemic in adhering to the varying rules and protocols and ensuring the community felt safe.

New Business/ Roundtable

- Mayor Pam Hemminger – Town of Chapel Hill
 - Expanded sidewalk program will continue for now and we are working on upgrading the way it looks. People really enjoy it. Look for outside dining to continue to grow.
 - There is a bill in front of the state legislature; [House Bill 781](#), that we are hopeful will pass. It would allow us to create “social districts” downtown allowing people to wander with their alcoholic beverage within a certain area. This would allow us to expand the outside dining experience and allow for continued social distancing.
 - Saturday free parking downtown will continue until the middle of August.
 - The old “[CVS parking deck](#) (aka “ugly deck”) on East Rosemary is on schedule to be demolished late June/early July. The reconstruction will take a year for the new deck to be built. The Wallace parking deck will be full capacity and we are looking for other places to help people park during that year the new CVS parking is being rebuilt. Therefore, parking will be at a premium.
 - The proposed new hotel at the old town hall is coming before Town Council before we break in June. They are proposing a rooftop outside amenity for the public.
 - We are starting our short-term rental (STR) discussion this evening. We will be working to finalize some kind of outcome and voting at the end of June on that.
 - [University Place \(U Mall\) redevelopment](#) proposal on the agenda tonight. The redevelopment of University Mall includes turning them inside out with the stores all facing outward versus inside as they are currently. The redevelopment proposal includes adding residential units, more commercial space, and some green space.
 - [The Aura Project](#) on the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Estes is also working through the Town of Chapel Hill’s development process.
 - There are 41 development projects currently.
 - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds – The Town of Chapel Hill is slated to get 10.2 million dollars over the course of two years but we have three years to spend that. We will be having public forums on how to spend these funds. We have been advised not to jump too quickly in spending these. We need to take out time and make sure we have good oversight and administration of these funds. We do want to get started with some monies towards our [ReVive Project](#), grants and support for our local businesses to get them back up and running, especially the ones that haven’t been able to open until just recently.
 - [Governor Roy Cooper’s May 14, 2021 Executive Order No. 215 “Lifting COVID-19 Restrictions . . .”](#) – Mayor Lavelle and I met on Friday after the Governor’s orders came out. We weren’t given much time to implement any kind of plan. Everyone is struggling with how to move forward. We’ll see a lot of confusion and inconsistencies. Thankfully, in Orange County people respect the science and data. I talked to the school board chair yesterday, they are very concerned, and their parents are very distressed about doing away with masks because their young children cannot be vaccinated and they still want to go out in public like to grocery stores. Now they are not going to feel safe to do so. The News and Observer had a [poll](#) indicating people still want to wear masks and that they are feeling like we are not quite there yet with the vaccinations.
 - Chapel Hill Town Hall is still requiring its employees to wear masks. Town Council will continue virtual meetings until the end of June.
 - Our unemployment rate is below 3%, which means it is hard to find workers.
 - We are doing everything we can to encourage people to be vaccinated.

