

Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting
October 20, 2015 – 1:00 pm
River's Edge Convention Center – Columbus, NE

Commission Vice-Chair Roger Dixon called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

Commissioners present: Roger Dixon, MECA of Omaha; Deb Loseke, Columbus/Platte County CVB; Roger Jasnoch, Kearney Visitors Bureau; Lisa Burke, North Platte CVB; Carol Schlegel, Red Willow County Tourism; Tony Moody, John Q. Hammons Hotels & Resorts; Jeff Boeka, Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites of North Platte; Roger Kuhn, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Commission staff present: Kathy McKillip, Angela White, Amanda Barker, Lisa Karnatz, Alex Duryea, Jenn Gjerde, Bryce Arens, Karen Kollars, Heather Hogue.

Audience members signed-in:

Linda Revis, David Sawyer, Carl Reichart, Kevin Howard, David Hendee, Kirsten Parker, Brenda Leisy, Terri Licking, Jeanne Davis, Linda Lacy, Kim Kwapnioski, Denise Oswald, Penny Seibert, Brad Mellema, Megan Storm, Rich Claussen, Dave Wegener, Sarah Focke, Karla Niedan-Streeks, Hal Enevoldsen, Todd Kirshenbaum, Bob Sautter, Lora Young, Michele Hayes, Ron Sack, Matt Emodi, Mitch Glidden

Public Comment signed-in:

Kevin Howard - Alliance, Brad Mellema – Grand Island, Kirsten Parker – North Platte

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Tony Moody motioned to approve the meeting agenda. Roger Jasnoch requested to add discussion items at the end of agenda concerning the Nebraska Nice Journey group tour and the closing schedule of the seasonal visitor centers this fall. Jeff Boeka seconded. Motion passed.

Open Comment Period for Items on the Agenda

Roger Dixon, Commission Vice-Chair opened the public comment period at 1:04 pm. Kevin Howard thanked the Commission for the recent media tours. Brad Mellema expressed approval of the recent media tours. Kirsten Parker thanked the Commission for listening and implementing her suggestions regarding the VisitNebraska.com website. Commission Vice-Chair Roger Dixon closed the public comment period at 1:06 pm.

Approval of September 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Roger Dixon requested a motion to approve meeting minutes from September 1, 2015. Roger Jasnoch and Carol Schlegel requested clarification of verbiage within draft minutes, discussion amongst the group. Deb Loseke motioned to approve meeting minutes from September 1, 2015. Tony Moody seconded. Roll call vote results: In favor: Jeff Boeka, Lisa Burke, Roger Kuhn, Deb Loseke, Tony Moody. Opposed: Roger Jasnoch, Carol Schlegel. Abstained: Roger Dixon. Not present: John Chapo.

Financial Update and Finance Committee Report

Deb Loseke, Commission Treasurer, presented the current budget status report and provided financial updates. The Commission has spent approximately 43% of the allotted budget so far this fiscal year. The Finance Committee and Commission staff continue to monitor the budget. Currently the lodging tax collections are up 5.6% over last year, August 2015 receipts were lower than the previous year's August. Heather Hogue, Commission Grant Administrator, presented current contractual aid standings and available grant funding, and recommended opening the next Tourism

Marketing Grant and Community Impact Grant cycles in early spring of 2016 (March) while continuing to monitor the budget to insure expenditure of contractual aid funding. Tony Moody motioned to accept financials as presented. Roger Kuhn seconded. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Commission Chair John Chapo was absent, no Chairman's report presented.

Governance Principles Committee Report

Roger Kuhn noted that when the Governance Principles were originally established, a quorum for carrying on official business was established to be at least 2/3 of the full Commission (6 of 9 members). The committee had requested and received clarification from the Nebraska Attorney General's office to differentiate between an established quorum and majority. The Commission is not in violation of the Open Meetings Act, as none of the Commission's committees have more than four members. Roger Jasnoch requested Commissioners send any discussion topics concerning Governance Principles to Roger Kuhn prior to the next Commission meeting.

