

Approved May 24, 2017

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting April 19, 2017

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
Durham Technical Community College, Hillsborough Campus, Hillsborough, NC

Board Members Present: George Cianciolo, Andrew Strickland, Tim Hoke, Rosemary Waldorf-Chair, Kayla Austin, Aaron Bachenheimer, Meg McGurk, Penny Rich, Lydia Lavelle, Annette Lafferty, Jeffery Strickler, Lee Storrow, Shannan Campbell, Lee Pavao, Mark Bell

Not Present: Allison Nichols-Clapper, Mark Sherburne

Staff attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Allison Chambers, Steve Brantley, Katie Murray

Also present: Penny Gluck, Executive Dean of Orange County Operations, Durham Tech, Erik Lars Myers, Mystery Brewing, Hillsborough, NC

Call to Order

Chair Rosemary Waldorf called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Waldorf requested a motion to approve the April 19, 2017 minutes. George Cianciolo so moved and Penny Rich seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Host Introduction

Penny Gluck welcomed the board to Durham Tech. She reported that they have started some new initiatives at the Orange County Campus. In June of 2016 the Orange County Board of County Commissioners approved the Orange Connect Fund that awards \$500 to any high school senior in Orange County who attends Durham Tech. There is no application and Durham Tech identifies the recipients. In the first year of the award 81 students benefited from this fund. Of the 81 that started, 65 returned in the spring. Penny Rich noted that it was the Commissioners goal to provide education to all county residents regardless of their level of financial need or immigrant status. Through Durham Tech's College Promise program a motivated high school junior or senior could graduate with an associate's degree from Durham Tech at the same time they graduate from high school. Qualified high school students can take Community College classes tuition free. Some of the credits earned can be completed online. Last year they started an associate's degree that prepared students for careers in hospitality and tourism. The Visitors Bureau Board thanked Durham Tech for helping to train the workforce for hospitality jobs.

Guest Presentation

Erik Lars Myers, CEO and Master Brewer from Mystery Brewing, joined the board to talk about craft brewing in Orange County. He shared that Orange County is home to two of the oldest breweries in North Carolina in the Top of the Hill and the Carolina Brewery. Both of these breweries have been important to Orange County tourism. Craft brewing is a 1.2 billion dollar industry in NC and employees 150,000 people. Mystery Brewing employees 26 people in Hillsborough. The challenges to new breweries in Orange County are expensive rents and a long permitting process for business development. He feels one answer is the promotion of local tourism and that will in turn bring tourism from outside the County. It is important to prioritize local breweries. He asked the board to help Orange County breweries grow, and

feels that will go hand in hand with growing tourism in the county. When Laurie Paolicelli asked him what he would like to see by way of marketing he said the best way to market a brewery is by telling the genuine story behind their beer. As an example, Steel String Brewery names all their beers after albums or songs and their tap pulls are parts of musical instruments. Also important is seasonality of beers and the relationships with breweries and local farms. The vast majority of Mystery Brewing business comes from outside Orange County and 45% of their business is done on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Four percent of the beer consumed in NC is made in the state. They have learned a lot from wine producers about how to attract older drinkers. Rosemary Waldorf would like to form a group to consider some of his suggestions and think about how to raise the profile of our Orange County breweries. She proposed holding an initial brainstorming meeting at Mystery Brewing with members of the Visitors Bureau Board.

Finance Report

Finance Chair, Penny Rich reported that the Orange County Board of County Commissioners will receive the Manager's Recommended Operating Budget on May 2, 2017 and will spend the rest of May and first part of June receiving resident input and discussing possible revisions. The 2016-17 Visitors Bureau budget has devoted a large amount to advertising in the wake of HB2, even though HB142 passed we are not out of the woods as visitors are still saying they will not visit NC. More resources have been put toward social media and a television campaign focusing on the Charlotte market. We are supporting the arts commission and working hard to stay focused on mid-week business for our hospitality industry, including business and conference travel mid-week. Commissioner Rich encouraged the board to use the Visitors Bureau resources, including calling Marlene Barbera when in need of public space.

Sales Report

Marlene Barbera updated the board on the upcoming North American Travel Journalists Association conference that will be held in Orange County May 16-18, 2017. Registration just closed and so far the number attending is 78. There will be a "twitter party" on April 26 at 4 pm for one hour. She is hoping all our partners will participate by tweeting their welcome to the group and posting photos of the county. She would like all board members who are tweeters to participate. The hash tag is #OCNC2017. We are a unique destination in that we have three towns and the university to showcase. She has sent out invitations for the Barn at Valhalla event on Tuesday evening, May 16. More information on the conference will be going out over the next weeks as the conference start gets closer. Marlene asked Katie Murray to speak about the art that will be displayed at the Barn at Valhalla event. Katie shared that the Arts Commission put out a call to artists state wide, with preference given to Orange County artist, to put together a show and they had a tremendous response.

