

**Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting
Tuesday, February 26, 2019 – 3:00 p.m.
Bootleg Brewers – Taylor, Neb.**

Commission Chair Roger Kuhn called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Commissioners present: Darrin Barner, Heritage Homes of Nebraska; Roger Jasnoch, Kearney Visitors Bureau; Roger Kuhn, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Starr Lehl, Scottsbluff Economic Development; Deb Loseke, Columbus/Platte County CVB; Ashley Olson, Willa Cather Foundation; Sarah Sortum, Calamus Outfitters; Jeanna Stavas, Whispering Pines Bed and Breakfast

Commission Staff present: John Ricks, Bryce Arens, Callie Austad, Jenna Bartja, Micheal Collins, Jenn Gjerde, Heather Hogue, Karen Kollars, Erin Lenze, Erin Wirth

1. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Roger Jasnoch requested to add in an item about videoconferencing into the agenda. Roger Kuhn said he can add in videoconferencing to the Commission Chair Report.

Lehl motioned to approve the meeting agenda as changed – with videoconferencing added in as item 8C under the Commission Chair Report. Jasnoch seconded the motion.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Jasnoch, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, Olson, 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 3:08 p.m.

With no members of the public coming forward, Kuhn closed the Public Comment Period at 3:10 p.m.

3. Approval of January 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Deb Loseke motioned to approve the meeting minutes from January 9, 2019. Barner seconded.

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

4. Financial Update and Finance Committee Report

Jeanna Stavas shared that the budget is currently on track. Lodging tax is up, there was a 4.9% increase year over year from 2017 to 2018.

The Biennial Budget Hearing will be on March 13, 2019. Roger Kuhn and John Ricks will be in attendance and will be asking legislative for blessing on budget request. The budget will take effect on July 1 and will be for 2021.

Sortum motioned to approve the financial update and report. Olson seconded the motion.

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

6. Director's Report

A. Lodging Tax Performance

Lodging tax was already talked about in the financial update.

B. Strategic Plan

John Ricks shared that the commission has proposals in from 2 or 3 different places to reconstruct the strategic plan. The commission will be developing the plan this year and next. The original goal was to have the plan finished for this year's conference but Ricks shared that he would like to see what the campaign does in the marketplace and see how it affects this place itself first. The new goal is to have it finished for the 2020 Nebraska Tourism Conference.

C. Annual Report

The 2018 Annual Report is available to view on VisitNebraska.com.

D. FY2018-2019 Grant Awards

John Ricks shared that the commission had 81 applicants this year requesting \$1.7 million in funding. The commission is distributing \$784,600.20 in grant funding.

E. 2019 Denver Stock Show

Karen Kollars provided a summary of the 2019 Denver Stock Show. There were 23 volunteers, three commissioners and two staff members who worked the booth. The commission came in under budget and Kollars shared that you could tell the commission's ads were running because many people came up to the booth and mentioned them. Commissioner Stavas worked the booth a few days and commented that she felt it was worth it to attend.

F. 2019 Travel Counselor

Micheal Collins went through a handout that provided information on the 2019 Travel Counselor Season. The 2019 season will run from May 14-September 8. Fourteen locations will be staffed across the state and Sarpy County will not be staffed this year. The Corps of Discovery Welcome Center is currently closed – but the commission is supporting it being open and it will be staffed if it is open.

Sortum motioned to approve the recommendations for the 2019 Travel Counselor season.
Barner seconded the motion.

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

G. 2019 Passport Program

Erin Wirth went through a handout in the meeting that provided results from the 2018 Nebraska Passport Program and an update on the 2019 program. This is the 10th year of the program.

The Nebraska Passport program took home three awards at the Nebraska PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) awards banquet. The awards were for top honors in marketing campaign and special projects, as well as winning Best of Show.

An announcement of the chosen 2019 stops will go out at the beginning of March.

H. 2019 Tourism Conference

Callie Austad provided commissioners with a handout reflecting an estimated budget for the 2019 Nebraska Tourism Conference. Austad also suggested a roundtable discussion with commissioners on Wednesday morning of the conference.

Stavas motioned to approve the 2019 Nebraska Tourism Conference draft budget. Loseke seconded.

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

I. 2020 ABA Marketplace in Omaha

This event is happening in January 2020. John Ricks shared that at the last marketing committee meeting the topic came up and asked that Nebraska Tourism Commission look in to a sponsorship of some kind for ABA. Ricks said the commission is currently seeing how it can get involved in ABA. The Motor Coach Association and NETA are platinum sponsors of the event at \$50,000 or above. The Nebraska Tourism Commission will look at sponsoring this event and come back with a recommendation for the next commission meeting.

Commissioner Jasnoch would like the minutes to reflect that sponsoring ABA will be an action item on the agenda for the next commission meeting and commissioners will vote on this topic.

