

Visitors Promotion Committee
August 19, 2015
MINUTES

In attendance: Kerry Eagan, Julie Lattimer, Roland Morgan, Dave Wheaton, Colette Wear, Lynne Ireland, Roma Amundson, Trent Fellers, and Michelle Waite

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

Guests: Lynn Johnson, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Sarah Hartzell and Kevin Abourezk

Call to Order and Introductions: Julie Lattimer called the meeting to order at 1:31pm and introductions were made to include Kevin Abourezk from the Lincoln Journal Star.

Prairie Corridor/Haines Branch Funding Request: Lynn Johnson, Nicole Fleck-Tooze and Sarah Hartzell gave a presentation requesting funds for Phase 2 of the Prairie Corridor on the Haines Branch Project. Johnson gave a brief review of the Lincoln/Lancaster County comprehensive plan that covered the Salt Valley Greenway and connecting corridors. The proposed Prairie Corridor is a key link between Pioneers Park and Spring Creek Prairie, two of Lancaster Country's most valuable resources for tall grass prairie and environmental education. The components to the comprehensive plan include the strategic plan, securing funding and developing public/private partnerships for implementation. Specifically, the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor is a trail and tallgrass prairie passage that is 13 miles long with 10 miles of trails connecting Pioneers Park to the Conestoga Lake Recreation area, Village of Denton, and the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, taking advantage of Lincoln's nationally recognized trail system. The major components of the project include the trail, conservation, research, economic development opportunities, habitat development and education and outreach. This trail would be very different than any other by having nature centers at each end and the many learning opportunities. The economic and community benefits by connecting Lincoln to rural areas and the Village of Denton and holding events is much the same as the Eagle Nacho Ride. This project would increase eco-tourism opportunities with approximately 400,000 visitors annually to Pioneers Park and 14,000 to Spring Creek Prairie; this has the potential to grow substantially once the two resources are connected. The Travel Industry Association of America stated that national trends in recreation between 2006 – 2011 estimated that more than 27 million travelers have taken bicycle vacations. Events such as BRAN are becoming increasingly popular. The draft 2015 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, notes that national trends are that most popular outdoor activities include trails for walking, biking, running and bird watching. A major project component is the economic impact of \$5,950,000. This figure was derived using a state event multiplier of \$350 per room night for 17,000 hotel rooms utilized. It is estimated the number of annual visitors would be 61,000 local and 124,000 outside of Lincoln. The formula used was based off room night potential that was identified in a comparable study of the Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge. A SCORP survey of 3,500 Nebraskans stated that 26% are willing to travel more than 100 miles for outdoor recreation. Outdoor activities Nebraskans participate in are nature, wildlife and other outdoor activities, cycling, hiking, wildlife viewing and visiting nature or interpretive centers. Nebraskans who participate in these activities spend: \$647.39 per year on transportation; \$122.11 per year on trail equipment and \$63.40 per year on wildlife observation equipment. The funding request for the trail component from the VPC is \$90,000 over three years as matching funds to pledge in support of an application to the Nebraska Environmental Trust for \geq \$900,000 for the same period. Phase 2 anticipated or confirmed partners include: City of

Lincoln, Lancaster County, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Village of Denton, Great Plains Trail Network, Recreational Trails Program, UNL School of Natural Resources, Lincoln Parks Foundation, Lincoln Cares, Wachiska Audubon, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Prairie Plains Resource Institute and Nebraska Land Trust. Lattimer asked if anyone had any questions for the group. Fellers asked if the trail could be marketed for a fun run to raise funds and if it was long enough for possibly a marathon. Johnson replied yes with marketing help from the CVB. Johnson also stated the City of Denton is a financial partner committing \$6,500 over three years with the possibility of additional grant money with the next grant cycle. The Prairie Jazz Festival is selling t-shirts as well. Lattimer excused the guests and opened the floor for discussion. Eagan was asked to clarify the balance of the improvement fund to verify if requested funds were available. Eagan stated that the previous grant request from them was finished in 2012 so will not be a conflict. The Event Center contract is completed so funds are adequate to accommodate this request. Waite stated she was impressed with the list of partners and it was obvious they put in a lot of time with applying for grants and obtaining partners. Maul stated eco-tourism is big and this will help activity in Lincoln and will be good for the whole county. Fellers stated a fun run would be easy and quick to organize for this type of trail and it is cheaper as well as streets would not need to be closed. Wheaton asked about the width of the trail and its component and Maul responded it is the typical 8' with crushed limestone. Lattimer stated that the VPC's focus is on tourism first and foremost. Eco-tourism is a positive way to help the environment and this would be an efficient way. Ireland asked the hoteliers what they felt about the estimate for room nights and Wheat and Wear stated they felt the estimate was high. Lattimer stated it might be worth comparing with other like areas. Maul stated maybe the hotels should be polled on how often they are asked for biking information. Waite commented about a bike share the City is working on. Lattimer stated that it appears to be the right thing to do and made the motion to grant the Lincoln Parks Recreation Department \$30,000 per year for three years for the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor project. Motion was seconded by Collette Wear. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of May Minutes: Lattimer asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes of the May meeting and for presentation to the County Board and then asked for a motion to approve such minutes. Wheaton made the motion and it was seconded by Ireland. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of July Financials: Kalkwarf presented the CVB profit and loss statement and reminded everyone that since it is the beginning of the fiscal year, this statement is for the month of July only. Total income is \$158,219 which include room tax bid fees of \$35,000 due to the 2015 State Games of America for which corresponding expense is listed below. Total expenses are \$151,995 and on track leaving a Net Income of \$6,224. Maul stated that most of the activity in the financials was State Games oriented. Lattimer asked for a motion to approve the financial statement as presented which was done by Ireland and seconded by Morgan. Motion carried.

