

Visitors Promotion Committee
February 11, 2015
MINUTES

In attendance: Kerry Eagan, Julie Lattimer, Becky Perrett, Roland Morgan, Dave Wheaton, Colette Wear, Lynne Ireland, Roma Amundson, Dave Norris and Michelle Waite

Staff attending: Derek Feyerherm, Kathy Dvorak, Jeff Maul, Kyle Fischer, Ron Kalkwarf

Guests: Tom Lorenz, Mike Werner, John Toy, Noah Dea, Doug Rix and Pam Forrester

Julie Lattimer called the meeting to order at 1:35pm and introductions were made.

City of Waverly, Lawson Park Funding Request. Waverly Mayor, Mike Werner, introduced John Toy, Noah Dea, Doug Rix and Pam Forrester and stated they respectfully request the VPC approve their funding request of \$150,000 for the Lawson Park Project. This project will create a state-of-the-art baseball/softball and soccer sports complex and specifically three softball/baseball fields, lighting for three softball/baseball fields and the existing baseball field and a concession/restroom facility with a crowd's next and covered seating area. Toy covered the Vision of the project which included the capability to host regional, state and multi-state baseball/softball tournaments in Waverly; convert Waverly's strong tradition of sports participation into recreation tourism and over-night lodging that will stay in Lancaster County and to capture over-night lodging from tourist attractions between Lincoln and Omaha, through a new hotel in Waverly. Rix gave an overview of Waverly starting with the proximity to Lincoln and that Waverly has experienced a 34% growth rate in the last ten years and it is expected to double in 25 years and the City is embarking on major infrastructure projects to keep up with the growth. Toy reviewed the history of Lawson Park that included when the land was purchased and the completion of Phase I. The request today will be part of Phase II and a Phase III is also planned. The details of the Lawson Park Request were discussed to include the concession/restroom facility and other details of Phase II which are not part of the funding request. The Phase II project timeline was discussed with the hopeful start of construction in July, 2015, with substantial completion by November, 2015. Dea emphasized the need for this project stating they have a total of 43 ball teams trying to use 4 fields; reiterating the need to go elsewhere for tournaments and not being able to have many home games. He also stated there has been over a 25% increase in participants wanting to use this field with soccer experiencing a 49.7% increase. Forrester reviewed the high school/legion game potential attracting out of town guests, high school and junior varsity games and tournament potential as the only Class B school in Lancaster County. Forrester also reviewed chart of possible games that reflected the potential of 1,433 room nights annually and that the economic impact for local, state and regional events could, conservatively be over \$500,000. Rix reviewed a hotel market study which confirmed the need for a 50-60 guest room hotel and stated Lawson Park would contribute to both "transient" and "group" demand as well as potential to capture additional guest nights from surrounding attractions such as the Lancaster Event Center which is very supportive. Forrester reviews the source of funds for Phase II stating \$1.9M is needed to complete this project and that the City of Waverly is very committed by contributing \$1.3M to this project with the potential of \$200,000 in matching funds. \$150,000 has been received from the Land and Water Conservation Fund; they have applied for a grant \$50,000 from MLB-Baseball Tomorrow; received \$30,700 from Friends of Baseball and the Parks and Recreation Department has donated \$12,200. A balance of \$7,100 is left after the VPC request. The VPC request of \$150,000 is less than 10% of the project cost and will have a huge return on investment. Werner

wrapped up the presentation stating there is strong community support and thanked everyone for consideration of this request. Lattimer reminded the guests that it was the duty of this committee to review requests with respect to tourism. Amundson stated there appears to be a tremendous ground swell of support and asked if they needed the entire amount requested. Forrester stated that the lighting of the fields was imperative to the project to hold tournaments and community/sponsor funds have been leveraged as much as they can. Maul asked Dea at the end of the day how does having home games and tournaments equate to heads in beds. Will they work with other individuals to bring in select teams? Toy stated they are already getting calls from Abbott regarding their overflow which necessitates a concession stand and they are very receptive to opening the fields to others. Dea stated that over 400 kids signed up for spring soccer. Toy stated that lights would change the dynamic for scheduling. Forrester stated that lights double the playing time. Lattimer asked would these parks be maintained through City funding? Werner stated the City is committed to hiring another individual for this purpose and are budgeting accordingly. Toy stated an increase of 20% over the next four years is being budgeted to cover another person and maintenance costs. Waite inquired about the economic impact numbers for Lincoln and Forrester referred to the slide that showed the potential economic impact of over \$500,000 and that could double if you added select teams. Feyerherm stated that to attract regional/national tournaments, more than four fields would be required and asked if there are plans to upgrade Wayne Park. Toy stated there were no plans to upgrade Wayne Park at this time. Dea stated that Wayne Park could host younger teams and Toy stated that the younger teams are presently going to Council Bluffs to play for State tournaments. The group was dismissed after no further questions.

