

Approved January 20, 2016

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting November 18, 2015

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
FRANK Gallery, Chapel Hill

Board Members Present: Anthony Carey, Libbie Hough, Debbie Hepp, Karen DeHart, Lee Pavao, Michelle Johnson, Mike Gering, Rosemary Waldorf, Penny Rich, Aaron Bachenheimer, Meg McGurk

Not Present: Annette Stone, Lee Storrow, Mark Sherburne, Nitin Khanna, Jill McCullough

Staff attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Marlene Barbera, Allison Chambers

Also present: Linda Prater, Susan Filley, and Gordon Jameson of FRANK Gallery; Heidi Perov Perry, Carrboro Bicycle Coalition; Andrew Strickland, GM Residence Inn; and Shannan Campbell, Economic Development Planner for Town of Hillsborough.

Call to Order

Chairman Anthony Carey called the meeting to order at 8:10 am.

Introductions were given by all.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Cary requested a motion to approve the October 21, 2015 minutes. Lee Pavao so moved, Michelle Johnson seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Guest/host speakers

Chairman Carey recognized Linda Prater, Susan Filley and Gordon Jameson of FRANK Gallery. Gordon Jameson spoke on behalf of FRANK and stated that they are a non-profit organization representing eighty artists of whom twenty-two are members of the cooperative. He shared that the gallery has established a dedicated outreach area within the gallery for art exhibits by students, theater presentations and music and mentioned that there is a video on their website that highlights some of these activities. Part of their mission is to bring something really great to downtown and added that most of their artists are from the area. Member artists have responsibilities to the gallery and receive a consignment on sales of their art while other artists do not have responsibilities and pay a fifty percent commission to the gallery on sales. The majority of large sales are from out of town visitors. Mr. Jameson also noted that they rent the space out for private events.

Chairman Carey recognized Heidi Perov Perry with the Bicycle Coalition to speak on Bicycle Tourism. The coalition's goal is to make the road safer for cycling and to get more people to cycle. Their community outreach has included Fix a Flat events, bike light giveaways, kids rodeos, and participation in the State Bike summit. She requested that we advertise the County and towns as bike friendly destinations. The Coalition would like to see a bike path from Carrboro to Hillsborough and a bike themed art show at the Carrboro Branch Library. Chair Carey and Ms. Paolicelli stressed the importance of promoting bicycle tourism in our community. Michelle Johnson spoke about a bike share feasibility study conducted in Carrboro by UNC students in planning.

Executive Directors Report

Laurie Paolicelli shared that there would be a news conference later in the morning at the Robert and Pearl Seymour Senior Center announcing Orange County's receipt of a \$900,000 Alzheimers Disease Initiative Specialized Support Services grant, which will be administered over the next three years. She recognized the great job Marlene Barbera is doing with strategic planning in determining gaps. The biggest myth in tourism is that "people are going to come anyway." They come here, but they may not necessarily stay here and that is what we are focused on, letting people know what is available here to keep them here. In Mark Sherburne's absence he ask her to share that he is working with Karen McCall at the medical school to get her looped in and send their consultants our way to keep the business in Chapel Hill/Orange County and not send them to Durham. Nitin Khanna is not with us today as he is in India. He would like to see us host a Diwali event (celebration of lights and the New Year). We are in the process of looking at occupancy rates for the past ten years to see what months we need to fill and working with these groups to bring them in during those months. We are also looking at how business in our contiguous counties is affecting us. We have sponsored table this coming Saturday at Equality NC, an important state convention. We are committed to LGBT travel and are seeing an uptick. The nominating committee is working on new appointments to the board and will report at the January meeting.

Budget Update

Penny Rich, Finance Chair, needed to leave the meeting early so Laurie Paolicelli provided the update. At the board's request we are drawing down \$250,000 in fund balance, the majority of which will go to marketing. Our ad agency will attend our January meeting to talk about the market research they have done which revealed that when people arrive at Raleigh Durham International Airport, they really don't know much about Orange County. They are going. Reverend Robert Seymour would like to see a Civil Rights and Historical Museum combined with the Visitors Center at that location. Discussions will continue in the next several years and Rich will keep the Visitors Bureau board updated. Going forward there is still a need for a Visitors Center to provide live customer service.

Sales Report

Marlene Barbera reported that the Visitors Bureau has hired Cyndi Golden as a Sales Specialist on a contract basis for six months starting November 30, 2015. Marlene has arranged a Director of Sales meeting with the county's hoteliers followed by a day of site tours. Marlene has completed a hotel demand survey having received feedback from nine out of fourteen hotels. She found that 77% of hotels do between 11% and 30% group business; their top four markets are (from greatest to least) Social, Educational, Corporate and Sports; top four months of need are December, July, August, and January; Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday are the top need days of the week in almost all months; almost 40% of hotels need weekend business all year; there are distinct differences on need based on market mix of hotels. She has launched holiday promotions running from November 21 through January 3 by asking hotels to send in their holiday promotions that we can put on the Visitors Bureau website. Marlene shared that the feedback she has received from planners is that they want meeting space for 300 to 400 attendees with room for breakout meetings with a hotel attached. Right now we do not have that space in the county. Ms. Paolicelli stated that it is the goal of the upcoming RFP, to determine what space we need from an Economic Development perspective. We hope to work will HVS, who has done work for Durham and Wake Counties. We need empirical data to see what the county's needs are going forward. Rosemary Waldorf suggested keeping local elected officials in the loop so that no one is taken off guard by a recommendation. We need people ready to receive news of the report by building a culture. Chair Carey recommended getting this before Town Council and Commissioners as they are looking at other projects already.

New Business/Roundtable

Chairman Carey acknowledged all for updates in their respective fields:

Chairman Carey recognized Aaron Bachenheimer who noted that UNC now has two Nobel Prize winners on faculty. There is a lot of discussion going on between the town and university regarding public safety. This conversation includes lighting in neighborhoods surrounding the university.

Continuing the round table, Karen DeHart reported that high school soccer championships begin this weekend, with Football championships to follow later in December at Kenan Stadium. Former board member, Rick Strunk, will retire from the association on December 31, 2015.

Chair Carey recognized Andrew Strickland of the Residence Inn. He reported that his property will start a light renovation the week after Christmas with the expectation of completion in February. A change of furniture, lighting, paint, art work, and the addition of some local photography.

Chair Carey recognized Mike Gering, who deferred to Shannan Campbell who reported that the tourism board in Hillsborough now has a full-time staff person. They are designing a new website. The Cloth Mill will be open soon. Laurie Paolicelli inquired if we could meet at the Orange County Public Library and view the Stick Works.

Debbie Hepp shared that the next grant deadline is December first. The Arts Council is beginning a market research project. They are looking into why they do not have more participation in their grants program and artist salons. Sheer Associates will conduct thirty stakeholder interviews beginning in January.

Meg McGurk reported that the Shimmer event will be the second Friday in February. Artists from eight states will participate in the event of lights that will bridge Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Christmas Tree lighting will be the Sunday after Thanksgiving. All event information can be found at downtownchapelhill.com/holidays.

Chair Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:25

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman

Date