

Visitors Promotion Committee
May 11, 2016
MINUTES

In attendance: Dennis Meyer, Julie Lattimer, Roland Morgan, Dave Wheaton, Becky Perrett, Amy Dickerson, Lynne Ireland, Colette Wear, Trent Fellers, Michelle Waite and Deb Schorr

Staff attending: Derek Feyherherm, Jeff Maul, Kyle Fischer, Ron Kalkwarf

Guests: Joe Homan, Mike Faughn, Christin Dionisopoulos, Jerry Shorney, Tony Odem, Tammy Thimgan, Josh Larson, Gary Ehlers, Mark Harris, Dr. Gabor Racz, Kevin Abourezk

Call to Order and Introductions:

Julie Lattimer called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m. and introductions were made.

Dennis Meyer, Lancaster County Budget & Fiscal Officer gave a brief update on the improvement fund balance. He said that over the last six months the fund balance has been tight when compared to the remaining commitments over multiple years. The fund balance will open up in the future due to two main reasons. First, lodging tax collections are coming in higher than projected. The projection for FY 15-16 was \$1.5 million versus \$1.65 million which will actualize. Second factor is that in FY 15-16, the CVB did not request all that was allocated for additional bid fees and the request today for \$41,000 in grant funds will not cause issues on the balance. Dave Wheaton asked what commitments still remained. Meyer stated for FY 15-16, \$800,000 was still remaining, \$1.4 million in FY 16-17, and \$600,000 in FY 17-18. The five year contracts for Lancaster Event Center and Pinnacle Bank Arena are also coming to completion which will free up funds. Jeff Maul asked Meyer through June of 2018 if there were funds available for future major requests and he stated there were. Still left this year in commitments to pay out are Star City BMX, Lawson Park in Waverly and Centennial Mall. Meyer reconfirmed that all requests heard today will not affect the fund balance. With no further questions, Lattimer thanked Meyer who then excused himself from the rest of the meeting.

Camp Creek Threshers Grant Request:

Joe Homan, Vice President, and Mike Faughn, President of the Camp Creek Threshing Association presented their grant request. Homan said they put on their annual show that includes antique tractors and threshing demos. Everything planted, harvested, etc on the grounds is done by antique equipment. There is a steam engine saw mill that can convert logs into boards of different dimensions. There are about 6,000 visitors each year, with around 500 that are from far enough away to need hotel rooms. Approximately \$61,000 is spent in the county by their estimates. In addition to the annual show, organizations such as the Blacksmiths and school Heritage Days use the grounds. The grounds have also been used for movie sets and weddings. Highlights for the show include threshing, cutting silage, and rock crushing. They do advertising, spending around \$7,500 per year. They are submitting a grant request in the amount of \$11,570 to cover three projects. The first project is to pour a 5x9 foot concrete pad by the church to set a wheelchair lift. The church is air conditioned which is important due to the time of the year of the show. The second project is to replace the roof of the print shop building, along with four windows. The roof and windows are old and leak rain and snow. The equipment in the building is old and needs to be kept dry to maintain their integrity. The final project is to restore the livery stable. The roof needs replaced and they want to replace the old doors to make the building, which currently is a garage, look more like a stable. They received a bid from Hermance

Home Care for the projects. Lattimer asked where their annual budget comes from. Homan said they sell concessions, charge admission for the show and the general store sells merchandise. Dickerson asked if the event is in the black. Homan stated that people make donations and there is an endowment to support the show. Schorr asked how many other events occur in a year. Faughn said that there are not true rentals to bring in additional revenue and they have not found their niche. Most events aren't charged to use the grounds as members of the association do not have to pay rental costs. Wear asked who owns the land and the building. Faughn stated the association owns it all and they are a non-profit. Wheaton asked if any of their buildings were damaged in the recent storms and Faughn mentioned they were not. Fellers asked how weddings work on the grounds. Faughn answered that there is a \$150 charge to use the charge only for the ceremony. They do not allow alcohol on the grounds so there are not receptions and in total, there are between 2-3 weddings a year. Homan said they only are able to do events between spring and fall due to their not being running water and the need to winterize the grounds. Morgan asked how they track where guests come from. Faughn answered there is a log book that is placed near the restrooms that people sign. Maul asked if the grant will help grow events. Faughn said this will as their budget is small and it is difficult to keep up with maintenance due to the age of the buildings. Lattimer asked if the church not being ADA affects the event and both answered no. With no further questions, Homan and Faughn were excused.