Lattimer opened the floor for discussion stating that the request was aggressive. Waite stated they had done their homework and it was impressive the Mayor attended this grant request. Lattimer asked about thoughts on another hotel in the area. Wear stated that this has been in the works for quite a while and thought it would affect the rest of the hotels. Lattimer asked if there was a drawback in not upgrading Wayne Park at this time. Feyerherm reiterate that regional and national tournaments actually need eight fields close together. Wheaton asked if Abbott could be put in the mix for this type tournament. Feyerherm stated there are no baseball/softball fields at Abbott. Then Wheaton asked what effect the new Speedway complex would have. Feyerherm said Speedway will not have ballfields and Maul added the proposed West Haymarket Ballfields; however, the need is there and some tournaments are Ok with four-plex fields. Ireland stated that soccer teams are usually home-based or are within 50 miles and probably won't get them to stay overnight. Class B schools are very drivable; and wondered what teams would require an overnight stay. Perrett stated that the select teams are the ones who would stay over and that can't be determined as yet. Waite inquired if there was a social side to the tournaments and Maul said yes as teams plan social events outside the ballfield and another enhancement creates an important balance – the demand is there. Waite stated that they would probably come into Lincoln to eat. Ireland asked if there would be any bleed from the Lancaster Event Center. Amundson stated that there is a need for additional hotels on that side of Lincoln. Lattimer stated that Dickerson of the LEC could not attend today, but supported this request. Maul reminded the group that the focus was on the ballfields not on a possible hotel. Perrett stated it was impressive that the City was so involved. Lattimer asked if Lincoln would develop it's own component, could they work together. Feyerherm stated definitely and stated examples. Lattimer asked then if this would be a county-wide benefit. Maul stated yes and even eastern Nebraska could be involved. Feyerherm stated that Dea was already working with Lincoln Parks and Rec. Lattimer asked if there were any other comments and then made a motion to approve the \$150,000 Lawson Park grant request. Wear asked if the VPC had enough money for such a request. Eagan said yes and stated there was \$359K available in fiscal year 2014-2015. Lattimer asked if committed money was already in place and Eagan stated yes.

There was brief discuss on how grant requests were approved and Lattimer stated that attractions are encouraged to do more planning and create an inventory of needs. Maul stated that the Waverly group had made a request to come before this board earlier and was told they had to wait until this scheduled meeting. Lattimer asked if there any more comments. Lattimer made a motion to approve the Lawson Park Funding Request of \$150,000. Perrett seconded and it was unanimously approved.

Pinnacle Bank Arena/SMG Funding Request: Tom Lorenz of Pinnacle Bank Arena/SMG stated this was a joint request with the City of Lincoln and PBA/SMG for \$35,000 to secure 2,500 linear feet of high chain link portable fencing that can be used for special outdoor events in Lincoln throughout the year. The fence panels are 6' high by 12' long and the purchase would include bases that support the fence and the shipping charges for delivery. This fence would be purchased through the City/County Purchasing Department in a competitive bid process. SMG would manage the fencing and make it available to community events as often as possible to help event producers reduce their costs and provide the type of perimeter and control required. Currently, such fencing is leased for a six month period from a company in Kansas City. Events such as Ribfest, Celebrate Lincoln, Pinewood Bowl events, Zoo Bar street dances, Canopy Street events, and for car shows at Haymarket Park and PBA festival space. SMG would manage and store the fencing and make the fencing available to event producers when appropriate. The demand for such fencing will only grow and will allow the availability of such fencing year round. Lorenz opened the floor to questions. Waite asked if this would replace the currently leased fence and Lorenz replied yes and that the quality of what is currently leased is not that great. Ireland asked what the annual rental cost was and Lorenz replied \$8-10,000; so it would pay for itself fairly quickly. Maul asked to confirm that the City would purchase and SMG would store and manage the fencing and would there be any revenue generated. Lorenz stated that it is not intended to be revenue making, but would need costs for labor covered and anything over and above would go back into the operating fund of the venue. Lorenz was excused. Lattimer asked if there were additional questions or comments. Ireland liked the fact that it would eventually pay for itself; however, how does this improve a tourism attraction and how does us paying for fencing bring in more tourism dollars. Lattimer stated that from past experience it would bring more events into town that often not having perimeter fencing is a deal breaker and also allows for admission to be charged. Lattimer asked Eagan if providing funding for this fence would qualify and Eagan stated it has to be for a nonprofit and it would be a City-owned asset. Ireland asked that if the City gives it to the PBA to use; how would that fit. Wear asked if all events were for profit. Eagan the venue that owns it is nonprofit. Wheaton stated that the businesses in the Haymarket want to have fencing on every football Saturday and concert events so alcohol could be carried openly in a designated area. Lattimer asked that based on the calendar, could the fencing be used elsewhere. Maul stated that all automotive events being recruited could use such fencing. Eagan asked if a refundable deposit would be required like in the case of the bleachers the City currently owns. Perret asked how the dollars would be trailed, but agreed such fencing would be attractive for events. Lattimer stated that she feels it would be a good investment for the County and the Pinnacle Bank Arena would be good stewards of the fencing and made a motion to approve the grant request of \$35,000 and asked if there was any discussion. Amundson asked, for example, if Waverly could use the fencing and Eagan stated they could if they agreed to pay for the labor and freight based on Lorenz's comments. Wheaton asked Eagan to reaffirm that this would be to cover costs only and not a revenue generator. Eagan stated it probably would be a case by case agreement and again, Pinnacle Bank Arena would be stewards of the City and the fencing would not be a revenue maker. Maul stated event requests that need fencing are nonstop. Eagan stated that the contract could be written that states the Pinnacle Bank Arena will not make any revenue from such fence "rental". Lattimer restated her motion to approve this request and Morgan seconded. Wheaton stated as long as

