

Visitors Promotion Committee
Meeting at Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel
November 18, 2020
MINUTES

In Attendance: Amy Dickerson, Susan Madsen, Roland Morgan, Becky Perrett, Aaron Stitt, Dave Derbin and Nicole Fleck-Tooze,

Absent: Roma Amundson, Jeff Cunningham, Tara Knuth, Tammy Ward and Michelle Waite

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

Call to Order and Introductions:

Becky Perrett called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. and thanked Susan Madsen for hosting the meeting. Perrett asked everyone to do introductions next and for those to serve as the roll call. During the introductions, Nicole Fleck-Tooze informed the group she would be moving to Colorado. Everyone congratulated her and thanked her for her service on the committee and Perrett said the Mayor will appoint a new member to replace Fleck-Tooze.

Approval of August Minutes:

Perrett asked if there were any comments or questions regarding the August minutes that had been sent out ahead of time in an email to the group. With no questions, she asked for a motion to approve the August minutes. Madsen made a motion to approve the minutes and Roland Morgan seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, Perrett called for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen, Morgan, Stitt and Perrett voted yes. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried.

Approval of October Financials:

Ron Kalkwarf presented the financials showing the CVB Profit and Loss statement covering July through October 2020. Total Income was \$376,452 down from budget of \$446,667 due to reduced funding being requested from Lancaster County. Total Expenses totaled \$385,009 and Kalkwarf pointed out event promotion-CVB and sports event promotion-CVB are down because of cancelled events due to COVID-19. Net Income was a net loss of (\$8,557) and would be addressed during the ½% discussion later in the meeting. Kalkwarf asked for questions. Maul added that the CVB has made continued cuts to the budget due to reduced lodging tax and will continue to closely watch expenses. Perrett asked if there were any questions regarding the financials. There being no questions, Perrett asked for a motion to approve the financials. Aaron Stitt moved to accept the financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Amy Dickerson. With no further discussion, Perrett called for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen, Morgan, Stitt and Perrett voted yes. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried.

CVB Audit

Kalkwarf presented the CVB audit for the year ending December 31, 2019 asking everyone to refer to the report in their packets. The Chamber is operating on a calendar basis, he said, and the point he would like to draw attention to is the Opinion; "In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Lincoln/Lancaster County Convention and

Visitors Bureau.” He asked everyone to review the document and reach out to himself or Maul with questions. Maul added there are many efficiencies and similarities to the Chamber and appreciate that working relationship. Perrett asked if there were any comments or questions on the audit report and there were none. Stitt made a motion to accept the audit as presented. The motion was seconded by Morgan. With no further discussion, Perrett called for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen, Morgan, Stitt and Perrett voted yes. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried.

½% CVB/Event Promotion Fund Request

Maul said that in order for the CVB to continue our bid process in attracting new events and securing existing relationships with organizers, he asks that the VPC approves the moving of improvement fund dollars for the use of promotion. Events that are being requested for include: \$2,250 for the Nebraska Quarter Horse Association, \$1,000 for the AMA State Championships in August, \$4,500 for the Central Plains Reining Horse Association(CPRHA) held a few weeks ago and the newly negotiated amount of \$65,000 for the NSAA Volleyball tournament. Dickerson added the CPRHA is one of the largest events the Lancaster Event Center had this year. The total requests are \$72,750. Perrett asked if there were any comments or questions. Stitt asked when these events occurred. Maul said the events have already taken place with the bid fee already have been paid or the expenses will be paid here in the next week. Dickerson made a motion that the VPC has made the determination that facilities are adequate in order to request improvement fund dollars to be used for promotion by the CVB as requested in the amount of \$72,750. Morgan seconded her motion. Maul said, if approved these will go on to the County Board for approval. With no further discussion, Perrett called for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen, Morgan, Stitt and Perrett voted yes. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried.

Directors Report and CVB Update:

Maul gave a VPC director’s report. He started with an NSAA update touching on the state volleyball tournament. It was successful despite the pandemic with this year’s attendance at 60-75% attendance compared to a 3-year average. State football was cancelled in Lincoln and moved to the towns of those teams competing. This was due to a variety of reasons at the discretion of the NSAA. Maul said he could see this coming and he understands the decision and the continued leadership and communication with the NSAA and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD). The CVB works with them daily and are pleased with that relationship. State Basketball is still scheduled for March. There is a new event the CVB will be bidding on and that’s NSAA High School Bowling that will be in February. On the marketing and social media side, Maul asked everyone to follow the CVB on Twitter and Facebook to view the GetARoom campaign and rate codes on Lincoln.org for discount rates from participating hotels. Trends show that travel will be by car as things begin to open back up in 2021, he said, and that is similar to numbers for 2020 that include leisure travel and vacations. The CVB was nominated for a Marketing Campaign of the Year at the State Tourism Conference and named a finalist. The focus will shift to survival and recovery this winter as asks everyone to support Lincoln hotels and restaurants by giving their employees room vouchers and gift card in lieu of the normal holiday parties and dinners. Social media influencers visited in September as part of a Nebraska Tourism fam and had great results.