Strategic Planning Session Report

Roger Dixon noted that a draft of the Strategic Plan was distributed to all Commissioners. They are to send recommendations or suggested changes to Kathy McKillip or Bill Krueger with CSL International by December 15, 2015. The final draft should be ready for review by the January meeting. The majority of the 2012 Strategic Plan recommendations have been addressed or carried out. Kathy McKillip noted that the draft of the updated plan recommends the Commission utilize research organizations such as Longwoods International or Dean Runyan Associates to create a Return on Investment (ROI) measurement system to provide modeling techniques quantifying the relationship between marketing efforts and visitation to the state.

Commission Committee Reports

Lisa Burke reported the annual Tourism Conference Committee is always seeking ideas and opportunities for growth of the event. Deb Loseke noted the Best Practices and Guiding Principles Committee has nothing new to report. Roger Jasnoch noted the NETA Legislative updates, reporting that NETA's next steps will be to educate and inform the industry about LB 329 (Ag-liability bill), and discussions are continuing regarding LB 285 (Civic Center Financing bill). Roger Jasnoch also reported regarding the Tourism Signage Committee, which will be referred to as the Tourism Marker Committee to clarify the intent of LB 449. The committee will continue discussions regarding the design of the markers and content they will provide, as well as where funding will come from and the required criteria to obtain a marker. No report from the Marketing Committee, as Committee Chair John Chapo was absent.

Marketing Update/Public Relations Review

Rich Claussen from Bailey Lauerman presented a 10-minute video highlighting marketing accomplishments of the Commission throughout the year. Congratulations to Ron Sack, Bailey Lauerman employee for reaching his personal goal of visiting all 80-stops along the 2015 Nebraska Passport Program! On his personal vacation time, a great achievement – a total of 81 people visited all 80 stops this year. Deb Loseke noted, as host city for this year's conference, her appreciation for the passion and commitment of Bailey Lauerman staff and Commission staff. Roger Kuhn also noted the marketing video represents the state well and appreciates all the work that went into it.

Dave Wegener from Swanson Russel reviewed highlights of public relations results and outlined the projected schedule for upcoming 2016 media tours:

- March 20-25 in Central Nebraska (Grand Island, Kearney, Harlan County Reservoir, McCook) with a focus on birding and agri-eco tourism.
- May 10-14 in Southeast Nebraska (Lincoln, Beatrice, Brownville) with a focus on agri-eco tourism, culinary, heritage and cultural tourism.

Director's Report

Kathy McKillip provided the Director's Report and copy of the Dossier magazine, which will feature Nebraska this winter, and highlighted the recent website updates, webinar trainings, 2015 Passport Program statistics, and recent promotions by the Commission. The most recent lodging tax figures were also distributed. Kathy McKillip also noted the new N150 Celebration License Plates are available and feature the VisitNebraska.com website. The plates can be ordered through the Department of Motor Vehicles for \$70. Commission staff present at the meeting stood for introductions.

Grant Updates

Heather Hogue reviewed the most recent press release announcing Community Impact Grant awardees for the fall application cycle. Grant awards went to the Omaha Sports Commission to promote the 2016 US Olympic Swim Trails, the Lincoln USBC Bowling Association to promote the 2016 World Tenpin Youth Bowling Championships, and the Omaha Equestrian Foundation to promote the 2016 International Omaha event.

New Business

Roger Jasnoch inquired about the formation of the Nebraska Nice Journey group tour. Kathy McKillip noted the tour was a program test, to offer additional opportunities for group travel across the state, and was originally offered to international conference attendees coming to Nebraska this November – to encourage them to come early and explore the state. Commissioner Kuhn noted that the Game and Parks Commission has also attempted similar tours over the years with a focus to introduce more travelers to outdoor opportunities.

Roger Jasnoch inquired about the staffed visitor centers closing in mid-October this year. Kathy McKillip noted the budget for seasonal staff is monitored, and the length of employment fluctuates according to the funds budgeted. Roger Kuhn noted that unforeseen circumstances occasionally happen in regards to schedules of seasonal employees, as Game & Parks Commission employs a number of seasonal staff throughout their parks each year. Kathy McKillip distributed the visitation counts for each of the visitor centers staffed by the Commission during the 2015 travel season.

Upcoming dates for Commission meetings:

January 14, 2016 (Senator Luncheon at State Capitol in Lincoln)
February 24, 2016 (Agri-Eco Tourism Conference in Grand Island)
May 2016 (date and location to be announced)

Tony Moody motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:37pm. Roger Kuhn seconded. Meeting adjourned. Respectfully submitted by Heather Hogue.