

Approved February 15, 2012

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting January 18, 2012

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at The Seymour Center, Chapel Hill

Board Members Present: Karen DeHart , Mike Gering, , Jim Norton, Laura Morgan, Mark Sherburne, Lydia Lavelle, Lee Pavao, Anthony Carey, Jim Parker, Gordon Jameson, and Valerie Foushee, Donna Bell

Members Absent: Dave Gephart, Greg Overbeck and Annette Stone

Staff Present: Laurie Paolicelli, Steve Brantley (Orange County EDC Director), Linda Ekeland, Martha Shannon and Tina Fuller

Guests: Jim Ward, Tony Poillucci – VisionPoint (the visitors bureau website firm).

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Anthony Carey, filling in for Chair Gephart, called the meeting to order at 8:07 am.

WELCOME

Vice Chair Cary informed board members that, Clean Design, the bureau's new advertising agency, would present their research findings for the majority of the meeting and Old Business would be moved up on the agenda. Carey gave the floor to VB Executive Director, Laurie Paolicelli.

Paolicelli read a proclamation for departing board member Jim Ward, Ms. Paolicelli gave a history of Mr. Ward's strong advocacy for tourism and board liaison to the Town of Chapel Hill. Mr. Ward stated he would continue to be a supporter of the VB staff and board of directors.

REPORTS

Mr. Carey informed members that committee reports would be postponed this meeting with the exception of the marketing report presented by Clean Design. Mr. Carey suggested spending more time on committee reports at the February meeting, especially on budget, mid-year numbers, Arts Commission and municipalities.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chair Carey requested a motion to approve the November 16, 2011 minutes. Mike Gering so moved with Karen DeHart seconding. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as written.

Clean Design Report

Natalie Perkins, CEO of Clean Design, discussed their research findings, stating that to begin with they reviewed the VB's existing plan, performed interviews, reviewed current marketing materials, and reviewed current social media outputs.

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Ms. Perkins also stated that the primary goals were attuned to the Mission Statement, and to increase occupancy and Average Daily Rate (ADR) at hotels.

Ms. Perkins and staff informed board members that they talked to 18 key stakeholders and compiled the following views to be perceived as *challenges*:

1) UNC is here and nothing else, 2) sleepy town but growing & dynamic, 3) the current campaign “3 towns for the price of 1” dilutes the message, 4) we have so much to offer that we can lose focus.

In contrast, Chapel Hill has great name recognition which comes from UNC and that the VB can take advantage of that.

In summary, research gathered the following information:

- Visitors come for UNC, sports, hospital, and to visit friends and family, in other words, something has to be going on for someone to come to Chapel Hill.
- Opportunities for growth are mid-week business; summer – off season, mid-size group travel and conferences with a major focus on group sales & meetings, then mid-week travel, and finally leisure travel.
- According to ESRI Marketing data, Chapel Hills’ leisure travelers are trendsetters (no kids, adventurous) and sophisticated squires (older, no kids). Business travelers are new recruits (majority), then passionate high tech and finally wide-eyed & eager. 59% are male, 41% female with an average age of 38 years. 71% are college educated. Not the traditional business traveler, they value good food and experiences. Leisure and business traveler may be intertwined as business travelers are blending leisure with their trips, some including family.

Research was also done through an audit of Chapel Hill’s competitors in the categories of messaging, design, social media, media spending, creative and comparator and categorized into Leisure, Groups and Business.

Research also revealed that Chapel Hill’s positioning in the positioning matrix is progressive & dynamic, with personality key words as: sophisticated, green, creative, educated, energetic, stimulated, vibrant and youthful- which was used to create an image or identity for the target audience.

Using all this data, Clean Design drafted three positioning platforms: 1) UNC, based on intellect, 2) The Alt-southern scene, targets very specific origins of Orange County, and 3) find your independence, based on individuality.

Board members took a vote on which platform they liked best with platforms 1 & 2 as close first choices. Many board members agreed that more than one platform could be used. There was a comment that other destinations use many different platforms in which Clean Design staff replied that the more platforms (messages) used usually means more budget dollars needed. Discussion commenced on which platform would entice the visitor; when questioned on which platform they liked best, Clean Design replied ‘alternative southern scene’.

Next Steps: Clean Design will present high level strategy, media direction and initial creative options to be reviewed and approved by board members at the February board meeting. Clean Design will then present at the March board meeting a very detailed plan with April as a possible launch date. With that, the floor was open to discussion.

Mike Gering suggested another vote to choose creative platform because after the discussion, some board members changed their mind on which strategy to chose. Laurie Paolicelli suggested leaning on Clean Design to make the best decision. There was some concern that Alt- southern was taking a risk.

After some further discussion, Anthony Carey requested a vote to have “Alt-Southern” as the media platform. Mike Gering so moved with Lydia Lavelle seconding. With all members in favor the motion was approved.

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Discussing target audience, Donna Bell raised the topic of price points, specifically how to capture travelers in Chapel Hill hotels since Durham was close enough to enjoy Chapel Hill but Durham hotels were cheaper. Bell posed the question: what is the traveler's value currently leaning towards and what is the value that would bring companies here that haven't come before? Ms. Bell stated she felt that business travelers are more price oriented. In response, Laurie Paolicelli stated that past hotel guests would be surveyed to help us best determine the answer to this. Clean Design could help design a study for this and Visitor Bureau staff could deploy. However, this study would not help to know who would come, only who have already been.

Laurie Paolicelli opened the floor to discussion: Some members felt that the Alt-southern platform would target an audience that could not afford to stay in Chapel Hill hotels. Some members felt that this platform would target the foodie movement audience that has dollars. Some members felt the platforms could be intermingled. It was noted that the hotel location is a factor and rate is a consideration. Another member noted that UNC's actions are important to the town as a whole and questioned if the relationship with UNC is as strong as it could be. Paolicelli replied that is a growing partnership and the Visitors Bureau role is to let it be known that there is so much more to Orange County than just UNC.

Concluding the meeting, Ms. Paolicelli informed board members of topics for next month's meeting

Next meeting venue

The Courtyard by Marriott, Chapel Hill

And with no other business to discuss, Vice-Chair Anthony Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:32 am.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Minutes accepted by:
Dave Gephart, Chairman

Date

Date