

Visitors Promotion Committee
Meeting at Lincoln Chamber of Commerce
August 24, 2022
MINUTES

In Attendance: Jeff Barclay, Tom Lorenz, Jason Hoehne, Tara Knuth, Susan Madsen, Aaron Stitt, Roma Amundson, Michelle Waite and Mairead Safranek

Absent: Jeff Cunningham, Dave Derbin and Tammy Ward

Staff Attending: Jeff Maul, Derek Feyerherm, Ron Kalkwarf, Todd Wiltgen, Diane Pryor, Jason Ball, Clay Simpson and Matt Duhs

Call to Order and Introductions:

Chairman Aaron Stitt called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. He thanked everyone for attending, welcomed new Board member, Tom Lorenz, and asked the attendees to introduce themselves and for that to serve as the roll call. Individuals complied and when Jason Ball introduced himself, he took a moment to encourage everyone to take the strategic plan survey. He asked the members to ask their networks and then thanked everyone for their participation in our planning and as members of various focus groups. Jeff Maul added this survey gives everyone a voice and will help determine our future. Stitt then said he's pleased to have Lorenz joining the group as a voice for the entertainment industry. He said we also need to fill Susan Madsen's spot on the Board. As was discussed at the last Board meeting, he talked to Kevin at the Graduate and Mark at the Scarlet, but they have both moved on and are unable to join us. He recommended Bryan Sullivan at the Embassy Suites and asked for input. Michelle Waite said she serves on a couple other boards with him, and he does a great job. Jason Hoehne agreed. He's also worked with him and spoke highly of Sullivan. Maul said he has good opinions and ideas. Tom Lorenz made a motion to appoint Bryan as a new member of the board. Hoehne seconded the motion. Stitt asked the members to vote. Stitt, Tara Knuth, Lorenz and Hoehne voted yes. Jeff Barclay missed the discussion and abstained from voting. Jeff Cunningham was absent. Motion carried.

Approval of June Minutes:

Chairman Stitt asked if there were any comments or questions regarding the June minutes that had been sent out ahead of time in an email to the group. There were no comments and he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Hoehne made a motion to approve the minutes and Barclay seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt voted yes. Jeff Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

Approval of July Financials:

Ron Kalkwarf presented the financials showing the CVB Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual for July 2022. Total Income is at \$411,176, he said, with Room Tax-CVB budget number being split 1/12 each month. In Other Income we will ask for the exact amount each month, Kalkwarf said. On the Expense side, Advertising-CVB is over budget by \$56,625 of an EDA State Grant expense. Kalkwarf said in Sports Event Promotion-CVB July is showing \$214,885 as a payout for USA Roller Sports. Jeff Maul noted the grant expense is for one month from the state for a Lincoln promotional video. We were granted ARPA

funding and we are waiting for reimbursement, Maul said. There were no questions on the financials and Chair Stitt asked for a motion to approve. Barclay moved to approve the financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Hoehne. With no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt voted yes. Jeff Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

Visitors Promotion Marketing Grant Review

The Committee began reviewing the various grants different entities applied for. Everyone was reminded these are for grants up to \$5,000 for the sole purpose of marketing for different projects that benefit Lincoln and the area. We have a budget and have set these with a \$5K limit as we attempt to rebuild our fund. The organizations and attractions must fill out the proper application and paperwork as well as qualify. Maul said he and Dave Derbin carefully review the applications to be sure they comply. Once approved in this meeting they are taken to the County for final vote and approval. The first grant request was from the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska for UNL and its Nebraska Repertory Theatre. This is for ShakesFEAR at the Haunted Temple. It's a sell out and a big success. The request is for \$5,000 and the event is on October 13-30, 2022. Maul said the paperwork is complete. There was no discussion and Stitt asked for a motion to approve. Knuth made a motion to approve. Lorenz seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, so Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt voted yes. Jeff Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

The next grant discussed was from Celebrating Nebraska Statehood DBA Nebraska Impact. Stitt said this event is held at the State Capitol and has a lot of people every year. They are also requesting \$5,000. There was no discussion and Stitt asked for a motion to approve. Barclay made a motion to approve. Hoehne seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, so Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt voted yes. Jeff Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

Next up was the Leadership Harbor LLC. Stitt said the application that came to us is not eligible for two reasons. First, they are not a 501(c)3 and they did not designate where other funding would be coming from. Maul said he would contact them and let them know it is incomplete and they can reapply. Hoehne made a motion to decline the grant request. Lorenz seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, so Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt all voted in agreement with the motions to decline. Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

A grant was requested by the Lincoln Children's Museum for \$5,000. This grant is for a major renovation of the Apple Tree exhibit. It should be done next spring. It is an original exhibit, and they are hoping to bring people back to see how it has changed and what improvements were made. There was mention of how they are working along with the Kimmel Foundation. After that discussion, Lorenz made a motion to approve. Barclay seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, so Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Lorenz and Stitt all voted yes. Knuth abstained and Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

The final grant request of the day was from the Lincoln Veterans Parade Group for \$5,000. Stitt said this looks like a good event. Maul said we have had staff on the planning board, and it's been a really great event in the past few years. Roma Amundson will be the grand marshal this next time on November 13, 2022. After those comments, Stitt asked for a motion to approve. Lorenz made a motion to approve. Knuth seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, so Stitt called for a vote. Barclay, Hoehne, Knuth, Lorenz and Stitt voted yes. Jeff Cunningham was absent for the vote. Motion carried.

