

**Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting  
Tuesday, October 16, 2018 – 8:30 a.m.  
Steinhart Lodge – Nebraska City, Neb.**

Commission Chair Deb Loseke called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Commissioners present: Darrin Barner, Heritage Homes of Nebraska; John Chapo, Lincoln Children's Zoo; Roger Dixon, Metropolitan Entertainment; Roger Jasnoch, Kearney Visitors Bureau; Roger Kuhn, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Starr Lehl, Scottsbluff Economic Development; Deb Loseke, Columbus/Platte County CVB; Barry McFarland, Mac's Creek Winery; Ashley Olson, Willa Cather Foundation; Sarah Sortum, Calamus Outfitters; Jeanna Stavas, Whispering Pines Bed and Breakfast

Commission staff present: John Ricks, Jenna Bartja, Micheal Collins, Jenn Gjerde, Heather Hogue and Erin Lenz

**1. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Chapo motioned to approve the agenda. McFarland seconded the motion.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

**2. Open Comment Period for Items on the Agenda**

Loseke opened up the public comment period at 8:33 a.m.

With no members of the public coming forward, Loseke closed the Public Comment Period at 8:34 a.m.

**3. Approval of August 29, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Barner motioned to approve the meeting minutes from August 29, 2018. McFarland seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

**4. Financial Update and Finance Committee Report**

Jasnoch provided a handout of the financial report. The finance committee has worked hard to condense all information on one sheet of paper to show how things flow in and out of the budget. The report is now live and in real time and can be pulled any day of the week.

Kuhn motioned to approve the financial report. Dixon seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

**5. Commission Chair Report**

**A. Election of Commission Officers**

Loseke read the proposed slate for the next group of commission officers. The proposed slate is as follows:

- Chair: Kuhn
- Vice Chair: Jasnoch
- Treasurer: Stavas
- At large: Sortum
- Past Chair: Loseke

Chapo motioned to pass the whole slate as proposed. McFarland seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

## **6. Director's Report**

### **A. Lodging Tax Performance**

Ricks shared that the Lodging tax for fiscal year 2017-2018 was the largest ever. The calendar year lodging tax is up over \$200,000 in August and four of the months in this calendar year were record breaking numbers. Marketing to the people who came for the eclipse, crane promotion and moving marketing dollars out of state are reasons he believes lodging tax is up. The projection that was done last fall for lodging tax said the commission would be up 1.3% and the fiscal year ended up increasing 6.8%. Ricks shared that crane promotion will start in January, and that lodging tax will always be a discussion but in the future there will be other ways to measure success as well.

### **B. Staffing Updates**

Ricks shared that the Commission has a new staff member, Jenna Bartja, Adventure Travel Specialist. Last spring the Commission interviewed for the education coordinator position, a first round of interviews was done in the spring and no one was hired. The position has now been posted again. Additionally Ricks said he asked for a position to help with international marketing. Instead of creating a new position, international marketing will be added to an already existing position with the hope of hiring for an international marketing position in 2020.

### **C. 2019 Denver Stock Show**

Ricks shared that the Commission has entered into a three year commitment with the Denver Stock Show to save around \$10,000. Ricks said he will continue to work with them on how to get Nebraskans involved in their scholarship program.

### **D. Tourism Grant Program Update**

Heather Hogue shared that the 2019 Tourism Grant cycle opens up today. The guidelines are on the website and at the registration table at the conference. The deadline to turn in applications is December 14<sup>th</sup> and the Commission anticipates announcing winners on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Last year the Commission received 70ish requests for \$1.7 million.

### **E. 2018 Travel Counselor Program Report**

Micheal Collins shared a summary of the 2018 travel counselor season. Handouts were provided. The cost of the program fluctuates each season, the total cost for 2017 was \$139,485.77 and the total cost for 2018 was \$133,563.23. For the 2018 season, 34 people were hired and 15 facilities were staffed. Commissioners discussed with Micheal ways to get information from people that travel counselors talk to for marketing purposes and think the program should be looked at to figure out how to do that. Collins shared that the Sarpy County visitor's facility doesn't produce very many visitors and asked if the Commission should keep staffing it. Commissioners said Micheal should provide them with a recommendation about staffing Sarpy County in the future.

## **7. Commission Committee Reports**

### **A. Policy and Procedures Committee**

Kuhn shared that Tourism Markers are in the process of becoming policy, it was submitted to the attorney general's office.

### **B. Tourism Marker Committee**

Jasnoch shared that the Marker Committee submitted their findings last year and that an e-mail will be sent out via NEBTOUR after the conference regarding Tourism Marker information.

### **C. Marketing Committee**

Jenn Gjerde shared that tomorrow after lunch at the conference there will be a full marketing update. The update will cover public relations efforts, passport, social media, website and more. The revenue from selling ads into the travel guide is up significantly this year. Additional measures of research will be used next spring to provide better reports.

## **8. NETA Legislative Update**

Jasnoch shared that lobbyist for NETA, Andy Pollock, will give a presentation tomorrow morning at the conference highlighting legislative bills of interest to the Commission.

The NETA Senator Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup> at NSEA in Lincoln, 605 S 14<sup>th</sup> St. on the fourth floor. Senators will be invited, up to 72 people can be in attendance. More information and a save the date card will be coming up. Jasnoch asks that the industry be there by 11:30 a.m. and Senators will be there at noon.

## **9. New Business**

### **A. Discussion of meeting schedule for 2019.**

Current proposed 2019 schedule:

January 9 – Videoconference (host locations in Lincoln, Kearney, Scottsbluff)

February 26 – Ord

May 14 – Location TBA

August 28 – Grand Island

October 22 – North Platte

Chapo proposed the idea of the May 14 meeting to be in Lincoln at the Children's Zoo. Commissioners discussed whether additional meetings need to be added to the schedule or not and requested that commissioners be updated more frequently. Ricks said the Commission can send a monthly report out to commissioners. The new Executive Committee was tasked with coming up with dashboard items for the Commission to send in monthly updates.

Barner motioned to approve the proposed 2019 Commission meeting dates and have the Executive Committee discuss adding an additional video conference meeting. McFarland seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

### **Adjourn**

At 10:09 a.m. Dixon motioned to adjourn. McFarland seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Chapo, Dixon, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, McFarland, Olson, Sortum, Stavas. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Lenz.