

MINUTES
Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting
February 20, 2019

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
The Franklin Hotel, Chapel Hill 27514

Board Members Present: Kayla Dempsey, Anthony Carey, Chair, Tim Hoke, Rosemary Waldorf, Annette Stone, David Brooks, Libby Hough, Mark Bell, Andrew Strickland, Tanya Moore.

Guests: Dixon Pitt, DR Bryan Properties, Southern Village; Lili Englehart, Frolyk Experiences.

Not Present: Shannan Campbell, Matt Gladdeck, Jeff Strickler, Rachel Schaevitz, Mark Sherburne, Lydia Lavelle, Penny Rich.

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

Also present: Dixon Pitt, Southern Village; Sally Greene, Orange County Commissioner; Lili Engelhart, CEO of Frolyk

Call to Order

Chair Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:09 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Carey requested a motion to approve the January 16, 2019 minutes. David Brooks so moved and Andrew Strickland seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Finance Report

In the absence of Penny Rich, Laurie Paolicelli offered the report. At this point in the fiscal year revenues are still outpacing expenditures but we are beginning to see some rate issues with mid-week stays. Tourism is outperforming expectations as evidenced by the amount of support awarded us based on our 2017-18 Performance Agreement that was 30% larger than anticipated. After finding that our ad agency FleishmanHillard was not a good fit for the bureau the board went out for bid again and as a result of that process will offer Clean Design in Raleigh a three year contract with the possibility of two, one year extensions. Clean Design will present at our next scheduled board meeting on March 20, 2019 at the Friday Center. Next year's budget request includes funding for tourism planning, ad agency charges, operations and an allocation to the Arts Commission. Next year's budget request will be presented to the board in April.

Guest Presentation

Chair Carey introduced Marlise Taylor, Director of Tourism Research, and VisitNC, previously part of the NC Commerce Department where she works with the state to gather broader and more statistically accurate data regarding visitors' travel activity in NC. VisitNC has been privatized and is now part of the Economic Development Partnership of NC which includes: Business Start-up, Business Recruitment, Product Export Assistance, Tourism Development and Business Growth and Retention. Their department is two-fold with the first being VisitNC: advertising, public relations, group travel, sports event marketing, industry leadership, international marketing, VisitNC.com, tourism development, retire NC program, research, community outreach, social media outreach, film and publications. The second is Commerce Visitors Services: Welcome Centers, fulfillment, call center and warehouse.

2017 was a record year for NC tourism: \$23.97 billion in visitor spending, more than 225,000 jobs, \$1.7 billion federal tax revenues, \$1.2 billion in state tax revenues, \$732 million in local tax revenues which resulted in a savings of \$512 saved by every household in NC.

Orange County experienced a positive year as well: \$198 million in visitor spending, which was a 2.7% increase over 2016, more than 1,900 jobs, \$10.7 million in state revenue, \$4.3 million in local tax revenue. Orange County residents saved \$105 per household in taxes due to visitor spending. NC remains the 6th most visited state for domestic travelers behind California, Florida, Texas, New York and Pennsylvania. In 2018 both occupancy and room rates were up 2.4%.

When asked about HB2 she responded that tourism is recovering and the state is offering more grant funds to compensate. Two states are continuing to ban state employee business travel to NC and neither one of those is a primary market. They track total consumer spending generated by tourism and are able to break that out into retail, food and beverage, accommodation and transportation at the state level, but not by county. [Full report here.](#)

Executive Director's Report

Laurie Paolicelli introduced guest, Lili Engelhart, CEO of Frolyk. Frolyk is the experience version of Airbnb. As a test experience Laurie arranged for her family to take a class instructed by an Endocrinologist on how to cook with an instant pot for better endocrine health. Occupancy is up so far this fiscal year. The bureau is currently arranging for production of a drone video by the award winning Wil Weldon. She is very excited about moving forward with Clean Design as our ad agency and is looking forward to their presentation at our next board meeting when they will present new campaigns, tweaks to our logo and signs to be placed in Charlotte. Clean has already begun work with Hillsborough to design a bus wrap featuring the town. Overall, the number of visitors visiting the Visitor's Center is declining and we are looking at possible location changes in the future.

