

Visitors Promotion Committee
November 20, 2019
MINUTES

In Attendance: Jeff Cunningham, Amy Dickerson, Tara Knuth, Roland Morgan, Aaron Stitt, Roma Amundson and Kerry Eagan

Absent: Susan Madsen, Becky Perrett, Denise Pearce, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Tammy Ward and Michelle Waite

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

Guests Attending: Mark Harris and Matt Olberding

Call to Order and Introductions:

Aaron Stitt called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. beginning with a review of the agenda and introductions. Following the introductions, Jeff Maul introduced Brooke Zimmerman, the Chamber/CVB's new Marketing & Communications Director, to the Committee.

Being no further questions or comments, Stitt welcomed the first presenter.

University of Nebraska – Morrill Hall

Mark Harris spoke to the Committee to request a grant for the University of Nebraska Morrill Hall. He is requesting \$10,000 for the construction of a family-friendly exhibit to help people understand the animals in the area by following their signs and signals. The funds would be used to construct the 1,500 sq. ft. exhibit on the 3rd floor of the existing Morrill Hall. It would be a one-year exhibit ready in 2020. Everything would be produced in-house by mostly University staff. It would show tracks, fossils, scat and clues, including feathers and some images of animals to let people know what to look for and where to look to determine what animals are living in their area. He shared a one-year video of a path in the wild and all the different animals that crossed over it. This video will be in the exhibit and he's hoping to inspire thousands to be interested in their surroundings and the animals we coexist with. Mr. Harris asked for questions. Stitt asked him to describe some events he has planned to hold with schools. Harris replied they have ongoing contracts and when they visit with them, they talk about topics and engage the visitors on topics related to nature and inspire interest in it. Maul pointed out the funds would solely be for the construction of the exhibit. Amy Dickerson asked for ways folks from out of town would hear about it. They have a marketing team that uses social online marketing as well as print media and do plan to have some press releases. Stitt thanked him for the presentation and excused him from the meeting. Discussion followed. Roland Morgan posed a question about having enough funds to grant them the \$10,000. Stitt told the Committee that there was a conversation prior to the meeting and there are enough funds to grant this request. Dickerson asked Morgan if he thought people would come to Lincoln for this. He said Morrill Hall is part of the Lincoln and University package of things to do in Lincoln. Stitt agreed saying it's just one more draw added to the list of interests, along with the Lincoln Children's Museum, bringing families and groups to Lincoln. Dickerson commented being a one-year exhibit may increase interest. Jeff Cunningham made a motion to grant the \$10,000 request for the exhibit as presented by the University. Morgan seconded the motion. With no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Morgan and Stitt voted yes. Perrett and Madsen were absent. Motion carried.

Approval of August Minutes:

Stitt asked for approval of the August minutes. Morgan made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Cunningham seconded the motion. Knuth asked if after the last meeting some new development with the Lincoln Sports Foundation had happened. Maul said this would be addressed during the director's report. Stitt called for a vote. Cunningham, Knuth, Morgan and Stitt voted yes. Dickerson abstained. Perrett and Madsen were absent. Motion carried.

Approval of October Financials:

Ron Kalkwarf presented the financials with the CVB Profit and Loss statement covering July through October 2019. Total Income was \$600,699 which was right on budget. Total Expenses totaled \$611,240 and Kalkwarf pointed out salaries were at \$209,270 and down some due to turnover. Net Income was actually a net loss of (\$10,541) this year. Kalkwarf asked for questions and Maul wanted to let everyone know a little more regarding the salaries. We have several shared salaries with the Chamber and that the turnover was not with the CVB but with these shared employees. Dickerson moved to accept the financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Morgan. With no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Morgan and Stitt voted yes. Perrett and Madsen were absent. Motion carried.