- Matt Gladdek – Executive Director, Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership
 - Dame’s Chicken & Waffles has opened in Chapel Hill. Damian Moore, who is the namesake and founder, is a Chapel Hill resident. They are doing really well but they have had trouble hiring people too so there will be limited hours for the time being.
 - Perennial Café will be re-opening under the ownership of Carrboro Coffee Roasters President Scott Canary. He is keeping it the same feel and design. I think the building owners, Mimi and Tanner Hock, really wanted was a coffee business that could take it to the next level so I think Scott Canary will do that.
 - Franklin Motors Beer Garden is a new bar that should be opening by the end of May or early June at the old Franklin Street Motors location. It will be a great beer garden experience. The architect that designed Ponysaurus’ spot in downtown Durham is designing this property. Mike Benson will be the general manager.
 - The Spindle Bar, which is the bar connected to Schoolkid’s Records, is also opening in late May, early June. Unfortunately, Stephen Judge, the proprietor, is stuck in Ireland because of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown but they still should be opening on time.
 - West End Wine Bar is closed but Mediterranean Deli owner Jamil Kadoura is opening an event space there.
 - [Save the Music](#) is still going on as the busker’s series. Now that venues can be open, we will be transitioning that name soon.
 - [Juneteenth Celebration](#) will have art performances, history exhibits, kid’s activities and more in conjunction with the Town of Chapel Hill thanks to Susan Brown at Chapel Hill Community Arts & Culture.
 - June is also Pride month so we are actively seeking LGBTQ artists to perform for Pride month.
 - PNC Bank sold to Grubb Properties. We are expecting and, I would go so far as to say hoping, for residential to be put in that space. Mayor Pam Hemminger has been in conversations with them and its likely going to be at least 22 and older for more adult-themed housing. One thing we noticed during the pandemic is we need more residents within walking distance of our businesses to help support them.
 - There is a bunch of other developers kicking the tires on available properties.
 - Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership has just hired Clean Design for a small contract to work in conjunction with all the great work Laurie has done with them. Specifically, Chapel Hill lacks an icon. Carrboro has its great logo that everyone plays with and enjoys. Hillsborough has its real clear feel that people understand and play with. We want to build on that same community pride for Chapel Hill. We’ve asked Clean to just play with some ideas. At events this summer we will give out stickers and judge by whatever is taken the most. The goal is for Chapel Hill organizations like the Visitors Bureau, the Town of Chapel Hill, and the Chamber all use it.
 - Downtown Together. We have just reviewed seven proposals from a broad RFP, looking at recommendations of what we can do to take downtown to the next level. We have sent out invitations to three of the seven to present to the Downtown Together task force. We will identify what are barriers to the development we want in downtown and a path forward. We are focusing on synthesizing all the many plans that have been done in the past ten years as well as looking at an easy and actionable path forward to make sure we are moving Chapel Hill in the right direction, especially downtown.
 - Adopt-the-Block – A project focusing on making downtown, especially around UNC, more attractive.

- Tanya Moore – Associate Vice Chancellor, UNC Chapel Hill
 - Orientation is still virtual.
 - UNC Staff will be returning to work on campus on July 19, 2021. From that point it will be a quick ramp-up to full move-in in August and, hopefully, looking a lot more normal.
- Mayor Lydia Lavelle – Town of Carrboro
 - Pride Month – I’ve been working with a committee at Chapel Hill and between the two towns, we have organized several different ways of celebrating Pride month. Flags, proclamations, and urging businesses to offer specials, drinks, special appetizers, and decorate. We are going to have Pride Food Truck Rodeo and Dance Party on Thursday, June 24 at Carrboro Town Commons. It is for everyone.
 - Frederick Douglass speech reading – we are hoping to hold this again this year on July 4 in the Carrboro Century Center. I am working with parks & rec now to figure out how to maybe ticket for that to limit attendance and we will have a live feed of the reading.
 - [203 Project](#) – at our meeting last night we passed a couple of text amendments to continue the 203 Project on its route toward, hopefully, a groundbreaking in the fall.
 - Also at our meeting last night we had a really good presentation from Catherine Lazorko, our Communications Manager, on efforts that she has done over the past year to increase our presence on all forms of social media. If you are interested, it is in our agenda packet from last night’s meeting.
 - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds – at our June 8 meeting our council is going to discuss our prioritization for much of those funds.
 - Carrboro Town Manager, David Andrews, is retiring the end of July. We have been advertising for that position but we are early in that process. We are hoping to have someone on-board by the time we come back in the fall.
 - Our staff has been working mostly remote except for some key staff that rotate in and out of town hall. The Town Hall has largely been closed to the public for much of this time. The plans from the Town Manager are for staff to start coming back slowly in June and July. We plan to keep meetings virtual through June. So staff will be returning, with protocols, this summer and then the new town manager will determine policies around remote work.
- Jon Hartman-Brown – Economic Development Director, Town of Carrboro
 - Carrboro is adding additional parking behind the Arts Center at 300 E. Main St. Additionally, we are working with Cat’s Cradle to provide them some accommodations so they can offer outdoor concerts during the summer back there. We are hoping this will help them recover some of the funds they lost during the pandemic when they had to shut down.
 - Freight Train Blues Festival is going on virtually now.
 - Our new Visit Carrboro social media channels are up on Facebook and Instagram.
 - Mask mandate – most of Carrboro businesses are choosing to require masks. Some are still not opening their indoor dining.
- Mark Bell – Mayor Pro Tem, Town of Hillsborough
 - Activity is really picking up for restaurants, bars, and outdoor events in Hillsborough. So far this month we have had our Sculpture Tour, our Garden Tour, and our Revolutionary War Day.
 - The Visitor Center still has self-guided tours and masks are required to come in to the Visitors Center.
 - Last Fridays – the next Last Friday will be May 28 and there are about 21 different venues for arts and events.
 - Orange County Historical Museum still has its [Date Night Exhibit](#).

