

Visitors Promotion Committee
Special Meeting via Zoom due to COVID-19
April 23, 2020
MINUTES

In Attendance: Jeff Cunningham, Amy Dickerson, Tara Knuth, Susan Madsen, Roland Morgan, Becky Perrett, Aaron Stitt, Roma Amundson, Kerry Eagan, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Tammy Ward and Michelle Waite

Staff Attending: Jeff Maul, Derek Feyerherm, Diane Pryor, Ron Kalkwarf and Todd Wiltgen

Call to Order and Participant Recognition:

Becky Perrett called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. She explained we are having this meeting via Zoom and talked about the different tools within the system. Perrett asked Diane Pryor to take the roll call. Following roll, she turned the meeting over to Aaron Stitt to lead the discussion about committee member term extensions.

Committee Member Term Extension:

Aaron Stitt told the Committee that terms for Roland Morgan and Becky Perrett are set to expire at the end of May. In light of the current situation with COVID-19, discussions have been made with both, and they have agreed to stay on until December 31, 2020. At that date, the VPC will revisit any further extension. At the direction of the County Attorney, Stitt asked Morgan and Perrett to abstain from voting. Stitt asked for a motion. Amy Dickerson made a motion to extend the terms of both Morgan and Perrett through December 31, 2020. Susan Madsen seconded the motion. Kerry Eagan spoke up and said there is a need to also waive the bylaws in asking for the extension. Stitt asked if this needed to be included in a motion and Eagan said yes. Tara Knuth made a motion to waive the bylaws regarding term limits in order to extend the Visitor Promotions Committee terms for Roland Morgan and Becky Perrett, during these special circumstances, through December 31, 2020. Jeff Cunningham seconded the motion. A vote was taken on the extension of terms. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Madsen and Stitt voted yes. Morgan and Perrett abstained. Motion carried. Next, a vote was taken to waive the bylaws. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Madsen and Stitt voted yes. Morgan and Perrett abstained. Motion carried. Additionally, Jeff Cunningham is completing a four-year term and Stitt asked for a motion to renew his service for another four years. Perrett made a motion to renew Jeff Cunningham for a second four-year term on the Visitor Promotions Committee through May 31, 2024. Susan Madsen seconded the motion. Stitt asked for a vote. Dickerson, Knuth, Madsen, Morgan, Perrett and Stitt voted yes. Cunningham abstained. Motion carried.

Jeff Maul took a moment to say we sincerely appreciate their willingness to serve until the end of the year. With these uncertain times, it is very important to have the consistency and continuity on the committee.

Visitor Improvement Fund Grant Program

Perrett next talked about the Visitor Improvement Fund Grant Program saying the future is unclear for businesses right now and we don't know what to expect going forward. There is not the anticipation of many requests for improvement funding and since the budget has grown tight with a decrease in lodging taxes coming in, we would like to propose a suspension of the Improvement Fund Grant program. Perrett

asked for discussion or questions. Nicole Fleck-Tooze said she had wondered if this would happen and had been considering making a grant request on May 1. She wondered if the committee knew of any others that may be thinking of making requests. Maul said he had heard from Lincoln Sports Foundation who was considering making another grant request. He let them know we would likely be discontinuing the fund for the unknown future. When asked if the schedule will be changed, Maul said it could be years, not sure when it would be because we need to pay out those that we owe with the little funds we currently have. Maul also noted that this is a decision being made statewide by other counties. Perrett asked Maul if he has a list of attractions to notify and Maul said yes, we will send out communications to them all and add language to the CVB website to reflect the decision. Perrett asked for a motion. Madsen made a motion to approve suspending the Improvement Fund Grant program until December 31, 2020. Stitt seconded the motion. There being no further discussion Perrett called for a vote. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Madsen, Morgan, Perrett and Stitt voted yes. Motion carried.

Future VPC Meeting Dates

Perrett began talking about future VPC meeting dates by saying typically at the May meeting we hear a presentation about the CVB budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1. However, Maul would like to delay the May meeting into June to give them one more month of discussion and insight. Since there are many moving parts in play in the midst of things going on in the community and so many unknowns, Jeff asked for a delay of the conversation until June. This would give another month of revenue projection. Maul is asking we hold the next VPC meeting either (hopefully) in person, or possibly again on Zoom, on Wednesday, June 17 at 1:30.

Directors Report and CVB Update:

Jeff Maul began his report thanking Perrett for her time, talent and treasures. We rely heavily on each other in moving the VPC forward, Maul said. He also added that both he and Derek have been working since mid-March on our budget in anticipation of the coming months. We will do everything we can to keep all the staff employed because we know we will need the salespeople and services when this is behind us and we move tourism forward. Our motto of don't cancel, postpone has been working well for us. We've seen several cancellations in May, June and July and just one in August. Maul asked the hotel representatives how the occupancy in their hotels is. Morgan said theirs has dropped significantly. They are down to 10% occupancy where usually they are at nearly 80%. He said they have been strongest, at close to 50%, in their extended stay locations. It is very atypical. Stitt said they have had huge cuts in occupancy. They maybe have 20-30 per night. He feels blessed that last week they got a PPP loan, so they were able to bring back staff. He also thanked Susan Madsen for sending people to his location to stay. Stitt said they are feeling pretty fortunate right now.

Maul asked Dickerson to update the group on the Rodeo coming this summer. She said the Family Motor Coach Association had already pulled out of their August commitment because most of their membership is in their 70's. They are wondering if they will ever do an event again, she said. The high school rodeo is still on. The staff at the Lancaster Event Center has been hard at work preparing. The grandstands are being completed as we speak, and the electricity is about to be turned on. She said they are not sure what they will be doing on May 7th as the directive of groups of 10 or less expires on May 6th. They are waiting and looking for guidance from the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department. They have horse shows that want to come to Lincoln and are still planning to come in June, if regulations allow it. They will be coming from 40 states for the show. Dickerson said she is a big PPP loan fan as well. She added that our banks have done an awesome job. Also, if we do not get the rodeo to come to town, they will be fighting hard to have them add us in another year on their calendar to make up for it. They will not stop fighting for it, she

said.

Maul went on to say one thing we are doing is keeping track of our clients and events – through phone calls and virtual meetings – and continuing to spread good cheer. The parade down P Street with the Children’s Museum was great, he said. In media, the CVB has encouraged people to go on a virtual field trip by packing a bag, a lunch and head to the basement to take a virtual vacation tour of area attractions. In closing, Maul meets weekly with the Nebraska Travel Association on Mondays. They are fighting to get 501c6 organizations covered in the CARES Act. Maul told everyone that the HRTM at the University of Nebraska are actively trying to increase the interest in the tourism program. He has heard lately that people are saying this is not the field of choice right now. Maul said we are praying for Madsen and her team right now. So many things are being canceled right now, Madsen said, and wondered if we had promised money to any activities or events that had cancellations. Maul said he and Derek Feyerherm are watching that daily and looking at contracts to be sure any future cancellations or contract negotiations do not put the CVB at risk. He specifically mentioned events in the sports market.

New Business:

There was no new business and no further questions or comments.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m.