

Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting

Monday, May 2, 2017 – 1:00 p.m.

Nebraska Tourism Commission Office – Lincoln, Neb.

Commission Chair Deb Loseke called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Commissioners present: Deb Loseke, Columbus/Platte County CVB; Roger Jasnoch, Kearney Visitors Bureau; Lisa Burke, North Platte CVB; Mitch Glidden, Sandhills Motel and Glidden Canoe Rental; John Chapo, Lincoln Children's Zoo; Roger Dixon, MECA

Commission staff present: John Ricks, Angela Sears, Jenn Gjerde, Lisa Karnatz, Karen Kollars and Micheal Collins

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Commissioner Chapo motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Dixon seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Open Comment Period for Items on the Agenda

Deb Loseke, Commission Chair, opened the public comment period at 11:02 a.m.

Comments presented:

Traci Jeffrey, Executive Director of the Norfolk Area Visitor's Bureau welcomed everyone and thanked the commission for coming to Norfolk to host their meeting.

Andrew Norman, Executive Director of non-profit Hear Nebraska, came to talk about what is happening with Lincoln Calling and Hear Nebraska. He requested that the Tourism Grants be reopened sooner rather than later. They want to apply for money to help promote Lincoln Calling.

The Public Comment Period ended at 1:07 a.m.

Approval Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Chapo motioned to approve the meeting minutes from March 13, 2017. Commissioner Dixon seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Financial Update and Finance Committee Report

Lisa Burke, Commission Treasurer, shared that as of March 31, 2017 we have paid out \$251,743.64 from our General Fund Account for Grant Allotments for Marketing and or Community Impact Grants our total budget for fiscal 2016-2017 is \$558,726.41.

To date we have spent \$3,009,264.49 from our cash funds. Our Cash Fund Budget for Fiscal 2016-17 is \$6,567,218.63.

Lodging Tax figures show that collections were down this February compared to last year:

February 2017: \$277,388.46

February 2016: \$302,232.45

But overall we are up by a bit through the first 2 months of this year:

Through February 2017: \$602,331.81

Through February 2016: \$601,780.77

Commissioner Dixon motioned to approve the financials as presented. Commissioner Chapo seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Discussion of future Commission meetings being held via videoconference

Marna Munn with the Nebraska Attorney General's office has given the commission guidance on how and when they can use videoconferencing. The commission discussed the pros and cons of using this technology. Several commissioners expressed a strong interest in beginning to use it so that commissioners wouldn't always have to drive so far to be at a meeting. The Marketing Committee offered to test the technology out at it's May meeting with the base location being at the Nebraska Tourism Commission office in Lincoln.

A discussion about LB222 also took place with commissioners expressing that this technology might be particularly helpful when new commissioners come on from all over the state.

Commission Chair Report

Commissioner Loseke asked that the commissioners take a formal vote to approve Director Ricks' Temporary Lodging Reimbursement Request. Commissioner Burke motioned to approve the reimbursement request. Commissioner Chapo seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Commissioner Loseke then took a moment to thanks Traci Jeffrey and the Norfolk Area Visitors Bureau for hosting the meeting.

Director's Report

A. Nebraska Visitors Development Act Changes/LB222

Governor Ricketts has signed LB222. The new law takes the commission from 9 members to 11 from 11 different regions. It is to Include 4 members with previous board or specialty experience such as banking or legal experience. Senator Blood asked that the wording around the strategic plan be changed to clarify whether the Commission had to, or could potentially redo the strategic plan. In the end the wording was changed to allow the Commission to update the plan if it wished but didn't mandate that it do so immediately.

B. Status of Advertising / Grant Opportunity Program

Director Ricks gave an update on this program. Ricks mentioned that the change in the program was to encourage participation in the Commissions several existing and one new advertising opportunities by making them more affordable for all sizes of communities. The opportunity was publicized and the applications were due on April 24. A total of 44 applications were received for this cycle. We are hoping this will give us a better idea which of the programs the industry wants so that we can use that info to shape future grant program. The grant review committee is in the process of reviewing and scoring the grants and will meet on May 12 to discuss and award the grants. The travel guide and website advertising opportunities were popular as well as the new Facebook opportunity. Commissioner Chapo commented that the grant program is evolving and we are trying to be responsive to feedback from stakeholders. Director Ricks also reported that approximately \$330,000 in grant money was requested.

