

Visitors Promotion Committee
February 10, 2016
MINUTES

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

Staff attending: Derek Feyherherm, Jeff Maul, Kyle Fischer, Ron Kalkwarf

Guests: Kelsey Bousquet, Claire Cuddy, Derek Bombeck

Call to Order and Introductions: Julie Lattimer called the meeting to order at 1:35p.m. and introductions were made.

CVB Staff Overview and Presentations: Maul asked the three salespeople from the Convention & Visitors Bureau to give updates on each of their markets. Derek Bombeck has been with the CVB for 2.5 years and focuses on the sports market. Prior to the CVB, he worked for UNL Athletics for 10 years. The most recent successes in his market were the 2015 State Games of America and 2016 NORCECA Women's Olympic Volleyball Qualifier. Upcoming events include World Ten Pin Bowling and its Youth Championship which will bring 300 participants from over 40 countries. Major League Triathlon will also be coming to Lincoln. This is their pilot year and Lincoln is one of four locations they selected. A few events that are on his radar are the Wrestling Olympic Trials in 2017 and National Senior Pro Rodeo which has been in Las Vegas. He mentioned that he travels frequently to conferences and one that the CVB is exploring bidding to host the S.P.O.R.T.S Conference in 2017 or 2018. Maul asked what challenges he faces in his market. Bombeck stated that Lincoln has done well with larger multi-sport events but growth is needed in the youth sports market. Fellers asked what the biggest need is to make this happen. Bombeck stated Lincoln needs youth sports complexes, including one for baseball that needs to be a minimum of eight lighted, preferably turf fields. A challenge currently is access to the existing fields in Lincoln as Lincoln Parks and Recreation generally uses them for their own programs. Fellers followed up by asking if tournaments are willing to use multiple locations for which Bombeck stated multiple venues are not preferred by planners as many cities are building complexes that can accommodate everything at one site. Fellers asked how these new ones are being built. Maul said the model is a combination of public/private partnerships and Lincoln needs to be careful how any new complexes are modeled. Fellers asked for an update on the status of Speedway Village. Bombeck stated that there have been changes in management and his understanding is that the soccer fields currently cannot be promoted for use until 2017 due to grass having just been planted.

Claire Cuddy stated that she has been with the CVB for two years and was a graduate of UNL's Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management program. She interned with the CVB during that time and later went on to manage events for Doane College and Wilderness Ridge before coming to the CVB. She focuses on the social, military, education, religious and fraternal markets (SMERF). The largest of these two is education and religious. Women of Faith will be back in Lincoln in the fall which was a success as they changed their format and were only looking at Tier 1 cities. They selected Lincoln due to previous ticket sales and past experiences here. Her goal for 2016 is to bring both a youth and men's ministry to Lincoln. Conversations have been ongoing with Promise Keepers however they have had numerous personnel changes which has delayed these talks. Cuddy commented

that these religious markets successes have been in part due to working with Tom Lorenz and SMG. She commented that SMG has been flexible with their calendar and with pricing. Cuddy said the youth ministry market has been evolving nationally and she is working to bring the Salvation Army Youth Council to Lincoln. Maul asked her to discuss the Religious Advisory Committee (RAC). Cuddy said this committee was formed by CVB and is comprised of multiple denominations. She has narrowed the focus of the committee and it now has been a good resource for women's ministry events.

Kelsey Bousquet said she has been with the CVB for 2.5 years and also was a graduate of UNL's hospitality program and interned at the CVB during that time. She focuses on state associations, hobby and the group tour markets. A big part of working the state association market is relationship building. As a result of her efforts, Nebraska Health Care Association is bringing their state convention back to Lincoln to Pinnacle Bank Arena. They previously outgrew meeting space in Lincoln and moved their event to LaVista. Another relationship she focused on was Nebraska Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Their board opened up the bidding process to other cities however Lincoln was successful in keeping them here through at least 2018. Bousquet recently attended the American Bus Association tradeshow in Kentucky and had appointments with over 20 group tour operators. The main challenge with the group tour market is getting the planners convinced to spend more time in Lincoln versus driving through on the interstate. She has been working with the Nebraska Tourism Commission and other CVB partners to create multi-day itineraries to sell. Bousquet commented that the hobby market is the broadest and one of the events she has been focusing on is the Nebraska Cattlemen's Ball.