CVB Audit: Ron Kalkwarf presented the CVB Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for December 31, 2013 and 2012. The Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements. The auditor's responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements. The evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate. The year ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted. This audit is just for the Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau and does not include the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Total liabilities and assets for 2013 is \$577,679 and for 2012 is \$706,276. Statement of Activities total revenues for 2013 is \$1,369,623. The total expenses are \$1,420,043. Net assets the

beginning of the year was \$523,336 and the end of the year was \$472,916. Cash flows net cash provided by operating activities is \$36,040 in 2012. Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of the year is \$607,508. Thus, the total for the end of the year is \$471,244. Fellers asked what would be the additional room tax. Maul said the Bureau records room tax revenue base on an annual operating budget approved by the County. Revenue is recorded at 1/12th of the budgeted amount each month. Additional room tax revenue received from the County in excess of the operating budget represents 25% of the additional 2% tax used to fund bid fees from the Visitors Improvement Fund. This revenue is recognized when eligible expenses have been incurred.

Director's Report: Maul began his report with a review of marketing and sales stating there is a lot to talk about. Maul reported a highlight over the last few months was the move to new offices and that Feyerherm played a major role in the move going smoothly, specifically relative to the electronics. July was a busy month at the Visitor Center with 1,385 visitors and 148 telephone inquiries. The Be-A-Tourist campaign wraps up the end of August with great photos being submitted. The 2015 State Games of America created great foot traffic with 800+ reservations made through the housing bureau. Derek and his staff did a great job of meeting people's lodging needs. 15,200 athletes participated from 47 states with 10,000 being from Nebraska making this the largest in its 10 year history. The youngest competitor was nine months (mother carried child during a volkswalk) and the oldest being 89 years. While we don't have accurate numbers it is estimated 1,500 from 15 states attended the closing ceremonies which ended up being an amazing event. Attendees included Alabama soccer players who were boarding a bus immediately following the event and four tennis players from Florida. Because of this success, hosting the 2019 or the 2021 SGOA is being discussed. Maul discussed advertising and marketing efforts saying new ads are due this week for CVB markets. These ads will have a new look. The CVB is also focusing on the Omaha and I-29 markets by doing more in the Omaha hotels. In July, the CVB worked with Bott Radio regarding vacation travel. Plans are being made for staff to attend the UMCVB conference in September. The CVB and Chamber is working with United Airlines "Hemisphere" magazine that is featuring Nebraska communities in a 42 page dossier. Other activities the CVB has been involved include testifying on behalf of the Zoo in favor of expansion and had representation at Zoobilee. The Good Guys car show was a success with 800 – 1000 vehicles. The attendance was not to the level of what the organizers had hoped for and hope to grow that in the future. Maul has been in meetings with the State Tourism Commission regarding securing funds for the World Ten Pin Championships and the Good Life Halfsy. Other projects the CVB is working on include working with Dan Parsons, Kevin Shinn and Jim Ballard to reintroduce food tours and group tour itineraries which will have a local and regional impact as well as local radio support. The Lighthouse Bulb project has had a huge impact on tourism. Colette Wear asked if we had any give-aways for out of town guests such as lapel pins which Maul assured her that we do. Upcoming events of note include the Women of Faith Conference for the second year and 11,000 attendees are expected; SCCA Solo Championships will be September 4 – 11 and 2,000 are expected; Market to Market Relay is October 3 and 2,800 are expected and the Good Life Halfsy is November 1 with 3,000 anticipated. Halfsy growth could continue with course refinements.

Feyerherm reported on sales leads and proposals stating so far for 2015 there have been 101 sales leads for 1,154 room nights of which 82% are for regional or national events; 13 proposals submitted for consideration; 43 leads currently pending for 32,433 room nights and have had multiple site visits for the sports market. Booked business for 2015 to-date include 53 events for 15,541 rooms of which 58% are for regional/national events. Events awarded, but waiting on a contract, include the 2016 Women of Faith Conference, Lincoln is the only city our size to be awarded this event; 2016 Dare 2 Share

conference which is a youth Christian ministry conference; 2016/17 USA Roller Sports which will be held at Speedway Sporting Village with the closure of Pershing – USARS really wanted to be back in Lincoln as it is easier to drive here; 2016/17 Major League Triathlon and 2017 National Junior Disability Championships. Upcoming trade shows include USOC SportsLink, August 25 – 27, Connect Sports, August 27 – 29 as well as Connect Marketplace, August 27-29. Bombeck and Feyerherm will attend these three tradeshows. NASC Market Segment, Colorado Springs, CO, September 28-30; S.P.O.R.T.S. Relationship, Shreveport, LA, October 5-8 and Rejuvenate, Dallas, TX, November 2 – 4 will also be attended. Feyerherm gave miscellaneous updates stating work is still being done on the Cities of the Big Ten with the third annual meeting which will be at the Connect Conference next week. Focus will be on possible tradeshow partnerships and enhancing social media presence. Work is also being done on Lincoln.org/Compete which is a sports dedicated section of the website that launched at 10:30 a.m. today. This section of the website will have filter venues by fifteen sports options. Religious Advisory Council headed by Cuddy, is restructuring and focusing on demographics. Twelve churches met to discuss events relative to women’s ministry. The CVB is also working on data collection for new and existing venues to include the Speedway Sporting Village and Lancaster Event Center, as well three new hotels and five in development for 2016.

New Business:

Lattimer stated there was one item of new business. Ireland’s term will expire and the committee would like her to serve four more years. Ireland agreed and Lattimer asked for a motion to appoint Ireland to the VPC committee for another four-year term. Motion was made by Wheaton and seconded by Morgan. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn:

There being no further discussion Lattimer adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.