

Approved April 19, 2017

MINUTES
Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting
March 15, 2017

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
The Hampton Inn, Carrboro, NC

Board Members Present: George Cianciolo, Andrew Strickland, Tim Hoke, Rosemary Waldorf-Chair, Kayla Austin, Aaron Bachenheimer, Mark Sherburne, Meg McGurk, Penny Rich, Lydia Lavelle, Annette Lafferty

Not Present: Jeffery Strickler, Allison Nichols-Clapper, Lee Pavao, Nitin Khanna, Mark Bell, Shannan Campbell, Lee Storrow

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

Also present: None

Call to Order

Chair Rosemary Waldorf called the meeting to order at 8:10 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Waldorf requested a motion to approve the February 15, 2017 minutes. George Cianciolo so moved and Tim Hoke seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Host Introduction

Mayor Lydia Lavelle welcomed the board to Carrboro. In doing so she talked about the addition of the Hampton Inn as Carrboro's first hotel, and that during its first year it was one of the Hampton Inn's best performers. People like the way it is situated on the property, set back from Main St. and that it is unique for the brand and somewhat jazzy. Corner suits are available as is event space around the rooftop pool. A second hotel is scheduled to be built on the same property, a Hilton Garden Inn. Groundbreaking will be late 2017 or early 2018. The addition of a second hotel will add to available conference space in Carrboro. The mayor offered a brief history of Carrboro which grew up around the railroad tracks and was originally called West End. In the late 1800s several mills were built around the tracks, with Carr Mill being the only one remaining. Carrboro was incorporated in 1911 as Venable. Under the direction of then Mayor, Ellie Kinnard, an effort was made to save Carr Mill and reinvent Carrboro as an arts destination. The Carrboro Farmers Market will soon celebrate its 40th anniversary. Carrboro is a small, compact town, encompassing only 6.4 square miles with a population of over 21,000 people, making it the densest town in NC. Carrboro has established a reputation as a walkable, bikeable, transit friendly town. Every decision made by town leaders hinges on "how will people get there?" As an arts destination they have established annual events such as a music festival, poet's festival and film festival. Many road races are held in Carrboro as there are inviting start and finish areas, as well as an inviting topography. They also have two of the best entertainment destinations in the Arts Center and the Cat's Cradle. Mayor Lavelle paused in her presentation to recognize our hosts from the Hampton Inn, General Manager Patrick Dewberry, and Catering Manager, Allison West who extended a welcome from the hotel, shared information about their services and offered tours of the property at the end of our meeting. The mayor shared that there are currently several development projects underway in Carrboro. Shelton Station is being built just north of Southern States on Greensboro St. and will include affordable workforce housing. A water main at the bottom of South Greensboro St. is being replaced by

OWASA, so that road is currently closed. South Green, being built at the Rogers-Triem site will be commercial properties, including two local restaurants. The town is in negotiations with the county to locate a southwest branch library in Carrboro and after looking at several possible locations is seriously considering the town parking lot next to the Open Eye Café. They are looking forward to the town building its first building, other than Fire Station 2, in over 100 years.

Finance Report

Finance Chair, Penny Rich reported that the Orange County Board of County Commissioners approved our request to draw down \$250,000 in fund balance, the majority of which will be used to fund a summer advertising campaign to target the Charlotte area with television advertising focused on bringing overnight visitors to Orange County. Laurie Paolicelli has met with the County Manager to review our budget request. Following best practices the budget is fifty-percent devoted to staffing, thirty-percent marketing with twenty-percent earmarked for operations. We are expecting a two-percent increase in occupancy tax revenues, which is less than last year's expectation, largely due to some anomalies in the market and the negative effects of HB2.

Executive Directors Report

Visitors Bureau Executive Director, Laurie Paolicelli, presented a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to the board. A sample of the results of this analysis follows.

Strengths:

- Chapel Hill Positive name recognition/brand is strong: positive national image.
- County located in center of the state, on eastern seaboard, near a growing RDU International Airport.
- Part of Research Triangle Park.
- UNC-Chapel Hill world class research university with cultural lures and nationally recognized sports.
- Great variety of arts, culture and dining options.
- Growing downtowns with shopping, restaurants, events and festivals.
- Good climate, known for scenic beauty

Weaknesses:

- Numbers at walk-in visitor's center dropping, with UNC visitor's center as competition.
- Higher Average Daily Rate (ADR) limits some visitors/group options.
- Marketing 3 towns that have distinct messages. Brand of Chapel Hill not always shared/supported.
- Need hotels to use our visitor materials for their guests on an ongoing basis.
- Growth needed in getting UNC meeting planners to use Visitors Bureau as a resource.
- Smaller budget than surrounding competing destinations.

Opportunities:

- New hotels will add variety to the county's inventory and occupancy taxes.
- Feasibility study will lend intelligence to need for flex space and/or sporting fields, both indoor and outdoor.
- New hotels and new residents downtown will increase retail business.
- New opportunities

Threats:

- HB2 continues to be a threat with travel bans, cancellations, etc.
- Airbnb
- Federal travel bans causing some foreign travelers to put off travel to U.S.
- Use of occupancy tax revenue for non-tourism purposes.

Some of the overarching needs and priority issues are:

- Feasibility study phase II
- Agency RFP and review of brand
- National positive media due to NATJA
- Increase dollars invested in sales

The entire SWOT report has been attached to these minutes.

Sales Report

Marlene shared that she recently attended a *Rendezvous South* trade show where she had nineteen one on one appointments with meeting planners. She has organized a March Madness Lunch and Learn to be held at the Carolina Club on March 16 to share local vendor resource information with UNC meeting planners. The NATJA Conference will be here May 16-18 and she is putting the finishing touch on those plans.

New Business/Roundtable

Chair Waldorf acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

Meg McGurk stated that basketball victories have been very good for downtown business. The West Rosemary St. Development Guide review of the final draft will take place at two sessions on March 21, 2017. A RFP is being initiated for a traffic and parking study to look a circulation mobility. A food truck rodeo will be held on E. Rosemary St. from 12-5 p.m. on March 26. Summer movies will be offered after games at Boshamer Stadium this summer. The Second Friday Art Walk will be held in April on the 14th and will feature open architecture offices and Florafetti.

Steve Brantley reported that the County's economic development board will soon get three new members. The county is working on extending utilities to properties along interstate highways in the county.

Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle shared that a conversation with current and former out NC LGBTQ elected officials will be held April 7, 2017 from 4-5:30 p.m. at the FedEx GEC on the UNC campus.

George Cianciolo reported that the Ephesus/Fordham project will be completed by the end of the month. There will be a meeting at the Chapel Hill Library on April 8, 2017 regarding future uses for the American Legion Post property. The Town Council has approved the new Homestead Townhomes to be built on Homestead Rd. between Homestead Park and the Vineyard.

Aaron Bachenheimer shared that the university is conducting a feasibility study ahead of transformation of the Student Union. An exercise center is one of the planned projects.

We will meet next month at Durham Tech in Hillsborough.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:35 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Laurie Paolicelli April 17, 2017

Date

Rosemary Waldorf

Minutes accepted by:

Rosemary Waldorf, Chairman

April 19, 2017

Date