Approval of November Minutes: Lattimer asked for a motion to approve the November minutes. Perrett made the motion and it was seconded by Morgan. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of January Financials:

Kalkwarf presented the CVB profit and loss statement for the period of July 2015 through January 2016, stating that total income was \$1,191,901 which is higher than budget due to State Games of America room rebates and USA Volleyball which both have offsetting expenses. Expense variances of note include utilities are lower due to the budget being established before moving to the new space. Total expenses were \$1,192,093 for a net loss of \$122. Lattimer asked for a motion to approve the financials as presented which was done by Dickerson and seconded by Wheaton. Motion carried.

Director's Report:

Maul reported the NORCECA Women's Olympic Volleyball Qualifier was a success with 6,322 in attendance on Thursday, 6,501 on Friday and 10,213 on Saturday. This success opens the door to more Olympic caliber events.

Maul has been working with Bruce Bohrer, the Chamber's lobbyist as well as Andy Pollock, lobbyist for the Nebraska Travel Association (NETA) Two bills being watched include LB562, the Nebraska Treasures Act that would create four districts in Nebraska for funding purposes of tourism development projects. It will most likely not pass due to the fiscal note attached. The second bill is LB1105, Craft Brew Advisory Board that would give oversight to craft breweries to the Nebraska Tourism Commission which would manage marketing dollars. There are concerns in the state as to why the Nebraska Tourism Commission would oversee this instead of the Nebraska Liquor Commission or other appropriate organizations.

Lincoln hosted the January meeting of Nebraska Association of Convention & Visitors Bureau (NACVB). The CVB did a site tour for Omaha based Turner Events & Marketing which primarily has only focused on Omaha facilities. Conversations are ongoing on partnerships for the Be A Tourist Campaign. KLKN-Channel 8 may be a partner of this program with an anchor such as Rod Fowler doing segments at each of the attractions. Maul also stated he does weekly radio spots with BOTT Radio, a Christian based station, which airs during both morning and afternoon drive time.

Planning continues for the August 21, 2017 Solar Eclipse event. Potential partnerships include UNL Astronomy Department and the Homestead National Monument in Beatrice who is anticipating 10-15,000 visitors. Maul asked Wheaton and Morgan if they have seen hotel bookings for this. Wheaton said he was unsure without looking at his reservations system. Ireland stated there are potential partnerships with the state to coincide with the Sesquicentennial celebration. Maul commented that planning is underway for the Good Life Halfsy, with adjustments to the route and overall growth of the event. Maul stated that the attendance at the Visitors Center was steady in 2015.

Maul stated that in the next ten days, a survey will be sent to attractions asking for new construction and renovation/expansions plans. The results will be shared with the VPC and County Board to help identify potentials asks of the improvement fund over the next three to five years. Maul commented that discussions are ongoing about growing and promoting a strong food/drink culture in Lincoln. He has been working with Kevin Shinn and Dan Parsons on how to capitalize on this movement.

There is an opening on the Nebraska Tourism Commission board and Maul has submitted an application. Schorr asked if this would be an appointment by the Governor which Maul stated it would be.

Maul said there are continued discussion on the need for additional sports fields and indoor/outdoor sport complexes. There was discussion on the need for new demand generators due to continued building of hotels in Lincoln. Fischer asked Wheaton and Morgan what their take is on the continued hotel developments. Wheaton stated that he sees all the hotels being constructed as select service brands which Lincoln currently does not need more of. What is needed in his opinion is another full service hotel in downtown Lincoln but full-service hotels are hard for developers to get behind in a market the size of Lincoln. Morgan agreed with Wheaton's assessment and commented that he feels there is a saturation of hotel rooms now. Wheaton stated there was a surge of development with the arena but the current supply has exceeded the need. Wheaton commented that economy and independent hotels will suffer as a result of the hotel developments, including five hotels opening in less than two years; all with the same amenities. Feyerherm stated that in a 12 month period from June 2015 to June 2016, there will be a 15% increase in room supply in Lincoln. Wheaton stated that his owners were surprised at the developments that occurred between when they first started looking at Lincoln to now. Maul stated that unemployment in Lincoln and the new supply has created workforce issues for hotels. Wheaton stated that he has had a constant need for a minimum of two full time employees since his property opened.

