

**Visitors Promotion Committee**  
**November 16, 2016**  
**MINUTES**

In attendance: Lynne Ireland, Roland Morgan, Dave Wheaton, Amy Dickerson, Trent Fellers, Becky Perrett, Jeff Cunningham, Kerry Eagan and Deb Schorr

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

Call to Order and Introductions:

Lynne Ireland called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. and introduced new board member Jeff Cunningham, executive director of the Lincoln Haymarket Development Corporation, co-owner of Burlington Antiques and associated with the Haymarket Farmers Market. Ireland asked Cunningham if he had any comments and Cunningham stated he is excited about serving on the VPC. Lynne then asked for introductions around the room. Lynne then stated that due to time constraints by several individuals, the grant requests would be heard first. Maul stated that because of these schedules we need to keep the presentations to 5 – 10 minutes each with the hopes of wrapping up the meeting by 3:00.

Lincoln Haymarket Development Corporation Request: Diane Cunningham of the LHDC and Angie Tucci of Telesis, Inc. and Marketing Chair of LHDC presented. Diane stated that the LHDC is a 22 member volunteer board made up of community leaders, area businesses, property owners and City and DLA officials and employs two part-time employees. For the last 30 years, LHDC has successfully provided thousands of guided tours to out of town and local tourists. The use of the walking brochure has been an essential component to these tours. In 2015 a new brochure was designed and produced with a grant from the Lancaster County Visitors Improvement Fund. The planned objective is to work with Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA) and Historic Preservation Planner, Ed Zimmer to add a “Haymarket’s Historic Neighbors” insert to the walking tour brochure and to promote the tour with expanded tours, advertising and another brochure printing. The insert will feature the Government Square Block as well as the Terminal Building and Mission Arts Building. This insert would be 8 ½ x 11 and folded and inserted into the current tour guide. The request is for \$7,871.48 which covers the printing of 3,000 additional brochures; 4,000 inserts; Historical Society images, Vanity URL and full page ad for the Lincoln Visitors guide for 2018. Ireland asked if anyone had any questions and Schorr asked why an insert and not attach it to the brochure and Diane said it would be used separately as well as an insert. Wheaton asked what is happening with the development with the app they talked about when LHDC was here two years ago. Cunningham stated that the vanity page was developed at haymarkettour.org and an app is still on the radar for a self-guided tour to transition to a recorded tour. Tucci stated that DLA does the marketing work and they are making it more of a mobile friendly website than an app. Maul thanked them for the acknowledgement of the Lancaster County Visitors Improvement Fund on the inside of the cover of the brochure. Question was asked if the two pieces will become one and the answer was it was possible to become part of the Historic Haymarket Booklet. The Haymarket tour takes about 1 ½ hours and will work with DLA to determine if it is best to combine or keep it separate. Dickerson asked how much traffic does the website generate and if the booklet could be put on the website. Maul stated that the tour market is still print heavy and take alongs are more valuable; especially with conference groups, school children, etc. Maul stated that a decision would be made today regarding the VPC’s recommendation to the County Board. The presenters were excused as well as Jeff Cunningham due to conflict of interest and Ireland opened the floor for further

discussion. Perrett stated she needed to go to the Visitor's Center more often and Dickerson asked where you sign up for a tour. Maul stated you contact LHDC or the Visitor Center who contacts Ed Zimmer. Perrett asked if there were placards on each building and Feyerherm stated that there are.. Ireland asked for a motion and Perrett moved to recommend approval of the request in the amount of \$7,871.48 for the creation of "Haymarket's Historic Neighbor" inserts; Dickerson seconded. Motion was carried.

