

Visitors Promotion Committee
August 16, 2017
MINUTES

In attendance: Lynne Ireland, Dave Wheaton, Amy Dickerson, Jeff Cunningham, Bill Avery, Carl Eskridge and Nicole Fleck-Tooze

Staff attending: Derek Feyherm, Jeff Maul, Ron Kalkwarf and Kerry Paup

Guests: Matt Olberding

Call to Order and Introductions:

Lynne Ireland called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m. and introductions were made.

Approval of May and June Minutes:

Ireland asked for a motion to accept the May and June minutes. Dickerson made the motion and it was seconded by Cunningham. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of July Financials:

Kalkwarf presented the financials reminding everyone of the fiscal year being July 1 through June 30, consequently the numbers are small as the financials represent one month, July, 2017. Income is \$143,011 which is basically the 1/12th of the room tax for the year. Expenses are \$130,798 with big items being Cornhusker State Games and USA Swimming. Net income is \$12,213. Ireland asked if there were questions regarding the financials. With no questions, Dickerson made a motion to accept the financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Wheaton. Motion carried unanimously.

Directors Report:

Maul stated that the upcoming eclipse on August 21st has proven to be one of the hardest tourism events they have had to try and promote due to so many variables. The fact that there are no tickets to sell to an actual event has proven to be challenging. Seasonal signs were created and hung-up around the downtown and Haymarket area. Hoping that these continue to create a buzz about the eclipse. The Lincoln Saltdogs Baseball game will begin at noon with a first pitch and then an official solar eclipse delay. There will be commemorative jerseys, solar glasses and other items available for purchase at the game. The solar glasses that are given out at the game have been donated by KuglerVision. The Lincoln hotels are at sellout for the evening of Sunday, August 20th. Wheaton mentioned that he has a cancellation waitlist that he could fill the hotel again if everyone cancelled. Maul stated that the southern part of Lancaster County hotel rooms filled up first due to being closer to proximity to Beatrice. The CVB staff has been referring people to Omaha now for hotel rooms. Dickerson mentioned that the Lancaster County Event Center has room available for campers still at this time. As reported in the Lincoln Journal Star the Air bnb activity is high due to the eclipse as well. This is an exciting time because people are visiting Lincoln for the first time. The Pinnacle Bank Arena has a number of events going on for the weekend as well. Including Capital City Ribfest, Kendrick Lamar concert and the Crawford vs. Indongo fight. Pinewood Bowl has Joe Bonamassa concert and Monday is the first day of classes at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. The 2017 Beer Tour is off to a great start. 600 passports were printed in May and the Visitors Center was out of them within a day and a half. 500 additional beer guides will be printed in August/September. The Beer Tour consists of 9 local breweries and breweries will offer those on the tour with a guide, free pints and prizes. Alpha

Media will be hosting 9 live remotes during the tour this fall/summer. The 5th remote will be tonight at SchillingBridge. This is a great way to show our support in the growth of the craft beer craze and help promote tourism. Lincoln has a great craft beer culture here and the Beer Tour has provided great energy and interest in the local breweries. 2017 has been a busy year as well as a busy summer beginning with the NSAA Championships that happened this spring and summer, USA Wrestling, SCCA and Formula SAE, State Education Conferences and the Jehovah's Witness Conference. USA Wrestling went well this year and we are currently in conversations about future years to come. The attendance numbers exceeded their expectations. Formula SAE continued to be a great success. Maul stated that he had the opportunity to be a judge this year and he was amazed by the event. When they left this year they mentioned that they want to come back. The Jehovah's Witness Conference continues to grow now that we were able to move them from Devaney to the Pinnacle Bank Arena. They have committed to being here through 2020. Maul mentioned that the CVB video is in production with the use of grant money received. The new promotional video is still being tweaked and hope to have that out soon. Maul mentioned that he is on the NTC RFP Review Committee for the new marketing firm. Maul stated that there will be a refreshment of the Visitors Center within the next six months in order to make it more welcoming. There is a lot of focus being put on the development of new destination facilities, with the focus on multi-sport and what will put heads in bed. Maul mentioned that he and Eskridge have discussed the value of sporting fields in this area.

Firespring will again handle media buys for 2017-2018; the long-term relationship has been very beneficial. The 2018 Visitors Guide is in production with all ad space sold. Layout will be the same as this year's and they will be ready by December 2017 or January 2018. Maul will be attending the UMCVB Conference in Dubuque, IA in September, as well as the Nebraska Travel Conference held in LaVista, NE in October. Maul stated that there is a potential merger between NETA and NACVB, 2 tourism associations. Both associations are made up of the same members and are doing the same thing. Maul stated that he is in support of the merger.