Directors Report:

Maul gave a VPC director's report saying as crazy as it sounds, 2021 was a lot better than we anticipated so when he looks at his numbers, he's comparing to the calendar year of 2021. Overall, he is happy with what we have done so far. In Visitors Center activity June 2022 had total calls of 38 which is not a surprise since we had 46 in 2021. In September we will have something a bit different than our usual Beer Tour and will be hosting Beer Week. There will be specials at participating breweries that pair food and fun with their beer. We are continuing to work on the 2023 Visitors Guide giving it a refresh this year featuring "ask the local" and more magazine like features. There will be redirects to our new website for comprehensive listings. Maul is excited to let everyone know the CVB now has two drones and their own licensed drone pilot. We are using the drones for new angles and the promotion of many events as well as promotional videos we hope to have out by the end of the year. The new CVB podcast is coming soon, and a sneak peek is available of Jeff's interview with consultant Jim Geist from DMO.

Looking ahead, Maul said the FMCA National convention is going on at the Lancaster Event Center with over 700 RVs expected. The attendees may sleep in the RVs, but during the day, they are in Lincoln's restaurants and stores. It's a great boost for the economy and like a big reunion for all of them. On the final Saturday the event is open to the public and anyone can go to see the RVs and exhibits. Other events this fall include Husker football, volleyball and basketball, the SCAA Solo National Championships in early September, the Market-to-Market Relay, Good Life Halfsy, NSAA State Volleyball in November and the Nebraska Music Educators Conference November 16-18. The relay and halfsy are great for the Haymarket. Our winter months are full, Maul said. He continued with social media results saying the Facebook engagement increased by 206% in July. A feature of the Parks & Rec's Field Trip Across Lincoln reached over 20K people. We incorporated reels on our Lincoln, NE Instagram and have reached 155% more people. We've also gained 2,000 new Instagram followers and are now over 10K! Lillie Norris is doing an amazing job for us with social media. The work continues with the convention center study. We are now in Phase 2 and examining in greater detail the five sites mentioned in the report. They are looking at scope and design, benefits and ability to build to fit, capital cost, community benefit and the financing.

Next Maul discussed the strategic planning CVB is working on with the Chamber and the Partnership. It is deemed an economic vitality strategy for the city's economic future. The initial planning meetings have been great, and he thanked everyone for their participation and attendance. Maul asked everyone to encourage others to take the survey, saying we have had 2,200 completed and our goal is 5,000. He thanked Mairead Safranek and Roma Amundson for their work on the recently announced grant funding process. Nearly \$5M was awarded to 15 tourism non-profits. Staff will travel to the UMCVB Conference coming up next month in Illinois and the Nebraska Travel Conference in October where we will be learning about new trends in our region.

Derek Feyerherm gave the sales update next with a sales breakdown. The CVB has issued 110 sales leads for 39,330 room nights. Of that, 70% of the leads are for new events, 62% of the leads are for national events and 29% are for regional events. In 2019, there were 107 sales leads for 48,928 room nights. The leads are slower during the summer months, he said, but we anticipate a busy fall and feel the numbers are close to where we were in 2019. In booked business, we had 79 events booked for 35,113 room nights, which is very similar to 2019. Of that, 15% of the booked rooms are for new events, 70% are for national events and 21% are for regional events.

Next, Feyerherm talked about tradeshow his team would be attending this year. We have been busy this fall with tradeshow. Derek Bombeck and Kelsey Meyer attended the Connect Marketplace in Detroit

earlier this month. Bombeck had 49 appointments and Meyer had 26 face to face meetings. It was one of the largest shows and very successful. We've got five more conferences coming up this year with Meyer attending Going on Faith, Small Market Meetings and Boomers in Groups. Bombeck will attend SPORTS Relationship and TEAMS.

Next, Feyerherm said we are happy to have Clay Simpson joining the team as Sales Development Associate. He came from Nebraska Wesleyan and interned here in 2019. Sports Nebraska expanded with three new members, and we have a commitment for marketing funding from State Tourism. We have partnered with Scout thru Huddle Up software to increase our number of RFPs. We have also been increasing meeting planner experiences and activities with four events this fall - Charcuterie and Caves, Laughs & Lavender, Critters & Coffee and another to be scheduled in November.

New Business:

In other and new business, Clay Simpson and Matt Duhs introduced themselves to the Board and told a bit about themselves. Simpson is from Lincoln, he said, is a Wesleyan 2019 grad and has been here two months. He will be working on the military and fraternity markets. He is married and has two daughters. Maul said he will be a great asset to the team. Next, Duhs said he is the CVB intern and our drone pilot. He is from Lincoln and loves it here. He expects to graduate from UNL's Hospitality Program in May. He really enjoys using the drone and has got some great footage of several events recently. He also said he's enjoyed helping with the new podcast studio in the office and helps with social media.

Stitt asked Tom Lorenz for an update about the entertainment industry. Lorenz said they have two big shows this week and the industry is not quite back yet. He said there have been some big shows but not as much as in the past. It's just a little slow yet. April and May will pick up here a bit. Until then the sports will be big for us. The calendar at Pinewood has been really good and they have done a few improvements there that he feels have really been top notch.

Maul thanked Lorenz and said he's doing an amazing job. There was a good discussion about concerts, shows, visitors and the impact on the hospitality industry.

Adjourn:

Aaron Stitt thanked everyone for their attendance, time and commitment. He adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.