

**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting at Sheraton Chapel Hill
September 20, 2023**

Board Members Present: Mark Bell – Chair, Karen DeHart – Vice Chair, Grace Holtkamp, Tanya Moore, Sharon Hill, Beverly Payne, Heidi Werner Dawson, Spring Council, John Hartman-Brown, Rebecca Mormino, Shannan Campbell

Not Present: Karen Stegman, Manish Atma, Damon Seils, Jenny Shultz-Thomas, Earl McKee

Staff Attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Hannah Hemphill

Guests: Camile Berry, Sam Vadgama

Call to Order

Mark Bell, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:14 AM.

Introductions

- Sam Vadgama, general manager at AC Chapel Hill and applicant for a vacant board seat. He has previously served on the board.
- Councilmember Camile Berry, attending in place of Councilwoman Stegman.

Approval of Minutes

Mark Bell requested a motion to approve the August 23, 2023, minutes. Sharon Hill made a motion to approve the minutes and Beverley Payne seconded the motion. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Executive Director's Report

- Discuss the strengths and challenges that Chapel Hill/Orange County tourism is facing.
- Economic Impact:
 - Visitor spending in Orange County contributed 236 million, which was an increase of 21% from 2021-2022.
 - Orange County is in the top ten counties for increased spending.
 - Rebound was pent up demand for events like weddings, small corporate meetings, university demands.
- Strengths:
 - Brand name – Chapel Hill is internationally known.
 - Rich history, vibrant culinary scene, stunning scenery (outdoors), small towns with strong history, something for everyone with activities (not enough for young children)
- Weaknesses:
 - Limited economy lodging and our daily room rates higher than neighboring counties
 - Lack of knowledge of community activities outside of the University
 - Lack of youth and recreational sports fields and courts. Currently facilities are the number one challenge.
 - Parking continues to pose challenges.
- Opportunities - Develop midweek business.

Approved October 18, 2023

- Production works to redo our video. We have hired a producer and are currently updating our shoot list. The video was focused on big meeting hotels, and we are evaluating what is missing. ([Meetings Video Link](#))
- Ad agency will present on \$250k plan for meetings.
 - Focused on Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro, New York, Atlanta, Tampa
 - Review call to action
 - Roundtable with hotels, discuss whether directing people to RFP page or meeting venue guide is preferable.
- Business Travelers
 - Ad agency business traveler campaign focused on media trip advisor and call to action.
 - Information on what to do in the area focused on what to do in the area by personality (chill time, party time, me time, etc.).
 - Time out campaign targeted on trip advisor, display ads, and search.
- Shelley Green with Destination Next will launch a survey about what's next for tourism in Orange County. The survey is anonymous and will help us chart the next five to ten years. The survey will seek input from staff, the board, and other key stakeholders.
- Question to the board: What is the biggest challenge facing you and the mission you represent for the board?
 - Rebecca Mormino: Placer data on downtown Chapel Hill is up 10% from last year and people are spending longer downtown. 100 block remains a challenge on Franklin Street. Students navigate Franklin St. differently and how do we reimagine new ways for people to want to be downtown outside of nights and weekends.
 - John Hartman Brown: Need better adjectives for Carrboro, which has a reputation as being “cool and hip” which is outdated. We need to look at the tourism assets and think about how to remarket and differentiate ourselves from other downtowns.
 - Camile Berry: How does Chapel Hill attract people to see that we are not just the university. Wayfinding continues to be an issue for visitors, parking especially.
 - Grace Holtkamp: More people are utilizing spaces which do not match the pastoral/romantic countryside imagine.
 - Heidi Werner Dawson: How do we keep visitors safe and promote a perception of safety.
 - Tanya Moore: The University is continuing to take feedback from the campus and community on how to communicate during emergency events.

New Business

- Two new applicants to the Visitors Bureau Board, Sam Vadgama and Meredith Saybe.

Beverly Payne The Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation

- Occaneechi Powwow will be held on October 14 and 15th.
- Archaeological conservancy putting the archeological site for the Occaneechi Tribe into trust. This is 20 acres of land.
- American Archelogy has an article about acquiring 20 acres.

Approved October 18, 2023

- Hillsborough Museum having Collecto-Con September 29th and 30th. There will be a fashion show and piggybacks on a current Treasure Hunters Exhibit.

Camile Berry

- The Town of Chapel Hill's Festifall Arts Market & More will be held on October 14, 21, and 28.

Heidi Werner Dawson

- Carolina Coffee Roasters partnership will launch a Centennial Blend in October.
- The Carolina Inn Holiday Market will be held on December 3, 10, and 17.

Jon Hartman-Brown, Economic Development Director, Carrboro

- Carrboro Music Festival will be held on Sunday, October 1st.

Shannan Campbell, Hillsborough Economic Development

- Hillsborough is having a holiday parade with increased safety protocols. Currently they are not considering a walking parade. The parade will be held on Sunday, December 3rd.

Next meeting: *Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at the Hampton Inn & Suites Carrboro*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 AM.