Commissioner Jasnoch said the benefit of this event is that there are 3,500 people attending and they're planning tours for the next 2,3 and 5 years. Commissioner Kuhn said this is a big deal/opportunity to get exposure for future tours.

J. NTC Promotional Products

The commission cannot sell promotional products but is in the process of remedying that. Senator Stinner introduced a bill to allow the commission to sell promotional items. There is an emergency clause on it so if everything passes the hope is to have items up and ready to sell shortly after April 1. The hearing is at 1:30 p.m. on Friday. The Commission is looking at using GROW Nebraska to sell the items.

6. Commission Committee Reports

A. Policy and Procedures Committee

Roger Kuhn has nothing to report.

B. Tourism Market Committee

Roger Jasnoch said there are no active applications at this time.

C. Marketing Committee

John Ricks went through a presentation in the meeting outlining various marketing updates including the summer 2019 media plan, stats on VisitNebraska.com and Travel Guide requests, 2019 media tours and more.

The new VisitNebraska.com website will be launching soon. A webinar training will be provided on March 28 at 1:30 p.m.

7. NETA Legislative Update

Roger Jasnoch shared that the NETA luncheon was on February 1st. About 60 people registered to attend, final attendance was around 40 people. Jasnoch shared that NETA will hopefully figure out a 2020 date soon to put it on the calendar for next year. Additionally, every Monday at 4 p.m. central time, NETA has a legislative update call.

A few legislative bills to keep up on:

LB57: AirBNB currently doesn't collect lodging tax, so this bill would require platforms like them to collect and pay that tax.

LB187: This bill expands sports arena facility financing and broadens it to be able to use it to apply for funds for soccer fields, sporting events, etc.

LB314 & LB497: These bills would triple tax for creating beer and wine in Nebraska and that would be crippling to small communities and breweries so NETA is opposing this bill.

LB637: This bill would allow the Nebraska Tourism Commission to sell promotional items.

8. Commission Chair Report

A. Committee Appointments

Commissioner Kuhn explained that there is a new committee structure. The commissioners will retain three of the committees, add a legislative committee and will eliminate the policy and procedures committee and the tourism market committee. The Nebraska Tourism Commission will monitor tourism marker applications in the future and bring any new applications to the commissioners. If there are new policies or procedures that need amended or added in the future, John and staff will bring those regulations to the board and the board would adopt or deny them as a body. In the future, only commissioners will sit on committees. All past non-commissioners on committees have been notified of this change. New committee assignments are as follows:

New Committee: Legislative Committee

Chair: Roger Jasnoch

Members: Darrin Barner, John Chapo, Starr Lehl

Marketing Committee

Chair: John Chapo

Members: Roger Dixon, Barry McFarland, Sarah Sortum

Finance Committee

Chair: Jeanna Stavas

Members: Deb Loseke, Barry McFarland, Ashley Olson.

Executive Committee

Chair: Roger Kuhn

Vice Chair: Roger Jasnoch

Past Chair: Deb Loseke

Treasurer: Jeanna Stavas

At-Large: Sarah Sortum

B. Survey of Commissioners

Roger Kuhn shared the results of a survey that was conducted to gather feedback and thoughts from commissioners on meetings throughout the year. The responses were anonymous. Results were as follows:

- Frequency of meetings: Voted 8-3 to keep the amount of meetings the same at 5 a year.
- Is it important to rotate meeting locations? 10-1 commissioners were supportive of rotating meetings.
- Activities for commissioners when they are in that location? 8 commissioners said they would like to see what the area has to offer when they are in that location, three commissioners did not have an opinion.
 - Kuhn asked John and staff to look in to the possibility of carving out time to have a presentation where local people from the area come to the end of the meeting and give a presentation about what there is in that area.
- Scheduling committee meetings a year in advance: Voted 6-5 in scheduling committee meetings a year in advance. Commissioners discussed scheduling committee meetings two weeks prior to commission meetings throughout the year or scheduling meetings six months in advance or quarterly.

C. Added Agenda Item: Videoconferencing

Commissioners had first videoconference meeting in January and things went smoothly overall. Rules state that commissioners cannot have over half of their meetings over video, meaning the most that could be done is two a year.

Roger Jasnoch shared that commissioners tried videoconferencing and it worked. Jasnoch suggested having an additional videoconference meeting in between May-August. Kuhn said the survey was in favor of not creating additional meetings in the year.

9. New Business

A. Upcoming Meetings:

May 14 – Seward (day before brochure swap)

August 28 – Grand Island

October 22 – North Platte

10. Adjourn

At 5:02 p.m. Lehl motioned to adjourn. Barner seconded.

Roll call vote – Commissioners in favor: Barner, Jasncoh, Kuhn, Lehl, Loseke, Olson, Sortum, Stavas.

Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Erin Lenz