- The Alliance for Historic Hillsborough and the Orange County Historical Museum are hosting lunch and learns from April through August. They have different topics in which they cover over the lunch hour.
- The Burwell School has guided tours and group tours. On June 5 they are having a history spotlight on 19th century clothing – what they wore and why.
- Preservation Month – we have a historic district commission and they are giving out awards for historic preservation.
- Mask mandate – local businesses are still requiring masks indoors. Outdoor bars and dining are not requiring masks. The Town Board has given local businesses some leeway for outdoor activities to help their business during the pandemic.
- Beverly Jo Payne – Alliance for Historic Hillsborough
 - The Alliance had a Revolutionary War re-enactment on May 8. That went very well and got many visitors into the museum to see the Date Night exhibit.
 - The Alliance has a Managerial Services Agreement (MSA) with the Burwell School and the Orange County Historic Museum. We have revised the MSA with the Burwell School and we are currently revising the MSA with Orange County Historic Museum.
 - The Preservation Fund is coming back and joining with the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough. So we have a new member representation, Rich Show, coming aboard.
 - The Orange County Historic Museum is kicking-off “Friendship Drive”
 - The Occaneechi Indian Tribe started its community garden at our tribal grounds in Burlington. We received a lot of help from the Hillsborough Urban Gardens (HUG).
- Dan Mayer – Executive Director, The ArtsCenter
 - Katie Murray, Program Coordinator, Orange County Arts Commission asked me to announce that she is working on a plan to expand her operations at the Eno Mill. She is working to setup new offices and some more public space. There are already artist studios there and she is looking to setup some gallery space and some potential classroom space. She is looking for arts organizations that are in need of a home. Small arts organizations that need a physical facility, either part-time or full-time or shared space.
 - The ArtsCenter summer camp registration is going along very strong.
 - The ArtsCenter is requiring masks because most children who attend our summer camp are under the age of 12 and cannot be vaccinated.
 - CommunityWorx is having a vaccine clinic this weekend. The ArtsCenter is investigating also having a vaccine clinic in the next month or two.
 - We hired an artist to create a poster for an organization called Day One in Elizabeth City that we are working with to get the word out and promote vaccines.
- Kayla Dempsey – Director of Marketing & Devel, NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA)
 - We had a great football event at UNC last Thursday, Friday, and Saturday which is a different format for us but it went well.
 - We had golf at Pinehurst on Monday and Tuesday.
 - We had softball and soccer in Greensboro and at Davie in North Davidson County this past weekend.
 - Cheerleading Invitational is this weekend at Southern Alamance High School. The cheerleaders do not have to wear masks when they are competing inside but spectators do per the school’s rules.
 - End of June we have men’s tennis, baseball, wrestling, track & field, and women’s tennis.
 - We do not require masks for student athletes participating in outdoor events. I will say that at North Davidson High School where I was for softball this past weekend, I didn’t see a mask for 48 hours. People coming into our communities may be expecting not to have to wear one. We

might want to make sure messaging is very good for that especially thinking of people traveling within our state to us.


- NCHSAA has another legislative hearing on Thursday.
- Commissioner Jamezetta Bedford – Orange County Board of County Commissioners
 - Budget
 - The County Manager recommended a \$150,000 transfer of ARPA funds to the Visitors Bureau and I expect that will get the full support of the County Commissioners.
 - Orange County is slated for about 28 million dollars in ARPA funds over three years. We are still researching how we can spend that.
 - This coming fiscal year’s budget is an austere budget. There will not be any salary increases. We do hope to restore merit pay, which can be between zero and \$1,000.
 - The budget includes a 3-cent tax increase because we have a large increase in debt with the new jail opening this summer and additions on both senior centers and many other county projects and the affordable housing second slot of 2.5 million just went out for borrowing.
 - All departments except for seven that are human services/safety net departments (Child Support Services, Emergency Services, Health Department, Housing & Community Develop, Sheriff’s Office, Social Services, etc.) had a mandatory 5% cut.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, June 16th*

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 a.m.

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 Minutes reviewed by:
 Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

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 Minutes accepted by:
 Anthony Carey, Chairman

6/22/2021

 Date

6/22/2021

 Date