

Minutes
Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Advisory Board Meeting
Sheraton Chapel Hill
June 12, 2024
8:00 – 9:15 AM

Board Members Present: Sharon Hill, Randee Haven-O'Donnell, Jon Hartman-Brown, Spring Council, Sam Vadgama, Meredith Saybe, Tanya Moore, Heidi Werner-Dawson

Not Present: Karen Dehart- Chair, Grace Holtkamp, Anna Richards, Matt Hughes, Paris Miller-Foushee, Steven Peck, Jeri Lynn Schulke, Donald "DR" Bryan, Wendy Smith

Staff Attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Hannah Hemphill, Katie Murray

Call to Order

Sharon Hill, Vice-Chair called the meeting to order 8:10 AM.

Round Table Introductions

Approval of Minutes

Sharon Hill requested a motion to approve the May 15, 2024, minutes. Randee Haven- O'Donnell made a motion to approve the minutes and Tanya Moore seconded the motion. All members were in favor of approving the minutes. The vote will be ratified at the next board meeting on August 21, 2024.

Marketing Update

- Several programs were reviewed including the Visitors Bureau continuing commitment to LGBTQ initiatives. An advertisement program was implemented in WALTER magazine, distributed to Triangle readers. Posters were produced for the Carrboro event and Paolicelli coordinated distribution with the Town of Carrboro's Public Information Officer, Catherine Lazorko.
- The Visitors Bureau unique public art sculpture, Rainbow Ram, will be used in the parade.
- Paolicelli reviewed marketing for the upcoming Manchester City vs. Celtic Game and thanked Board Member Randee Haven-O'Donnell for her work in securing the \$10,000 grant money for the Trolley.

Trolley advertising, staffing, PR, and marketing were reviewed.

Executive Director's Report

- Finalizing Budget with BOCC which included a special session on the Visitors Bureau fund balance. Paolicelli emphasized that the BOCC voted to allow the Visitors Bureau to maintain a 15% fund balance reserve and use fund balance for special event opportunities that occur at the end of the fiscal year, using European Soccer as an example.
- The Visitors Bureau contracted with a website evaluation company to engage website users on the site's usability and functionality. Final reports showed that the website needed to lead with restaurants, events, live music, and the mobile version of the site was not ranked as high. The Visitor's Bureau is now redesigning its site for ease of use.

Approved August 21, 2024

- Paolicelli reported she was “proud and pleased” at the community’s support of the upcoming Soccer game and their willingness to work together to offer special welcoming deals and extended hours for this international event.
- Paolicelli reported that the Town of Chapel Hill and the Visitors Bureau, UNC and local police have teamed to work with an Amazon television show filming on campus Week of July 8, 202.
- The board discussed key dates on the university calendar and the fact that a decision had not been made on commencement 2025.

Sales Report

- Marlene Barbera reported the initial success of the meetings and conference campaign implemented by CLEAN and Media Two, a buying firm based in NYC.
- Leads through CVENT, and organic search were increasing.
- Marlene continues to coordinate Trolley programming with local restaurants and businesses.
- Marlene is working with Tina Fuller to redesign and tweak the website for better usability.

Budget Discussion 2024/2025

- As we wrap up FY 2024, 82% of the budget has been spent as of May.
- 12.4% year to date growth in occupancy tax
 - UNC Graduation date for 2025 has not been set yet, further impacting hotel room sales.
 - The Board discussed sending UNC a letter about the economic impact of graduation and football schedules. Later it was determined that sending copy points to UNC Board representative, Tanya Moore, was the most feasible and Paolicelli would work with Moore on communication strategy to leaders at UNC.

New Chair and Vice Chair Vote

Sharon Hill requested a motion to approve Karen DeHart as continuing Chair and “DR” Bryan as the new Vice-Chair for the Advisory Board. Randee Haven O’Donnell was so moved, and Heidi Werner Dawson seconded. All present were in favor and the vote will be ratified at the next board meeting on August 21, 2024.

New Business

Spring Council

- Spring is committed to introducing a new festival in Chapel Hill based around the area’s long history in southern biscuits. She is working with local groups on attempts to host the 1st Annual Biscuit Festival, with the idea being a 3-day event to bring families downtown. As Southern Living magazine reported: “Biscuits just pair naturally with traditional Southern fare like [fried chicken](#), biscuits and gravy, and homemade jam.”

Katie Murray (OC Arts Commission):

- The Orange County Arts Commission is hosting Juneteenth celebration on Friday, Shambo Madina headlining with a DJ, vendors, kid’s activities. Free for all 6-9 at the Eno Mill
- Juneteenth events will be happening all day, including a panel about Black farmers at the library.

Approved August 21, 2024

- Katie confirmed that the Orange County Arts Commission will host the popular public art event, Uproar, in August 2025 and will work with an expanded event team as well as the Orange County Visitors Bureau.

Meredith Saybe:

- Union Grove Farm is putting a mobile coffee trailer up across from the ice cream store which will be called Blue Heeler Coffee. People will be able to come and hopefully be able to get delicious Larry's Coffee from 7 to 10 in the morning. We are trying to provide more utilization of the space, have more reasons for people to enjoy a little bit of time in the country.”

Tanya Moore:

- Tanya updated the board on key UNC dates and discussed the current search for a Chancellor. Tanya committed to communicating with UNC leaders about how key date changes on campus impacted the local economy,

Next meeting: *Wednesday, August 21, 2024, at the Carrboro Hampton Inn & Suites*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 AM.