Lincoln Children's Museum Request: Marissa Gill Keyzer addressed the group and thanked them for their previous support and the importance of this support to LCM and to the community. Keyzer passed around two handouts; one featuring a 3-story cuckoo clock. Keyzer stated that more than 70% of the museum has been renovated in the last six years and they are very proud of their new exhibits. They have experienced a 7% increase in attendance which is a record attendance and have over 6,000 member families. LCM is now ready to showcase what they have done in the last three years by using 360° technology on their website. The request is for \$2,200 to create a 360° view of each floor of the museum to post on their website and link to Google Maps, so that anyone who is searching for activities to do in downtown Lincoln can take a virtual walk through the building to see everything they have for families. Keyzer brought up a website featuring the Denver, CO Children's Museum as an example. The Denver example is not quite as seamless as they would like and are considering the vendor that did the one for the Pinnacle Bank Arena which is a great one. A 360° view is a much better representative of what is in the building; simple pictures can't convey the true message that it is vibrant and engaging. The vendor can attach it to Google Maps as well as the website. The filming will be done without children in the building to alleviate any privacy concerns or legal issues. The new website was uploaded last week and this feature will be easy to add. Ireland opened the floor for questions and Perrett asked if it played with the virtual reality (VR) stuff and Keyzer said she would have to check with the vendor. Maul stated that if LCM is ready to start telling the story and market and advertise – all you want is money for technology. Keyzer stated that they are working with Unanimous Marketing and money for marketing and advertising was built into the cost of the exhibits. Dickerson stated that if the attendance is growing is it doing so by just word of mouth? Keyzer stated that the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration kicked it off and the hot weather this summer brought more people indoors. Ireland stated that support from the Lancaster County Improvement fund will need to be shown so the public knows and Keyzer stated a logo would be easy to add. Ireland asked if there was any more discussion. Perrett said this will probably be a trend she faces the same issues with the websites at Runza. Wheaton stated that his hotel group is going away from using the 360° views and using more still shots as people use their phones. Morgan stated he does look at the 360° views when he is traveling. Ireland asked for a motion and Wheaton made the motion to recommend approval of the \$2,200 grant request to cover the cost of the 360° videos for the Lincoln Children's Museum. Morgan seconded and motion carried. Perrett asked about the history of previous requests by LCM and Eagan said he would look that up after the next presentation.

The Stage Theater Request: Ireland welcomed back Robert Wamsley, President of The Stage Theater and Rex Wamsley, Accountant. Robert started a video of various performances held at The Stage Theater to include The Drowsy Chaperone, Dogfight, and The Secret Garden. To date there has been over 21,000 in attendance from 62 counties; 28 states and 17 foreign countries. The Stage Theater advertises in 35 states and received a 5 star rating on Facebook and is the only theater around to receive such rating. Hitting the 2,000 likes mark on Facebook has exceeded other local community theaters. Robert drew attention to the video that featured the turn table that was obtained via Visitor Improvement

Funds. The grant assistance requests today includes \$1,588 to improve the attraction's use, by purchasing mobile lighting to increase visibility of actors on stage; \$660 to purchase portable interior signage to increase the attraction's visibility for potential customers; \$1,585 to expand and improve the existing attraction's sound system with individual lapel microphones; \$5,816 to expand and improve permanent use, by purchasing portable, stage and theatrical supporting materials and infrastructure; and \$350 to expand and improve permanent use, portable handicap seating to facilitate handicap accessibility. Ireland asked if there were any questions and Dickerson asked what was the most crucial need on Attachment 2 of the grant document. Wamsley stated that to expand and improve the existing attraction's sound system and second to expand and improve the theatrical supporting materials and infrastructure and the mobile lights is very important as well. Maul stated that he has heard on numerous occasions that a new facility was being planned and asked where were they in that regard. Rex stated that they are working it out and architects are drawing the plans. Dickerson asked if everything would be transferrable to the new facility and it was stated it could. Schorr asked about the affordability of the ticket prices and Wamsley stated they are \$16 for adult; \$14 for student and \$11 for youth and the goal is to keep it affordable. If the ticket cost is kept low the more people can attend. Season ticket holders get \$1.00 off the ticket prices and can pick their seats. Morgan asked if they have ever partnered with hotels or restaurants and Robert stated they tried and don't have the manpower to do follow-ups. Also, Holiday Inn Express sponsored one of the plays and there were hard feelings by other hotels that they had an exclusive hotel. A sponsorship is \$1,500 and covers show rights. Eagan asked if the building is still owned by Bob Carter and if so, he is not a nonprofit. Rex said the building was owned by Carter who is for-profit. Rex stated people have said they would give them the land and the bank has guaranteed funding for their own building. They will probably come back within a year to this group for a request toward the new building. Hickman wants The Stage Theater to stay and is building a \$3M community center. Fellers asked who is doing the drawing and what is the difference in capacity. The Wamsleys could not recall the architect but said their office was by Bread & Cup in the Haymarket. It initially will start with 300 seats with expansion to 1,000; right now can seat 122. Fellers asked how they determine the number of requests for tickets. By using Ticket Assistant they can see a waiting list and determine if they need to extend the performances into additional weekends. Ireland dismissed the Wamsleys and asked if there was any further discussion and asked Eagan his opinion. Eagan stated it is the County Attorney's opinion that the location has to be owned by a governmental entity or a nonprofit in order to receive a grant. Eagan went on to say that it was probably wrong last time The Stage Theater was granted funds for removable items since the building was still not owned by a non-profit or governmental entity. Maul stated that now we have a legal opinion. Eagan brought up the grant request of the subfloor used at Speedway Village; however, like equipment, the floor was movable; but does not qualify under State Statute. Equipment approved last time was not right and is problematic. Eagan stated that we would like to support a new facility if it is a nonprofit, but the legal opinion for this request supercedes any vote. Ireland asked if a vote should be taken. Schorr stated that we buy equipment all the time like machines to feed turtles. Cunningham stated that supplies or equipment does not improve the current facility. Eagan said it could be twisted as promotional. Fellers asked if it was a City or State statute and Eagan responded State. Maul stated that the VPC guidelines were being reviewed and there will probably be discussion at the February meeting. Ireland asked for a motion. Wheaton stated they needed to work for the purchase of their own building because at this point the grant does not qualify. Wheaton stated the motion should be to deny due to the building not being owned by a governmental agency or nonprofit. Further discussion included Schorr asking Maul the cost of the new building and Maul stated that he didn't know if they were far enough along. Ireland then made the motion to deny grant application because it is not authorized by statute. Wheaton seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ireland stated that the next request would be heard and then the ½% tax request would be heard due to time.

