

For Approval October 19, 2016

MINUTES
Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting
September 21, 2016

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
The Orange County Library, Hillsborough, NC

Board Members Present: George Cianciolo, Penny Rich, Shannan Campbell, Andrew Strickland, Meg McGurk, Tim Hoke, Michelle Johnson, Mark Bell, Lee Storrow, Allison Nichols-Clapper, Lee Pavao

Not Present: Jeffrey Strickler, Nitin Khanna, Rosemary Waldorf-Chair, Karen DeHart, Aaron Bachenheimer, Mark Sherburne, Annette Stone,

Staff attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Allison Chambers

Also present: Tom Stevens, Mayor, Town of Hillsborough, Libbie Hough, Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, Sarah DeGennaro, Executive Director, Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, Travis Myren, Deputy County Manager, Katie Murray, Arts Council Director, Amanda Garner, Orange County Economic Development

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Lee Pavao called the meeting to order at 8:08 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Pavao requested a motion to approve the August 17, 2016 minutes. Lee Pavao so moved, Penny Rich seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Finance Report

Penny Rich, Finance Chair, reported that we are moving into our new budget year and the present numbers are just the beginning. We are coming off a year of strong occupancy taxes. The 2016-17 budget is \$1.4 million, supporting a staff of six, the Orange County Arts Commission, increased fees to the county and a tourism sales and marketing budget. Advertising, on-line marketing and print publications take more than \$400K. October hotel rates seem to be dropping because UNC will have only one home game during the month of October this year. Andrew Strickland reported to the board that football weekends are always significant revenue generators for his hotel. The budget numbers are where we would expect them to be at this point in the year and we will monitor those numbers as we move forward.

Guest/host speakers

Vice-Chair Lee Pavao introduced Hillsborough Mayor Tom Stevens. He thanked the board for coming to Hillsborough and explained that talking about the town was one of his favorite things to do. People think of Hillsborough historically for both its part in North Carolina history as well as its part in United States history. The town's speedway was part of the beginnings of NASCAR and is one of only three speedways on the National Register of Historic Places. He sees the town as an Arts and Culture district for the Triangle, while the Triangle is a wonderful place, as is the state of North Carolina; Hillsborough is a gem of many wonderful places. Hillsborough has a strong connection to nature with the River Walk and many parks. The town is known for its writers and music venues including many outside music performance opportunities. People like to live in, and visit, Hillsborough because they can participate in small things in a small town. The town's population is 6,500 people. There are always new things happening with an enduring sense of history as well. A lot has happen in the last ten years in the town including the new library, Weaver Street Market, the River Walk,

UNC Healthcare Hospital and the Orange County Campus of the Durham Technical Community College and he expects to see just as much happen in the next ten years, including the changing of hands of many downtown properties, the building of a Town Hall Campus and ideally the opening of a downtown hotel. At present the town has a 60/40 residential/business property split. He thinks of Hillsborough as being made up of six districts: North, East, South, West, Historic District and the Center District, with each district having a residential component and a work component. They have a vibrant downtown within the Historic District which intertwines with the West end with its commercial space. The Center District includes the Daniel Boone area which is ripe and ready for a transition into a new shopping center and the likely home of a new train station. The South and East districts include the Sportsplex, the Meadowlands, Durham Tech and UNC Healthcare. He expects Hillsborough's population to grow to 12,000 people in the near future. Laurie Paolicelli shared that in a past study Hillsborough had a high recall rate among respondents, and a very favorable rating from those respondents in Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. While Hillsborough does not have a downtown hotel she suggested that Air B&B might be a good business model to keep our eye on when special events drive greater demand. Shannan Campbell, Hillsborough Economic Development, reported that there is some movement downtown in regards to retail space that is positive and will grow the retail base. The second leg of the River Walk opened in the last few months and has been heavily used. She also shared that while there is adequate parking now the town is looking at possible needs within the next five to ten years, as well as connectivity between the town's districts to better move people without them having to drive everywhere. The Handmade Parade will take place on Saturday, October 15 and the Farmers Market will have their Harvest Dinner this month as well as the Classic Car Show and the half marathon early on the morning of October 2. Mayor Tom and Shannon Campbell offered to take the group on a tour of the River Walk, but unfortunately it was a very rainy day.