Approval of ½% Fund Request:

Jeff Maul addressed the Committee saying twice every 12 months there is a request to convert the improvement fund money to the promotion fund. The purpose is to continue attracting new events, improving existing events and securing relationships with organizers. There are new requests for ½% lodging tax including NSAA volleyball, \$85K; NSAA football, \$20K; Christian Congregation, \$15.6K; SCCA Solo Nationals, \$15K, Nebraska Coaches Association, \$8.5K; and I/O Summit, \$8K. The total request is \$152,100 that we are asking to be released. These are from the July – October collections. Stitt asked historically what amount is requested in this timeframe. Maul said usually around \$180K the difference being due to not having roller sports this year. Dickerson made a motion saying the VPC determines the facilities in Lancaster County as adequate and approves the use of improvement fund dollars in the amount of \$152,100 for promotion as presented by the CVB. The motion was seconded by Knuth. With no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Morgan and Stitt voted yes. Perrett and Madsen were absent. Motion carried.

VPC Guideline Discussion

Maul began the discussion letting the committee know the last time the VPC's guidelines were updated was in June 2017. He has been visiting with Kerry Eagan and they want to form a sub-committee to review them and rework them. Eagan touched on a couple of the current problems - one with the wording on the \$10K grants. Currently the grant requests are for grants over \$10K or under \$10K. The guidelines do not cover requests of exactly \$10K. Another problem is when a non-profit makes a request to renovate or expand a facility, they do not own but serve as an agent for, they technically shouldn't be able to request the grants. Knuth also thought the economic impact formula on the last page of the grant request form could be simplified. Maul said these are small problems and mostly technicalities, but items that need to be addressed. We need to clean up and speed up the process, Maul said. Knuth noted that the application is not always filled out in its entirety. Morgan said how much goes to our fund from the hotel nights may be a good addition to the application. Stitt asked if the city breaks down how much tax is collected from food and beverage spent yet and Eagan said no. The separation of lodging, restaurant and miscellaneous funds is very broad as it now stands. It would be nice if we could dig into it and show more specifics. Dickerson

asked where we get the numbers – Dr. Thompson's report. Maul said there was a small discussion before the meeting going through solutions. They want a gold standard. Knuth said she would be on the committee and Stitt volunteered, too. Maul said he would add a meeting on the December calendar. Next, Maul wanted to recognize Roland Morgan for his 20-year anniversary with Lincoln Hotel Group and say good job – we appreciate you and your accomplishments over the years. Roma Admundson added Kerry Eagan will be retiring at the end of the year after 30 years on the job and wanted to recognize and thank him.

Directors Report:

Jeff Maul began his report talking about the CVB projects, marketing and sales beginning with the Visitors Guide. He said it will be available in late December/early January and is a little different size this year. It will be a slightly taller booklet style so it will show nicely on marketing stands. He was proud to promote former Mayor Chris Beutler for the Frank Morrison Award, which he won, at the State Tourism Conference held recently in North Platte. Beutler was honored for his contribution to tourism and his work as a state senator. He went on to say, for the second year, five journalists visited Lincoln in September and wrote about beer, wine and food. The articles have been very good. There has been continued growth of Sports Facilities for baseball and volleyball that he feels will be key to future tourism growth. Manzitto Sports facility is planned to open in March 2020, and the CVB is excited about it. Lincoln Sports Foundation Complex received an \$850K gift to continue their work. Maul said this is our last year hosting state volleyball on the current contract and it is going out for bid. We plan to seek another 3-5-year deal. It's been a great agreement with them as PBA has broken attendance records the last two years. We will seek to co-host Class A & B baseball with the Sarpy County/Papillion schools. Also, we are hoping to host a single class of golf in the next bid. Jeff continued with marketing and sales information thanking Zimmerman again and saying we are going to increase our social media and use of video in our marketing efforts. New travel spending numbers for Lancaster County came out. We were at \$476M in 2018, up 3.5% over 2017. We are having economic activity in lodging, restaurant and miscellaneous areas. We have a lot going on with events in November and December, Maul said, with state football this month and the Nebraska Power Farming Show in December. These are huge events for income from taxes for the city. Another interesting program in the growth phase is at Innovation Campus where there will be a hotel run by students in the Hospitality Program. Derek participated in the HRTM first-year mentor program. It's a good program, he said, that really drives home the importance of tourism.