Nebraska Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association Request: Ireland welcomed Mark Landis. Landis talked about Lincoln Race Course's (LRC) place in Nebraska racing saying existing permanent facilities are in Grand Island and runs races for 10 weeks and in Columbus which runs five weeks each year. Horsemen's place in Omaha is growing much like Lincoln and runs two weekends each year with about five races per day. LRC currently races one day each year with two races that day. LRC is a relatively new but growing facility that ultimately aims to replace State Fair Park. LRC is rebuilding racing on the grounds from scratch and is located in the southwest corner of Lincoln where Highway 77 meets the bypass of Denton Road. LRC has held racing since 2014 and is showing strong growth. The immediate expansion is to extend the track segment by segment and continue growth in local and regional market. Long term plan is to complete full racetrack and racing infrastructure and make Lincoln racing an annual destination like Omaha. Full realization will follow by reintroducing Lincoln as a standing part of the Nebraska racing circuit and make the race course a permanent seasonal attraction. Since 2014 attendance at the live race has more than doubled. The short-term goal is to continue building the racetrack while simultaneously growing interest in Lincoln racing. The grant proposal asks for assistance in the amount of \$10,000 by adding another segment to the track which will extend it from three furlongs to four. One more furlong increases safety and allows the horses to have more room. Landis also discussed the economic impact of adding one more furlong at LRC and the interest in Lincoln racing. Ireland opened the floor for questions and Wheaton asked if the building is open every day for simulcast and Landis said yes and they hold corporate events there as well as parties such as birthdays, bridal showers, etc. Eagan stated that according to State Statute, no proceeds shall be used where pari mutual wagering is being conducted. Ireland asked for a motion and Dickerson made the motion to deny the request because it was not in compliance with the State Statute, Morgan seconded. Wheaton abstained as the same person who owns the land for his hotel, owns the land for the race course. Motion carried.

½% CVB/Event Promotion Tax Request: Maul stated that in order for the CVB to continue their bid process in attracting new events and securing existing relationships with organizers, they are asking for the approved funds be released to the CVB. There are past and existing fees that need to be paid. The new request for the ½% lodging tax (July, 2016 – October, 2016 collection) will cover \$155,000 for USA Roller Sports and \$20,000 for World Ten Pin Bowling for a total request of \$175,000. Maul presented a sample motion as part of the request document. Ireland asked for a motion and Morgan made the motion that the VPC determines the facilities in Lancaster County as adequate and approves the use of improvement fund dollars for promotion as presented by the CVB in the amount of \$175,000. It was seconded by Dickerson and motion carried. Maul thanked the group and stated that these funds will help keep Lincoln competitive.

