

Nebraska Tourism Commission Videoconference Meeting
Wednesday, January 9, 2019 – 10:00 a.m.

Nebraska Tourism Commission
Nebraska State Office Building
301 Centennial Mall South, 1st Floor
Lincoln, NE 68509

City of Scottsbluff (9:00am MST)
2525 Circle Drive
Scottsbluff, NE 69361

ESU10
76 Plaza Blvd, Room A
Kearney, NE 68845

Mid-Plains Community College South Campus
601 W. State Farm Road, Room 141
North Platte, NE 69101

Commission Chair Roger Kuhn called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Commissioners present: John Chapo, Lincoln Children's Zoo; 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, Callie Austad, Jenna Bartja, Micheal Collins, Jenn Gjerde, Heather Hogue, Karen Kollars, Erin Lenz, Alisha Simonson

1. Approval of Meeting Agenda

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

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

2. Open Comment Period for Items on the Agenda

Kuhn opened up the public comment period at 10:08 a.m.

Lisa Burke, Executive Director of North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau thanked the commissioners and Nebraska Tourism staff for stepping out of their comfort zone and trying something new with the videoconference meeting. Additionally, she thanked NTC for their continued involvement at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Kuhn closed the public comment period at 10:09 a.m.

3. Approval of October 16, 2018 Meeting Minutes

McFarland motioned to approve the meeting minutes from October 16, 2018. Sortum seconded the motion.

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

4. Financial Update and Finance Committee Report – Commissioner Stavas

Stavas said the finance committee will continue working to standardize financial reports to review with committee members and commissioners.

For the 2018 calendar year, half of the 10 months through October set all-time records for lodging tax. February, March, May, August, September were record-setting months. In addition, 9/10 months were either all-time records or second highest. The first ten months of 2018 are currently up 5.7% over 2017.

Jasnoch motioned to approve the financial report. Loseke seconded the motion.

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

5. Commission Chair Report – Commissioner Kuhn

The Omaha World-Herald published more than 180,000 stories in 2018 and visitors clicked on those stories over 1 million times. In 2018, readers ranked Nebraska’s new tourism tagline the #1 story of the year.

The Official Not-At-All What You Thought State Travel Guide is off the press and being distributed. The messaging in the guide is consistent with the rest of the campaign.

Kuhn will be asking commissioners for recommendations on committee assignments. He does not need to reassign committees. There are four committees, if any of the commissioners have any interest in joining a committee, send your interest to Commissioner Kuhn. Kuhn will give committee assignments at the next meeting in February.

6. Director’s report and NTC Project Updates

A. Lodging Tax Performance

Ricks says the increase in lodging tax dollars is a really good sign, as it is the tourism commission’s only source of funding. He will continue to monitor and give reports.

B. Staffing Updates

Ricks shared that the Commission has a new staff member, Callie Austad, Industry Relations and Education Coordinator. Callie will be focusing on the Nebraska Tourism Conference, monthly webinars, relations with organizations like the Nebraska Community Foundation, Restaurant Association, etc. and helping to pull all of the segments of the industry together.

C. Strategic Plan

Ricks says the current strategic plan in place is lengthy and needs to be more actionable, brief, concise and reflect what the industry wants. Ricks is talking to 2-3 other organizations about their strategic plan. There will most likely be a decision by the February commission meeting on who will do the new strategic plan. Ricks would like to have the whole thing put together to have available at the 2019 Nebraska Tourism Conference in North Platte. An addendum might be provided for what is currently required to be covered in the plan.

D. Final Report from 2018 Tourism Conference

Nebraska Tourism made money from the 2018 Tourism Conference - \$7767.99. The budget was \$25,000 for the 2018 conference, the sponsorship goal was \$32,000 and actual sponsorship money was \$35,000. Nebraska City was a new location for the conference and was very well attended. The governor attended the awards banquet along with a couple of state senators.

E. 2018 Annual Report

A draft of the annual report was put on the site on December 31st but the Nebraska Tourism Commission staff is continuing to go through it and add additional information before a version is printed. A final printed version will be available for the February 1st Senator's Luncheon.