contracts to use the fencing was written that Pinnacle Bank Arena will not generate revenue from events using this fence. Lattimer amended the motion - move to approve the purchase of 2,400 ft. of linear fencing; purchased by the City and managed by SMG with the stipulation that neither entity can use fencing to gain a profit. Morgan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of November 12, 2014 Minutes: Ireland made the motion to approve the minutes of November 12, 2014, and seconded by Wheaton. Motion carried.

Approval of October Financials: Ron Kalkwarf went over financials for the period of July, 2015 through January, 2015, stating net income or gross profit was \$1,087,783, which was slightly over budget due to increases in Visitors Guide advertising and USA Roller Skating rebates, along with grant income. Total expenses were \$1,006,844 which is slightly under budget due employee turnover and restructuring. Meetings and conferences was over budget, but offset by Travel and Training being under budget. Net Income was \$80,939. Lattimer asked for a motion to approve the financials as presented which was done by Perrett and seconded by Ireland. Motion carried unanimously.

Director's Report: Maul reported that calls to the Visitors Center this year are up due to the new arena and development in the Haymarket. Maul gave a review of the Visitors Center activity for 2014. Maul stated planning for the 2015 State Games of America is coming right along and it is anticipated this will bring in over 20,000 athletes and 65,000 visitors to the City. Opening ceremonies will be held at Memorial Stadium with Lolo Jones and Jordan Burroughs. Room nights are already being booked. Maul reported that the 2015 Visitors Guide is now available and 80,000 copies have been printed. The CVB hosted a group of travel writers in December. Twenty journalists were treated to what Lincoln has to offer with the main interest on food and craft beers. Benefits are already being seen from this visit as the American Airline inflight magazine will feature Licorice International in an upcoming issue. The Be a Tourist campaign will be in its 12th year with more attractions than ever with the consideration being given to partnering with some events. The Lincoln Picture to Win contest was at Morrill Hall last weekend for the Dinosaurs and Disasters event. The goal of this contest is to get pictures and social media interaction. LAMA (Lancaster County Attractions and Museums) meetings continue to be held every other month. 2015 legislation focus will be on LB419 which exempts sales and purchases by accredited zoo's and aquariums from sales and use tax; a letter of support from Lancaster County will be sent. Also LB562 which identifies four existing or potential tourism sites with greatest potential for visitors for which the State would grant them \$1M per year to each district. This is pretty exciting and Maul will work closely with Kathy McKillip on this legislation. Maul gave a brief overview of the upcoming events such as the Nebraska High School Bowling Federation at Sun Valley Lanes; NSAA Swimming and Diving championships; NSAA Girls State Basketball and NSAA Boys State Basketball championships. This year the Ambassador program will be brought back.

Feyerherm gave a 2014 wrap-up stating there was a 17% increase over 2014 in leads sent out and 78% of all leads were new business (highest ever); 80% of all events booked were new (highest ever) and 25% of all events booked were regional (highest ever). 79% of all events booked were regional/national and 21% of all events booked were in the religious market which is up 6% from 2013. 14% of all events booked were in the educational market which is up 35 from 2013. So far in 2015 there are 20 sales leads for 6,635 room nights and one proposal submitted for consideration. 61 leads currently pending for 22,497 room nights and multiple site visits scheduled with events. Booked business for 2015 includes four events for 1,505 rooms. Pending events (waiting on contracts) are the

Women of Faith Tour and the 2015 Barrel Bash. Lincoln came in second to the USA Track and Field Junior Olympic Cross Country Nationals and the Outdoor Writers Association Convention. This is impressive since these events are during colder months and Lincoln finished ahead of warm weather states. Feyerherm stated that Kelsey Bousquet recently attended the American Bus Association National Conference in St. Louis, January 9-13, and had appointments with 36 group tour and motor coach operators and has already received leads for several events. Maul complimented Feyerherm on his work with the Cities of the Big 10 web page which is a huge marketing opportunity for us.

New Business: Maul stated the next meeting will be May 13, 2015, prior to the office move and briefly discussed the move. Ireland passed out a flyer regarding a current exhibit on loan to the Nebraska State Historical Society from the National History entitled Quilts and Context in the Civil War.

Adjourn: There being no further discussion Lattimer adjourned the meeting at 3:29 pm.