Looking at the event landscape, Maul said the CVB was proud to have hosted the USA BMX this summer, the AMA Motocross in the fall, Performing Arts at the Lied, Good Life Halfsy and the Market to Market Relay, virtual concerts at the LEC and the Cornhusker State Games. Not many cities had all of these events this past summer and we are fortunate. Maul gave the VPC an update on CVB operations as it related to reduced funding but said that he and Derek Feyerherm were working to ensure things would continue to run smoothly. On a high note, Maul said, he will not let baseball field development go quiet and conversations for new fields and potential to revive convention center feasibility are ongoing. Lincoln needs to be ready to go again when all of this is over. April will likely be a turning month and the CVB hope to land sports events of a significant size for that month. He opened it up to questions. Perrett asked about the 1% spending campaign within the city and said she looked at the local business list on the Partnership for Economic Development's website and it is not as user-friendly as DLA's. Feyerherm noted that the list on the Partnership's site is encompassing of nearly 10,000 businesses but the Chamber's website has a more user-friendly interface with its local members.

Feyerherm gave the sales update next saying the CVB has been fortunate to work with the LLCHD and they have been accommodating to try and make every event possible. The CVB has issued 100 sales leads for 63,788 room nights that have been bid out. Since the VPC meeting in August, there were 26 sales leads, 19 of those being in the sports market and seven for conferences. It seems like youth sports are returning the fastest. In 2019 at this time, there had been 140 sales leads so interest continues to be strong in Lincoln. When it comes to booked rooms, Feyerherm added the CVB is 700 rooms booked ahead of last year at this time. The CVB booked 72 events for 41,643 room nights, with 17 of those and 5,732 rooms since our last VPC meeting. Ten of those events were sports and seven conferences. Feyerherm commented that the process to book events is longer due to uncertainty of what the future holds because of the pandemic. Feyerherm added the national trend is showing that youth sports being back to what we were at in 2019 by 2022. Maul noted that most say that conventions maybe not returning to normal until 2023 but is optimistic that it will be a little sooner in our community. Feyerherm said tradeshow continue mostly in a virtual format. TEAMS was held October 19-22 and Derek Bombeck participated with Sports Nebraska and met with 30 sports event planners that were ready to book events for 2021 and beyond. He got several RFP's and has been working diligently on them. One hot prospect is Bass Fishing who is wanting to hold multiple events. Feyerherm updated everyone on the status of major events included USA Rollers Sports, Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, and student organizations based at the Nebraska Department of Education. Perrett said if there were further questions and acknowledged the CVB for its continued efforts. Stitt asked what the status was of bid fees for events that were canceled. Feyerherm and Maul shared the bid fees are not paid out for these and outlined their process moving forward with negotiations of events. Morgan asked if any events that have canceled due to uncertainty in 2021 may reconsider if the pandemic begins to turn around. Feyerherm said that it is unlikely.

Member Term & Grant Process Application Extensions

Perrett said at the June meeting it had been approved to extend her and Morgan's terms to December 2020 due to COVID-19. With circumstances still dire, they have been asked, and both agreed, to extend again until June 30, 2021. Perrett asked for a motion to approve the term extension. Madsen made a motion to suspend the VPC by-laws and extend Perrett's and Morgan's terms until June 30, 2021. Stitt seconded the motion. Perrett asked for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen and Stitt voted yes. Perrett and Morgan abstained. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried. Next, Perrett asked the group to consider extending the freeze on the grant process application through 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Stitt made a motion to extend the freeze. Madsen seconded the motion. Perrett called for a vote. Dickerson, Madsen, Morgan, Stitt and Perrett voted yes. Cunningham and Knuth were absent. Motion carried.

New Business:

In new business, Maul noted to a list of meeting dates for 2021 in the packets and asked everyone to mark their calendars. He said he was sorry to inform them that we would have no holiday party as much as we always enjoy celebrating with everyone. Dickerson asked if she could update everyone on what is happening at the Lancaster Event Center. The Farm Show moved to February, she said, and they closed and may stay closed until January or February. The rodeo is a go in July and they are revving up their campaign. Family Motor Coach Association cancelled the RV show in 2020 but rebooked for 2022. Airstream is deciding between two locations and it's between us and Loveland, Colorado. The International Firework Convention is still hopeful, and they will be working with hoteliers on that one. Madsen asked when there will be more information on CARES Act funds from the Department of Economic Development. Maul said he's not sure, but it should be soon. Maul said that aid for 501c6's may happen in the next round of funds from Congress, but we just don't know yet as that is vital for CVB's if COVID related delays continue. He said the physical doors of the Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor's Center have been closed due to the risk-dial but staff continue to work full-time from home and are as busy as ever. Maul closed wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season and thanked Perrett and Morgan for serving another six months. Madsen let everyone know the Blood Bank was taking donations in their ballroom if anyone would like to give blood.

Adjourn:

Perrett thanked everyone for their time and attention and adjourned the meeting at 2:36 p.m.