F. 2019 Denver Stock Show Progress

All of the visuals, including banners, for the stock show booth are new and based on the new campaign. Vladimir Jones entered into a 3-year contract with the National Western Stock Show for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021. It is a \$41,300, 3-year contract and \$10,000 was saved by entering into a multi-year contract. All of the new TV commercials are playing at the stock show and the testicle festival ad is debuting in the program booklet.

G. 2019 Agri/Eco Tourism Workshop

The 2019 Agri/Eco Tourism Workshop is February 22-24 in Ord. The next commission meeting is planned for Tuesday afternoon of the Agri/Eco Tourism Workshop at Bootleg Brewers in Taylor. On Wednesday, there will be two buses for ranch tours of Comstock Lodge, Calamus Outfitters and Rowse's 1+1. Wednesday night will be the Taste & Feel of Nebraska event for attendees to experience Nebraska food, drink and local products. Thursday will include sessions at the Trotter Convention Center in Ord. On Thursday night the Center for Rural Affairs will do a skit with Pizza Palace from Burwell catering.

Commissioners should inform Karen Kollars which dates they will be attending so she can get lodging set up. All information can be found online and brochures will be sent out shortly.

7. Commission Committee Reports

A. Policy and Procedures Committee – Commissioner Kuhn

Rules and regulations for both the commission grant program and tourism marker program has been approved by the Governor's Office and will be on the website soon.

B. Tourism Marker Committee – Commissioner Jasnoch

There are no active tourism marker applications at this time.

C. Marketing Committee

Ricks said web traffic has been doing great in the new year. Traffic has been up from January 1st to now.

The new campaign received over \$7.1 million in publicity value after it was announced. The campaign was talked about by the Today Show, Late Night with Stephen Colbert, Forbes, CNN, ABC Today, All Things Considered, LIVE with Kelly and Ryan and more. The Nebraska Tourism Commission sent Kelly and Ryan branded mugs that they used on a recent show.

NTC has been receiving a lot of requests for “Nebraska. Honestly. It’s not for everyone” merchandise. Under state statute, Nebraska Tourism cannot currently sell merchandise. NTC is working on a solution for this. The logo is trademarked and a cease and desist letter has been drafted. There hasn’t been a reason to use it yet, but NTC can ask places to stop using the logo if needed.

Starting Monday, January 14, NTC will kick off the crane campaign in out-of-state markets. The campaign will utilize TV, video and social media and will run through mid-march. The out-of-state markets include Denver, Kansas City, Sioux Falls, Topeka and Wichita. On Thursday, January 17th, the Nebraska Tourism Commission will have an in-market event in Denver focused on the crane migration. The goal of this event is to invite Denver-based journalists and tell them about Nebraska and the crane migration in hopes that it will generate media coverage.

In regard to the budget for the spring campaign, Ricks says they are working on drawing money from the reserve down to put it in market instead. There is currently \$1 million in the reserve. The commission board has said they want a cushion of \$500,000. NTC is looking to increase media spend and hoping to add in the following markets: Minneapolis, Colorado Springs, Oklahoma City and Rapid City. Kuhn said he is all for trying to get money into the marketplace, especially with the momentum surrounding Nebraska right now with the new campaign.

8. NETA Legislative Update – Commissioner Jasnoch

Today is the first day of the legislative session. There are 13 new senators. February 1st is the NETA Legislative Luncheon at 11:30 a.m. at the NSEA facility. If you haven’t RSVP’d yet, please do so through the information NETA has sent out. NETA will be starting their weekly conference call starting Monday, January 14th at 4 p.m. NETA has heard from 1/3rd of Senators for the luncheon so far. The NSEA facility is limited to 75 people.

9. New Business

A survey was done after the October commission meeting with feedback from commissioners on how many meetings there should be in the future, where meetings should be, etc. Kuhn and the Executive Committee will assess the results from the survey sent out.

A. Upcoming Meetings

February 26 – Bootleg Brewers in Taylor, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

May 14 – TBA

August 28 – Grand Island

October 22 – North Platte

10. Adjourn

At 11:37 a.m. Stavas motioned to adjourn. Chapo seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted by Erin Lenz