Sales Report

Marlene Barbera reported that she is focusing on mid-week travel in order to fill hotel rooms when occupancy is lower. One approach is traveling to tradeshow around the country that give her access to meeting planners who may have association events to bring to Orange County for mid-week meetings. She has just returned from a conference in San Antonio that is the first of four conferences she will attend this calendar year which will allow her to meet with 100 new meeting planners. The UNC meeting planner event, March Madness, will be on March 14 from 3-5 at the Carolina Club. At that event eighteen venues will be showcased to UNC meeting planners. Information will be shared about planning their conferences locally and how the bureau can assist them with services.

New Business/Roundtable

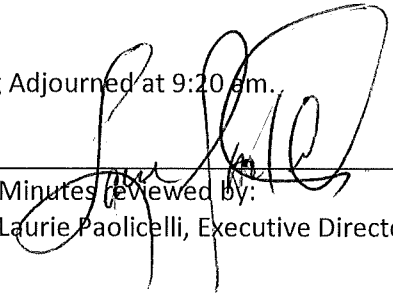
Chair Carey acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

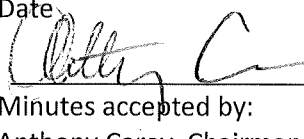
- Katie Murray of the Orange County Arts Commission gave everyone of copy of the commission's new report *setting the Stage, accessing and prioritizing the arts for the creative future of Orange County, NC*. The publication is a summary of the research the commission has done over the past few years. It is a preview of where the commission is heading in terms of initiatives. The top three priorities are: serving as the local arts agency for Orange County; both short term and long term arts infrastructure in the county; increasing access to the arts.
- Anthony Carey shared that while the sub-committee chose to contract with Clean Design he would like to see the bureau do some projects with the other agency that was considered, Odd Fellows. Odd Fellows is also based in Raleigh and they specialize in music and film and other things that are unique, much like our community is.

- Tonya Moore reported a new interim chancellor has been appointed at UNC and he is expected to serve for 18 months. The search for a new chancellor will begin in the fall and should be complete by July 2020. They are in the RFP process with their visitor's center and once a vendor is selected they expect construction to take 6-8 months. Their new facility will include several digital displays. The current visitors center will move from Morehead Planetarium to a yet to be determined temporary location as renovations will soon begin at Morehead. UNC has established a new weeknight parking plan that will be rolled out in August, they will begin charging for parking when that happens.
- Annette Stone reported that the TSA plans to hire a part-time social media content person, replace the faded bus wrap and replace the aging banners downtown. The Carrboro Business Alliance is working on marketing and events in town. The town is rethinking space use in the new Orange County Library building since the ArtsCenter will not be in the building and they are working on providing parking during construction.
- Libbie Hough shared that she is a member of The Carrboro Business Alliance and a representative from the Orange County Library which is building a new branch in Carrboro on S. Greensboro St. She is part of the marketing committee which will meet each month.
- Mark Bell reported that a Billy Strayhorn celebration will take place on February 26 and the Burwell School has many events planned for the spring. Hillsborough is approaching completion of the sidewalk project and will soon dedicate the part of the River Walk that serves as the Mountains to the Sea Trail. Hillsborough is having a Dead of Winter walking tour February 22 and 23, sponsored by the Historical Museum and Mark will portray Archibald Murphey who died in his house in 1832.
- David Brooks, on behalf of the Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce, shared that there is a list of events on the chamber website. The spring 2019 polo season will start on March 2.
- Kayla Dempsey reported that state basketball championships will be held on March 16 at the Smith Center. They will hold their annual student leadership conference on March 26 at the Sheraton. Last year 560 students attended the conference.
- Andrew Strickland encouraged groups to reach out to hotels as they are interested in doing different events in their lobby areas.
- Laurie recognized Chair, Anthony Carey for being chosen as Lodging Operator of the Year in NC.

Next Meeting: *Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill.*

Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 am.


 Minutes reviewed by:
 Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

 Minutes accepted by:
 Anthony Carey, Chairman

3/20/19
 Date