The CVB continues to do presentation to civic clubs and UNL's HRTM program. There will be another Gieger Media Tour in May with writers being in Lincoln for 1.5 days. The CVB and Nebraska Sports Council has submitted an intent to bid letter for the 2019 and 2021 State Games of America.

Upcoming events of note include the NSAA State Basketball tournaments, Stand Up Tour, Guardians of

Freedom Airshow, Cattlemen's Ball, Benevolent & Patriotic Order of the Does Annual Convention, USA Roller Sports (nearly one month of competition), World Ten Pin Bowling Championship, Major League Triathlon and Women of Faith.

Feyerherm gave a sales update. In 2015, there were 157 sales leads for 80,993 rooms bid out. A total of 94 events were booked for 60,775 room nights. The market with the biggest growth was the religious market that comprised of 23% of all room nights booked in 2015. Feyerherm stated there was a 31% decline in room nights lost to other cities which he attributed to work Kelsey Bousquet has done in the state association market. For 2016, fourteen sales leads have been issued along with four proposals. Six events have been booked for 594 room nights. Feyerherm then gave an update on the status of contracts for events where Lincoln has been selected. The CVB attended the American Bus Association tradeshow and Kansas City Boat & Sportshow in January. The next tradeshow will be the National Association of Sports Commissions Symposium in April. Feyerherm gave an update on the Cities of the Big Ten organization. Due to turnover at several DMO's, the organization is at a standstill, with an upcoming conference call to discuss the future of the organization. Feyerherm also commented that there has been increased membership with the Lincoln Lodging Association. The association is building a new website and will be partnering with JackRabbit to handle online bookings.

New Business: Maul stated the Lied Center sent a letter to the County Board and CVB advising that they will be resubmitting their funding request in October. Eagan and the County Board drafted a letter asking the Lied Center to outline their ongoing plan for facility maintenance. Maul stated that the Nebraska Tourism Commission sent a letter to attractions that outlined the result of a study on best practices for the use of lodging tax collection. Eagen stated nothing in the letter showed wrong doing with Lancaster County's practices. Dickerson stated the sample grant application looked similar to what is used by the VPC. Eagen noted that a guideline that states that improvement funds cannot be used for structural needs in existing facilities. Eagan is unsure how this could be enforced along with a guideline stating that there must be matching funds for grant requests. Eagen commented that the Nebraska Tourism Commission cannot force the guidelines. Maul mentioned that the letter stated that the recommendations were best practices and that other communities were looked at heavily when composing this letter due to good established guideline. Maul thanked the VPC and the County Board for work throughout the years to fine-tune the grant guidelines for Lancaster County. Ireland commented that it was interesting money was spent on this study however multiple practices outlined were counterintuitive. Ireland stated that many museums in outstate Nebraska were not aware of the availability of improvement funds or don't have the relationship with their county boards like the attractions in Lincoln and Lancaster County do.

Lattimer asked if there was any other new business to bring up. Ireland reminded the VPC that the Nebraska History Museum will reopen on April 1st with four new temporary exhibits. She stated that the third floor won't open until later in the year. The museum will have an exciting new front/façade that was made possible through to the requirement by the 1% for Arts law.

Eagen asked Maul to give an update on the financial status of the NORCECA event. Maul stated that income exceeded expectations and there would not be a need to access the \$275,000 the county board allocated.

Adjourn: There being no further discussion Lattimer adjourned the meeting at 2:46 p.m.