C. Timeline for FY2017-2018 Grant Programs

Director Ricks told the commission that everyone he's talked to likes the grant program but there seems to be a common complaint that there has been some inconsistency in when it's been announced and awarded. Many people are requesting that it be more consistent so they can better plan. Commissioner Loseke added that the fluctuation was due to left over money or grants that weren't used. The group discussed options for when the grants could be opened up again. Commissioner Burke suggested that we do it in October because that is generally the time when most people are planning and budgeting for the following year's events and activities.

Commissioner Burke made a motion to release the grants in October, close them by end of December with notification in January. Commissioner Dixon seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

D. Data analysis/research

Director Ricks announced that he has completed a market analysis project that uses zip codes that we collect via travel guide requests, web traffic and combines it with MRI data. All of this data is then rated and indexed to reveal defined target markets where people have a greater propensity to visit Nebraska. He noted that we took out all Nebraska cities and just looked at out-of-state markets. We are trying to also get data from Hotel / Lodging industry so that we can make it even more precise. Ricks also noted that economic impact research is in progress and he will have an update soon and that a visitors study and seasonal wave tracking are other things he wants to tackle very quickly.

E. Status of Commission draft RFPs

Director Ricks updated the Commission about the progress of the RFPs with DAS. The three RFPs that are being drafted are for Ad/Media, PR/Social and the last one is for VisitNebraska.com Publishing & Content (Travel Guide). He noted that it's been a challenging process to get through and some routes are subject to what is allowed by our current statutes. He reported that he and the staff are looking at final drafts of these and they should be ready to go out

pretty quickly. Time is of the essence because the window for shooting new commercials is coming up quickly. He noted that he will report back on that soon.

F. Commission / Department of Roads Partnership Roadway Signage

In 2013 Nebraska Tourism worked with the Nebraska Department of roads to replace 37 highway signs in the state that promote various destinations, communities and points of interest. Recently the Commission has received a few requests from communities and individuals who would like to change some things about the signs. In talking with the Department of Roads it does appear that it is possible to change the signs' content but there would of course be a cost.

After discussing the possible scenarios in which people might request to change the content of the signs, the Commissioners asked the Commission staff to come up with a formal process/procedures for people to request changes to the signs. The Commission would then review the requests on a case-by-case commission. They also expressed that if people wanted to change a sign's content that they should be willing to pay for the change.

G. ABA Marketplace Discussion

Director Ricks updated the Commissioners about an upcoming meeting with the ABA to discuss the possibility of them hosting the 2020 ABA conference in Omaha. Director Ricks and Micheal Collins are going to dinner with them next week while they are in town for a site visit. Ricks shared that STA typically follows this event into a community the next year or the year after.

Committee Reports

Tourism Conference Committee - Commissioner Burke talked about the budget and plans for the upcoming meeting in LaVista. The committee is expecting a higher than normal turnout because of the location of the event. She passed around the budget for review. The expenses are a little higher in LaVista then they have been for some past conferences. This is mostly due to higher food costs. The group discussed potentially raising the fees to cover the cost of higher food prices but decided they did not want to raise the fees. Sponsorship levels and benefits were slightly adjusted. Director Ricks added that in the future the commission would be doing a better job of defining a conference budget. Commissioner Dixon suggested that we approach some of local attractions and businesses about sponsorships. Commissioner Burke commented that staff members Karen Kollars and Lisa Karnatz are doing a good job with the conference planning.

Policy and Procedures Committee – No report

Tourism Marker Committee – Commissioner Jasnoch reported that the committee competed and sent out an ITB (Intent to Bid) to over 15 sign businesses around the country. Two companies are interested at this time. They included a company from Ohio one from Indiana. They are recommending Eagle Sign and Design/Hawke Acquisition Company (who also does the state's historical markers).

Commissioner Dixon made a motion to go with the Tourism Marker Committee's recommendation to use Eagle Sign and Design/Hawke Acquisition Co for tourism markers. Commissioner Glidden seconded the motion. Roll call vote- Commissioners in favor: Loseke, Jasnoch, Burke, Glidden, Chapo and Dixon. Opposed: none. Abstain: none. Motion passed.