Feyerherm reported that sales leads and proposals with 120 sales leads for 61,727 room nights of which 50% is regional/national and are off to a great start in 2017, in comparison to 153 sales leads and 65,896 room nights total in all of 2016. 22 proposals have been submitted for consideration. There are currently 34 leads pending for 9,000 room nights. Booked Business for 2017 include 84 events booked for 51,724 room nights of which 57% is regional/national in comparison to 103 events for 36,261 room nights total in 2016. We are in ongoing discussions with numerous USOC NGB's such as roller sports, Volleyball and Wrestling. Maul stated that we have spent a lot of time in the past on the phone with Colorado Springs to give us a chance and we have now had 2 events where attendance has exceeded expectations. The second half of 2017 is busy tradeshow season and focus will be on multi-year renewals of existing contracts. The sales staff has served on numerous local organizing committees this summer and now will catch up on sales opportunities. Bombeck will be attending USOC Sportslink in New Orleans, LA August 20 & 21; Feyerherm will attend the Connect Association Conference and Connect Specialty (SMERF), August 21 – 24, at the same location with Bombeck attending the Connect Sports Conference August 21 – 24 as well. Bombeck will be attending the S.P.O.R.T.S. Relationship Conference in Cedar Rapids, IA on September 18-21 and the CVB plans to submit a bid to host this conference in future years. The NASC Market Segment Conference in Detroit, MI on October 9-11 will be attended as well. Rachel O'Donnell will be attending the Connect Faith conference in Cincinnati, OH, October 24 – 26. Working on the Nebraska Sports Marketing Coalition and exploring the need/goals of potential sports marketing groups. Have spent the last couple of months trying to get this group together. Rachel O'Donnell has been hosting UNL Department

Meetings to discuss how we can help them in trying to get research conferences to Lincoln. O'Donnell has held a breakfast on East Campus and has a meeting scheduled for the City Campus. We have high hopes in this area. Maul mentioned that this has been a difficult area to crack into. This approach allows us to get in front of people and let them know what we can do in order to help them. This has been well received. Feyerherm stated that they are working on the Sports & Meeting Planner Guides and hope that they will be online soon. The holdup has been the Woods Tennis Center on the sports side and The Graduate Hotel on the meeting side. Hoping to have it finalized by the end of August/beginning of September. Also working on a new RFP enhancement for meeting planners and hoteliers in hopes to integrate and make it easier.

VPC Committee Vacancy:

Maul mentioned that Collette War was approved at the last meeting for an additional four year term, but has since moved on to another career and is hence no longer on the VPC. Based on requirements for this committee, this vacancy does need to be filled from the hotel sector. Maul mentioned that there were 3 names that satisfied this requirement and had a presence in the downtown area. Those names were; Susan Madsen, General Manager of The Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker, Aaron Stitt, General Manager of the Courtyard by Marriott Lincoln Downtown/Haymarket hotel and Chad Pitlik, General Manager of the Hyatt Place Lincoln Haymarket. Maul would like to have the recommendation presented to the County Board and accepted by the November VPC meeting. Dickerson asked which of these had the best convention space. Maul stated that the Cornhusker Marriott has the most convention space. Feyerherm stated that the Courtyard and Hyatt have limited event space. Dickerson asked if there has been a lot of turnover in the Cornhusker Marriott General Manager position. Feyerherm stated that Madsen has been there since the remodel. Maul stated that Chuck Harper was the last major downtown convention manager that sat on the VPC and that Madsen sees great opportunity for the downtown area. Wheaton stated that if any of the candidates had any questions regarding the position or the time commitment they are welcome to reach out to him. Maul asked if it was ok then he would move forward and talk to Madsen. There were no objections.

New Business:

Eskridge mentioned that the sale of the Abbott Sports Complex has been tabled indefinitely at this point. A lot of people in the community hate to see this facility go away. Maul stated that people he is hearing from say that their children use it a lot for sports. Eskridge mentioned that not only do Lincoln residents use it, but so do residents in the surrounding areas.

Dickerson gave an update on the Lancaster County Super Fair stating that while the weather was wonderful the exact numbers are not in yet, the overall sense is that numbers were up, however the carnival number were down probably due to the recent events at the Ohio State Fair in addition to the stabbing that happened as well. The carnival has been showing her what they do at similar events in Texas in order to help with the security. Dickerson is wondering whether there is a trend at other events towards these incidents. Dickerson mentioned that she had to get a police presence at the fair this year in order to deter these type of events. Dickerson asked the VPC members if they had any suggestions as to what she could do. Cunningham mentioned that a cop presence doesn't help anymore, because the groups involved in these incidents aren't scared of the police anymore. Dickerson stated that incidents like this could hurt tourism. Dickerson stated that the Lincoln Police Department was great to work with and is wondering what she can do for next year. If you have any ideas let her know. Eskridge stated that there is a gang taskforce and maybe she should contact them regarding her concerns. Cunningham wondered whether a metal detector should be at the entrance. Dickerson

stated that you can create a policy to handle this, but they have not at this point because they deal with so many ranchers and farmers that tend to have guns in their trucks.

Ireland stated that the next meeting will be on November 15, 2017. The Salute to the Good Life celebration is on Friday, September 22nd on Centennial Mall, featuring a fountain dedication, food trucks and ending in a laser light show on the Capitol. Ireland also mentioned that the State Historical Society will have a pre-eclipse event on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Maul mentioned that Lincoln.org lists all eclipse events that are going on in the area for this weekend. Concern was expressed regarding the traffic and potential parking along of Highway 77. Avery asked whether there was any concern regarding the glasses. Maul stated that the CVB purchased ISO approved glasses. The knock offs that are out there are not produced correctly. It was mentioned that if you read social media regarding the effects of the solar eclipse there are a lot of different opinions out there. Avery stated that the knock off glasses must not have any quality checks. Maul agreed.

Adjourn: There being no further discussion Ireland asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dickerson made the motion to adjourn and Cunningham seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.