

Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting
Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 1:00pm CST
Video Conference, Various locations

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

Economic Development Center
City of Scottsbluff
2525 Circle Drive
Scottsbluff, NE 69361

Commissioner Chair Roger Kuhn called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Commissioners present: Darrin Barner, Heritage Homes of Nebraska; 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; Barry McFarland, Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery, Roger Jasnoch, Kearney Visitors Bureau, John Chapo, Lincoln Children's Zoo, Robert Sabin, Hilton Omaha.

Commission staff present: John Ricks, Heather Hogue, Jenn Gjerde, Michael Collins, Erin Lenz, Madison Johnson, Callie Austad, Jenna Bartja, Shirley Wichman

1. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Commission Chair Kuhn welcomed commissioners and asked for motion to approve agenda.

Barner motioned to approve the agenda. Olson seconded the motion.

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

2. Opened Comment Period for Items on the Agenda

Kuhn opened up the public comment period at 1:06pm.

With no members of the public coming forward, Kuhn closed the Public Comment Period at 1:07.

3. Approval of September 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Approval was deferred until they received the minutes. Continued to Financial Report

4. Financial Update and Finance Committee Report – Commissioner Stavas

a. Budget Status Review

Stavas went through spreadsheets that were previously distributed. Director Ricks spoke about the budget spreadsheets, budget narratives through a PowerPoint presentation pointing out various elements of dollars spent and money saved in the working budget 20-21 as it stands now. Commission is closely watching and monitoring. Commissioners discussed outstanding dollars, marketing dollars, and areas money is being saved.

b. Lodging Tax Performance

Director Ricks gave update through many months of pandemic.

Motion to accept status review as presented was made by McFarland. Olson seconded the motion.

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

Went back to Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Loseke made motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 9, 2020. Jasnoch seconded the motion.

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

5. Commission Chair Report - Commissioner Kuhn

Congratulated Nebraska Tourism Commission staff on a job well done throughout the past year given all the ups and downs in the industry. Kuhn mentioned there were several active legislative bills that may have potential impact on the Game and Parks Commission. Thanked everyone for supporting him through his tenure as Chair.

6. Director's Report and NTC Project Updates – John Ricks and NTC staff

- a. Strategic Plan – Ricks gave update
- b. EDA Grant update – Ricks gave update on money disbursement if approved
- c. Final Report from 2020 Tourism Conference – Callie Austad gave update. Reported great numbers for attendance and received good comments on having virtual instead of in person.
- d. 2020 Annual Report – Ricks said report is ready and will be sending one to all commissioners.
- e. 2021 Travel Counselor Program – Micheal Collins gave update and presented locations and budget.

Motion to approve the list of centers and budget as presented made by Stavas. McFarland seconded the motion.

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

- f. FY2020-21 Grant Program Awards - Heather Hogue gave updates. There were 56 applications requesting \$1.4 million. Funded or partially funded total was \$494,833.65. There was some discussion on the format and guidelines of the grant application. It was felt the process needs to be looked at to see if there are ways to make it more user friendly.

Motion to approve the grant awards as recommended made by Chapo. Barner seconded the motion.

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

7. Commission Committee Reports

a. Legislative Committee/NETA Legislative Update – Commissioner Jasnoch

Jasnoch presented updated on NETA, they has legislative conference call every Monday at 4pm via zoom. There were 684 bills and 12 proposed amendments introduced in session this year. NETA is looking at 24 different bills.

b. Marketing Committee - Commissioner Chapo

Chapo deferred to John Ricks for Marketing updates. John gave presentation on marketing campaign. Talked on possibility of doing some advertising in the spring, starting in May. Gave updates on passport program and how it keeps growing even in a pandemic. Commissioners discussed various elements of the program and marketing campaign. Commissioner Lehl talked about an app called visit widget. She wants the Tourism Commission to take a look at the app and report back to the commission at next meeting. Jenn Gjerde will do this.

c. Tourism Marker Contract Renewal – Commissioner Jasnoch

Jasnoch gave update. There are no current applications. There was discussion on there has been no interest in this since the inception of the program. Jasnoch will get with Shirley to send a survey on the need to continue.

Motion to approve the one year renewal option of contract mad by Sortum. Motion seconded by Barner.

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

8. New Business

a. Locations and dates of 2021 Commission Meetings

Deferred on voting for 2021 meetings until next meeting. Shirley will send out Doodle poll for March meeting, last week. There was discussion on the following dates: Brochure swap in Grand Island, May 12, 2021; Starr volunteered Scottsbluff in August for a meeting; and the Travel Conference in Grand Island in October, date TBD.

b. Election of Commission Executive Board Officers

There was discussion on election of officers and nominations for each position. The following nominations were made:

Chair: Roger Jasnoch
Vice Chair: Robert Sabin
Treasurer: Jeanna Stavas
At Large: Barry McFarland
Past Chair: Roger Kuhn

Motion to approve the nominations was made by Lehl. The motion was seconded by Sortum.

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

- c. Holding regional commission networking sessions via Zoom throughout the year (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually) depending on your region's wants/needs

Discussion by commissioners on how they felt about the network sessions. The sessions benefit the area, get to know each other, communication to share. They thought it would encourage them to communicate with industry partners. Some thought it was a good idea and was willing to get together. Some thought they already get together with their constituents in other ways and didn't need another meeting/zoom session. The consensus was that if they wanted to do these, they certainly could. Not everyone has to be involved in the network sessions.

9. Adjourn

At 3:30 McFarland motioned to adjourn. Lehl seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted by Shirley Wichman

*Denotes Action Item

Open Meetings Law of the State of Nebraska will be available in the meeting room. Proposed agenda, posted January 23, 2020, kept current and available for inspection on the Commission's website, visitnebraska.com. Items of an emergency nature may be added to the agenda by the Commission at the meeting. The Commission reserves the right to enter into closed session, should a closed session be necessary.