Marketing Committee – The marketing committee was unable to meet due to scheduling conflicts but Marketing Manager Angela Sears gave the following report.

- RFP’s are still currently being reviewed in DAS so they have not been posted yet. We had a very productive meeting with them yesterday and hope to get these out very soon.
- Website traffic is up 19.73% year-to-date over previous year!
- 9.5% increase in our e-newsletter subscriber list YTD
- \$800,000+ in PR generated Ad Value YTD
- 37 TV, radio and newspaper interviews completed so far this year
- Travel Guide requests started off a little slow the first quarter with only about 61,000 distributed so far, but we are currently heavily promoting the guide on social channels and via our digital advertising so I expect to see a big increase of distributed guides in April and May.
- To celebrate National Travel and Tourism Week, the Nebraska Tourism Commission will host town hall meetings in multiple communities in May. This will be an opportunity for members of the public, press and the tourism industry to meet John. The sessions will begin with short opening remarks, then the floor will be open for Q&A and a listening session. A few of the town hall locations are also stops on the 2017 Nebraska Passport. We also received a proclamation by the governor declaring Nebraska Travel and Tourism Week is May 7 -12, coinciding with the national celebration. The town hall meetings are open to the public and should last about an hour. Note: All commissioners are invited to attend all or any of the town hall meetings that you can get to.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
May 9, 2017	Nebraska City	9 a.m.	Kimmel Orchard, 5995 G Rd, Nebraska City, NE
May 9, 2017	McCook	3 p.m.	Citta Deli, 110 W 3rd St, McCook, NE
May 10, 2017	Gering	1:15 p.m.	Gering Civic Center, 1050 M St, Gering, NE
May 11, 2017	Columbus	1 p.m.	Historical Evans House, 2204 14th St Columbus, NE
May 12, 2017	Bellevue	3 p.m.	Beardmore Event Center, 3730 Raynor Pkwy, Bellevue, NE
May 17, 2017	North Platte	11 a.m.	Best Western Plus, 321 S Jeffers St

Through My Eyes Campaign Update

Campaign Soft Launched on March 1st

- The majority of our Through My Eyes and CO-OP advertising is now flowing into the marketing. You will note that the marketing advertising budget spends are sitting at around 35%, a big part of that is because we haven’t yet been billed for most of the media below. You can see the advertisements in the following places...
 - Print pubs like True West, Midwest Lining, Country Living, Endless Vacation Home and Away, Parents, Trains, Colorado Life, and many more.

- Digital channels like YouTube, Google Adwords, Google retargeting, Trip Advisor and more.
- Our Social Channels (we've been doing some heavy boosting to promote our travel guide and our Through My Eyes videos to our target markets)
- So far we've had 104,000 *Through My Eyes* video views on our Facebook page since launch. We've also added over 2,000 fans to Facebook since Jan. 1.
- So far we've had 119,524 *Through My Eyes* video views on our YouTube Channel.
- The most popular video so far was the Omaha Zoo video with 72,000+ views.

Passport Program Update

Program began on May 1! The passport program has continued to grow year-over year largely through word-of-mouth and our PR efforts. For 2017 the pre-launch interest has been phenomenal and it looks to be a record breaking year. Program Director Erin Wirth has done a fantastic job putting together the tours and the materials for this year's program.

Beginning May 1, we will have a PR / Media Blitz to promote the launch of the Passport Program which will include a press release, social media posts, tv and radio interviews, email marketing, a small Omaha World Herald digital campaign, passport information booths, at our corporate partners businesses and elsewhere. To date we have already distributed 15,990 passports! Here's the breakdown...

- Individual Passports Requested = 9,000+ (out of state = 300+)
- To Passport stops = 7,610

NETA Update – NETA is trying to work with Governor to find out more about LB222 and what that involves.

New Business

- A.** Upcoming Commission Meetings
August 22: Kearney CVB at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Chapo commented that he felt Director Ricks did a very nice job speaking at a recent FACE the Chamber event in Lincoln.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Angela Sears.