Approval of August 17, 2016 Minutes:

Ireland asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the August 17, 2016, meeting. Morgan made the motion and Wheaton seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of October Financials:

Kalkwarf presented the CVB Profit and Loss Statement for the period of July through October, 2016 stating income was \$566,620 which is 100% to budget as 1/12 is projected each month so will always be

budgeted amount. Expenses were \$682,542 leaving a Net Income of (\$115,722). Expenses were over budget due to the USA Roller Sports and World Ten Pin Tournament. Ireland made the motion to approve the financials as presented and it was seconded by Dickerson. Motion carried unanimously.

Directors Report: Maul stated that July lodging tax collections at \$408,034.29 were the best ever at 16% above the previous all-time high. This was due to USARS, World Tenpin, Cornhusker State Games, Hobbytown and Jehovah's Witnesses and other conventions. September beat that record at \$437,545 and Maul said they are very happy about how it is going. Maul stated that growth continues in the Sports Tourism market. The need for additional fields continues and there are 3 -4 groups interested in development as well as the City. Maul attended the UMCVB Conference in Rapid City, SD in September and they are asking what Lincoln is doing to be successful. Tracie Simpson and Kelsey Bousquet attended the Nebraska Travel Conference in October in Gering and the CVB has continued outreach via radio stations such as KLIN, KFOR, BOTT Radio which is a Christian radio station and upcoming on KZUM. Maul reported that Lincoln Calling continues to grow into an even bigger event that encompasses music, art, comedy, YPG and more. Lincoln was selected to host NSAA Unified Bowling in December at Sun Valley Lanes. Unified Bowling which is when they pair people with abilities with disabled individuals. Lincoln did not get the bid for State Games of America in 2019 (went to Hampton Roads, VA) or 2021(went to Ames, IA); the goal of the organization is to move these games around. Maul reported that the search for the Nebraska Tourism director continues and a final four have been selected. Interviews are being setup for each and hope to have a decision by week's end. Work on the 2017 Solar Eclipse continues. The eclipse will be Monday, August 21 at 1:02 p.m. for 90 seconds. The Lincoln Saltdogs will have a noon-start game that day and will have a total darkness delay of game. A website has been set up at [www.neclipse17.com](http://www.neclipse17.com). Maul stated that a committee has been set up to review grant request guidelines. This committee includes Eagan, Schorr, Dickerson, Ireland and Maul. The committee will do their best to have something sent out to this committee by December to be finalized at the February, 2017 meeting. The NSAA Volleyball tournament was successful again this year and the CVB will bid on future years in January as our three-year contract is up. Grand Island will likely submit a bid as well as potentially Omaha with Creighton as host. Maul stated the 2017 Visitors Guide production is ongoing and received a copy to proof today. The discussion of a Visitors Center Interactive signage via the window continues and would be a good medium for holiday ideas and engagement via video in an effort to increase traffic.

Feyerherm reported on the 2016 sales leads and proposals to date saying there were 134 sales for 61,745 room nights of which 82% are regional/national and 79% is new business. Thirty-one proposals have been submitted for consideration and there are currently 48 leads pending for 29,850 room nights. Feyerherm also reported that 83 events have been booked for 28,765 rooms of which 64% is regional/national with 65% new business. The CVB staff is pushing for decisions on outstanding bids. 2017 is lining up to be the best year ever. Fall is the busy season for tradeshow with seven shows attended between August 25 and October 27. Feyerherm has been meeting individually with all hotel general managers conducting surveys to see how best their needs can be met. Enhancements have been made to Lincoln.org with an enhanced photo library; several organizations have asked for improved photos. Social media is being added to all profiles. Bombeck received his Certified Sports Event Executive certification in October. This certification provides national clout when bidding on events. The CVB co-sponsored a Heritage Clubs forum with Omaha and Grand Island and Bousquet will be attending the American Bus Association Annual Convention & Tradeshow in January.

Schorr asked what week-long hockey events could be available to bid on with the new facility in

Lincoln. Feyerherm stated that we lost the bid for USA Ice Skating as they need two rinks and side-by-side is preferred in which the John Breslow Ice Center can't provide. Maul reported that youth and peewee hockey is strong and Maul has told the City Council we need two sheets of ice. Feyerherm said that they have contacted Lorenz at the PBA; however, the arena has to rent compressors so it doesn't make it financially feasible unless it is an event of significant size.

New Business:

Ireland referred to the 2017 meeting date schedule in the packets.

Adjourn: There being no further discussion Ireland thanked everyone for their time and made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Morgan. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.