Jeff directed everyone to the 2020 meeting dates in the packets and asked them to add the dates to their calendars. He invited the group to the CVB Holiday gathering on December 5th. Next, Maul showed the group the sheet showing the CVB 2019 accomplishments and 2020 goals put together by the marketing team. Maul said they have continued meeting with StarTran to expand their downtown route to include stops at the Children's Museum and the Cornhusker Hotel. Also, we are hoping to work on the USARS in future years. Derek Feyerherm said Lincoln will host in 2021 and 2022 and is working with Speedway Sporting Complex to finalize plans. We would take a year off from hosting and then host again in 2024 and 2025.

Feyerherm talked next about sales and proposals. He said we have had 141 sales leads for 74,804 room nights. 82% of those are regional/national and 48% are new business. They have issued 16 proposals submitted for consideration and are sitting on 29 leads currently pending for 29,656 room nights. In 2019 Booked Business, Feyerherm went on to say, there are 110 events booked for 40,950 rooms. 77% of those are regional/national and 57% are new business as well. This will increase by end of year as decisions are pending on several large proposals. Dickerson added information on one of the proposals being the RV

Convention coming later in 2020 after the high school rodeo. There will be 2,000 - 2,500 RV's using the campgrounds and attending the conference at the Lancaster Event Center. Many other attendees and convention personnel will stay in Lincoln hotels. Feyerherm continued talking about the new Act-On software that will help the team with sales efforts. The sales team will use it to really dial in to exactly what meeting planners are looking at.

The CVB has been on the road these last two months attending tradeshow including one called SPORTS in Panama City Beach, Florida. Derek Bombeck attended in Florida along with a show in Anaheim, California called TEAMS. These past few weeks Bombeck has been doing a lot of follow-up on contacts and leads gathered at the shows. Feyerherm attended a Small Market Meeting in Green Bay and Kelsey Meyer went to Franklin, Tennessee to the Boomers in Groups tradeshow. Before that show we were offered last minute marketing spots in the programs and show materials. Our logo was everywhere and led to many hits, which Meyer is following up on. Maul added a plug for the Children's Zoo Lights display opening the day after Thanksgiving. He said it should be put on the route for tour buses as it will be open just a month and takes on a Disney theme.

The Sports Nebraska update included an USOC visit in August and many communities sharing RFP's. We are wrapping up year two of this and have had great growth and progress. It has helped with nationwide recognition. There were ROI sales trips from Chicago to DC. It was our first year doing dedicated sales trips and they are looking at us for events. It has been very successful. In early September, we had Kaleo Tours come through Lincoln. They used us as a pass over day in between other stops on their tours. The Lincoln stop went over so well that some of the tours are putting us on their future schedules. Area CVB's are working together on group tours and we are seeing growth here. Kelsey Meyer is doing a lot with Omaha building holiday itineraries with lots of events and interests. Finally, Derek talked about the NACO Convention in Kearney Meyer will be attending as well. This is an annual convention we attend as a sponsor at their tradeshow. Morgan asked where we're at on wrestling. Feyerherm said Omaha has the best facility for that since people can pull in, set up, have all classes in one location, tear down and pull out with ease. Stitt asked what is the CVB's biggest win this year. Feyerherm said the event Dickerson alluded to earlier is a big win, along with Frontiers in Education that was a partnership with UNL College of Engineering. Stitt asked if the Manzitto field/courts would be used for state high school tournaments. But those will be primarily for national club and select team tournaments, Maul said. They likely would also be used to draw non-traditional sports to the city for their competitions.

New Business:

In new business, Maul wanted to acknowledge Kerry Eagan again for his many years of service and let him know how much he has been appreciated. He was thanked for all he has done for the Committee. He has been the guiding principal, Maul said, as he recognized him for his great service. It's been fun and we will miss you. Stitt asked if there would be any changes on the grant payouts and Eagan said that depends on cash flow in the future.

Adjourn:

Dickerson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Morgan seconded the motion. Being no further discussion, Stitt called for a vote. Cunningham, Dickerson, Knuth, Morgan and Stitt voted yes. Perrett and Madsen were absent. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.