Old Town Hall Update

Lee Storrow is representing the Visitors Bureau board on the Old Town Hall Committee. He reported that talks are moving forward. The group is looking at what modern community centers, museums and gathering places look like, and how to tell our community's story in a dynamic way. The group has scheduled a meeting May 3 to invite public comment. They will give a formal report to Town Council before their summer recess. Cianciolo said that it would be helpful to the Town Council to know what the Visitors Bureau Board's position is. Penny Rich pointed out that it is not the charge of this committee to decide what will go into the building or the financing of making that happen, but rather look at what the possibilities could be and what could work well there and it would be helpful to know what the Visitors Bureau Board would like to see the Visitors Center move to the Old Town Hall location. Annette Lafferty reported that it might take three years for the new IFC facility in Carrboro to be completed once the current residents move out. Laurie will draft a letter, send it out to the board for feedback, and then share that with our representative attending the May 3 meeting.

Executive Directors Report

We are committed to the promotion of LGBT Tourism and as part of that commitment, the Bureau recently hosted a national vlogger who has a very large LGBT following. NC is still on the do not travel list for 20 state's government employees. Starting in 2018 some NCAA tournaments will be held at NC venues. Our advertising right now is LGBT, Micro Brews, Food, Dining and a little bit of sports as we try to appeal to a larger crowd. The current budget year is coming to a close. We had a \$1.6 million budget that included spending down our fund balance from a few dynamic years of occupancy tax collections. A television spot is presently being produced and it will be ready for the board to review at next month's meeting. The spot will run in Charlotte, the Triad and the Triangle. Looking at next year's budget we have an allocation for indirect costs from the county, the Arts Commission, administration, operations and sales/marketing. The allocations follow best practices of the industry. In the coming year we will be in television, our online media presence will be much stronger; there will be more diversity in our advertising. She will be speaking at the Mountains to the Sea Trail conference in Elkin, NC about how CVBs and state agencies can get the word out about the trail. She thanked Meg McGurk for organizing the second Friday Artwalk. The Visitors Center had 200 guests during the April event. We currently have a RFP out for an ad agency as required by the county. We are looking at a minimal bid process. Visitor numbers are up at the Visitors Center but occupancy tax collections are slightly off last year's collections.

Chair's Report

Rosemary Waldorf updated the board on the status of the market research by CSL regarding the possibility of adding an economic generator to the county. CSL has identified two possibilities, a conference center with an adjoining hotel or an indoor, hardcourt sports facility. They are looking at the impact of these possibilities on existing hotels. The second phase of the research is looking at funding scenarios. A full report will most likely be presented after the summer break, with the August 16, 2017 meeting being considered for a presentation by Bill Krueger of CSL.

New Business/Roundtable

Chair Waldorf acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

Jeff Strickler invited the board to attend a reception that will be attended by the Virtual Enterprise and Technical Education from area high schools. The group is coming to the UNC Health Care campus to participate in a networking event to offer the students experience in engaging in a professional social event. All board members are invited from 5:30-7 pm the evening of April 19, 2017.

Erik Lars Myers shared that there will be a music event the weekend of April 28-30, 2017 in west Hillsborough, called West Fest.

Shannon Campbell shared that Friday, April 28, 2017 is the first Last Friday of the season. Hillsborough is doing a street scape project on Churton St. with the bulk of the construction coming in July.

Katie Murry reported that the Arts Commission's grant cycle is now open. One of the changes they have made this year is to offer training for potential applicants. One will be held in Hillsborough and another in Chapel Hill.

Brumley Forest will open the weekend of April 29, 2017. Penny Rich would like to work with the Visitors Bureau and the Parks Work Group on the app that is being built to highlight all the trails in Orange County.

Andrew Strickland reported that the AC Marriott is on schedule. Their rooms are 100% built and ready to go in Pennsylvania. They will be staged in the parking lot of the old Walmart on MLK, Blvd. in Durham. Depending on the weather they will start putting them in place May 8 – 14. Between May 8 to June 15 they will go from a one story building to a four story building.

Chair Waldorf announced that the new Hyatt Place has passed Hyatt’s quality check and will move ahead with their soft opening on May 2nd. They will have four wedding groups the following weekend and are fully booked for graduation. She reminded the board that they have received an invitation to the grand opening which will be held May 18 as a drop in event from 3-7 pm.

We will meet next month at the Hyatt Place.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:35 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Rosemary Waldorf, Chairman

Date