Vice-Chair Lee Pavao asked Allison Nichols-Clapper to report on Mr. Nutter and Mapleview Farms following a recent fire. Allison shared that Mr. Nutter has recently celebrated his 88th birthday. Due to a recent fire in the processing barn at the dairy it will be six to eight weeks before they can go back to producing their milk products. All the wiring and the roof of the building will have to be replaced. The store will remain open as long as their built up stock holds out. The fire started in the building as a result of a faulty lawn mower stored there. Mr. Pavao asked Allison if we would be able to meet at the farm in the near future. She was agreeable and we tentatively plan to meet there in February 2017.

Sales Report

Marlene Barbera recently traveled to Grapevine, TX to attend the Connect tradeshow. The show was attended by 3200 people and she chose to focus on the specialty market which includes social, military, education, religious and fraternal rather than association because this is business available now. She had 39 appointments over two days with each meeting lasting six minutes. The trip generated three RFPs right away, which if the business comes to Orange County, would generate \$200,000 and 700 room nights. She will follow-up and expects to receive more RFPs in October and November as a result of the trip. She is going the Huntsville AL the week of October 3rd for Small Markets Meeting tradeshow. Rob Stern, Sales Consultant, has begun working and will attend a General Managers meeting on October 12 followed by site tours of county hotels. Marlene shared that the North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) has finalized their contract with the Sheraton and the Bouncing Bulldogs have agreed to perform at the Tuesday night event at the Barn at Valhalla. A new video is being produced with a segment about each town in the county to better differentiate their unique personalities, with welcoming comments by all three Mayors. Penny Rich asked about the upcoming Terra VITA food festival's effect of local hotels and Andrew Strickland reported that the Residence Inn has 20-25 rooms booked and more at the Siena as well.

Executive Directors Report

HB2 has resulted in us being taken off a lot of organizations bid lists resulting in a \$1.6 million revenue loss thus far. We are also losing revenue as a result of compression when Durham and Cary lose business. We have hired Convention Sports and Leisure (CSL) to conduct a feasibility study to let us know how we can generate more demand for our area in the future. The focus is on three primary areas including sports fields, which could be adversely affected by HB2. Ms. Paolicelli is hopeful that the state tourism board will launch a branding campaign for the state of NC to remind people of our multi-dimensional personalities. How HB2 will affect our economy will not be known until next year. Business is good but an election year always results in a fickle economy as will new hotel supply and HB2. Ms. Paolicelli introduced a new app we are rolling out next month called NC Farms as part of a pilot program with the NC Department of Agriculture. The app helps the user locate pick your own farms, back to nature opportunities and farm tours. This will be introduced at the Ag Summit in February. We are also working on a Tobacco Road (triangle) College Tour app in cooperation with the Raleigh and Durham Visitors Bureaus. The Visitors Bureau will have a float in the October 15 Handmade Parade in Hillsborough to support the arts. The float is a VW bus painted on canvas by local mural artist Michael Brown. The banner that precedes the float will read "All aboard, everyone welcome" as part of our response to HB2. Ms. Paolicelli encouraged the board to check out the bureau's new website, www.visitchapelhill.org. She also reminded everyone that the Terra VITTA food festival, an event that the Visitors Bureau Board voted to become title sponsor of, begins on September 28 and runs through October 1.

New Business/Roundtable

Vice-Chair Pavao acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

Michelle Johnson reported that this coming Saturday at town hall there will be a dedication ceremony to dedicate Carrboro's latest mural painted by Michael Brown on Jones Ferry Rd. The annual Carrobor Music Festival will take place the following weekend and members of the Carrboro Board of Alderman will participate in the Pride Parade in Durham on Saturday as well. Ground breaking for new hotel in Carrboro will be during the first quarter of 2017.

Meg McGurk shared that Tar Heel Downtown was a great success on September 16, and the plaza at 140 was at capacity for the first time. Twelve thousand people are expected on West Franklin St. on October 2 for Festifall. The Downtown Partnership is looking at ways to improve the downtown alley ways as well as tactical urban projects. She reported that this has been an unprecedented summer as no businesses have closed in downtown Chapel Hill. They have also seen an uptick in businesses that will serve residents such as gyms.

George Cianciolo reported that the Chapel Hill Town Council has asked the town manager to take a look at parking needs. One of the options they would like to revisit is adding two floors to the top of the Wallace Deck as potential office space, affordable office space.

Laurie Paolicelli reported that Lee Storrow will attend the LGBTQ International Gay Lesbian Travel Association Conference in Las Vegas in December on behalf of the Visitors Bureau.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:04 am.

Minutes reviewed by
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Rosemary Waldorf, Chairman

Date