Schorr stated that the event is huge and stretches the road infrastructure leading to the grounds. Ireland said the event is unique and provides good programming. Fellers stated that it sounds like the Living History Farm outside of Des Moines which is very popular. Lattimer asked if this grant request will help grow the event. Maul stated he believed this is to maintain the event but that the VPC can encourage the association to grow the event and do more living history events as Fellers suggested. Fischer asked Schorr if there were zoning issues and she replied there isn't as alcohol is not sold on the grounds. Lattimer asked if all parts of the grant request meet the criteria of the grants. Maul stated yes as with the request being a major grant ask, has already been sent to the county for initial review. Lattimer made a motion to approve the grant request for \$11,570. Perrett seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Lincoln Parks Foundation Grant Request:

Christie Dionisopoulos, Executive Director of the Lincoln Parks Foundation introduced herself along with Jerry Shorney from Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department and Tony Odem with the Lincoln Flying Disc Association. Dionisopoulos stated the Foundation has been around for twenty-four years and will be the fiscal sponsor for this project. Odem is the acting treasurer of the Lincoln Flying Disc Association and has 4-5 years of experience with the courses in Lincoln. Currently there are thirty-five members and over 200 Facebook followers of the local association. Odem said the purpose of the association is to grow the sport and to provide educational opportunities by working with schools. The national association has 85,000 members and was started over forty years ago. There currently are 500,000 regular players, with professional players making an average household income of \$50,000/year. Odem said that 21% of players identify themselves as professional players. There are over 800 new courses installed annually, with most in the United States. Odem stated there are two parks in Lincoln. Tierra Park at 27th and Highway 2, is a small nine hole course and is not professional in quality. There used to be one at Roper Park West but it was removed due to construction. The course was moved to the east side of Roper Park but there is lots of work that is needed and they would like to have yet another course back on the west side and make it a professional grade course. Their goal is to host a tournament with 180 players – 90 on each course. These two day events bring people in for four nights – two for practice and two for competition. Odem said he competes and often goes to

Des Moines or other cities and as a team they have three hotel rooms for four nights. Lattimer asked if Des Moines was the closest professional course. Odem said that Norfolk just had a tournament and Omaha has four 18-hole courses and continues to build new ones. Waverly and Malcolm each have a nine hole course. Players in Lincoln want more than just a recreation level course according to Odem and Lincoln really needs an 18-hole course to host a tournament. Emporia, KS just hosted the world's largest tournament with 1,200 disc golfers which resulted in \$1 million in economic impact. Maul asked what it will take to get to the Emporia level in Lincoln. Odem said that Emporia not only has professional courses but also create temporary courses on golf courses. Lincoln would need a minimum of six quality courses to do be at that level. Schorr asked if there is sufficient parking at Roper Park for a tournament to which Shorney replied there was. Fischer asked if the improvements from this grant request would help with events such as State Games of America. Odem said that one day of competition was at Roper East for the State Games in 2015, but they also used an 18-hole course in Seward. There was not the ability to host it all in Lincoln. Fellers commented that he always sees players competing when driving by Roper Park. Odem said that people will travel far for a course if it is done correctly. Lattimer asked if the request was for \$10,000 and what it all covered. Odem said yes as the project involves three phases but the grant request is only for Roper East and includes building eighteen cement pads, message boards, course information, tee box metal frames for signage, and new baskets. The entire cost of this first phase is \$21,170 out of \$50,900 that will involve building an additional course on Roper West and enhancing Tierra Park's course. Lattimer asked where the rest of the funding is coming from. Dionisopoulos said the foundation will raise the additional funds to finish the first phase, along with building the west course and improving Tierra Park. Fellers asked when Lincoln would have the ability to do a tournament such as the one in Emporia. Odem answered in a couple of years, once the whole project is completed. Lattimer asked if Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department owned the land to which Shorney replied yes. Perrett asked who is designing the courses to ensure they are professional quality. Odem said that most of the designing abilities come from competing on other courses. Odem said he designed the course for Doane College and that other Lincoln Members have designed courses as well. With no further questions, Dionisopoulos, Odem and Shorney were excused.

Lattimer asked Maul and Feyerherm if there is potential for additional disc golf events in Lincoln. Maul said this project would be an enhancement of State Games of America in which Lincoln is in the running for either 2019 or 2021. Feyerherm commented that the CVB worked with the association and Parks and Recreation in the past on a regional event and proposed building a temporary course at Pioneers Park but was unsuccessful due to not having an established one for the planners to test. Feyerherm also said that Derek Bombeck does meet with the national association at national tradeshow but is unable to bid due to not having quality courses. Lattimer asked if the sport is growing to which Feyerherm said it is. Fischer recognized Kalkwarf as being a player and a medalist at State Games of America. Kalkwarf commented that the sport is inexpensive and anybody can play it which is why it is growing in popularity. Kalkwarf also said that the quality of Roper has gone downhill since removing the west course as a result of the construction on the creek. Lattimer asked Kalkwarf if it is realistic to say that outsiders will come to Lincoln with enhanced courses. Kalkwarf answered he was surprised at how many out-of-state competitors came in for the sport during State Games of America. Lattimer asked if a recommendation can be made to approve the grant contingent on the remaining funds being raised. Maul said yes as it has been done with previous grant requests. Wear made a motion to approve the \$10,000 grant request from the Lincoln Parks Foundation contingent on the remaining funds for the projects being raised. Wheaton seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Morgan asked if there is a time restriction on the completion of the project and the raising of the

remaining funds. Maul said that the contract with the county provides for one year from start to finish for the project.

Star City BMX Grant Request:

Tammy Thimgan with Star City BMX began by thanking the VPC for previous awarded grants and showed pictures of the previous projects. She reminded the committee that the 2013 grant provided asphalt for the turns on the course and focused on erosion with the 2014 grant going to building the starting hill up from four feet to ten feet. Thimgan stated that the track worked with the CVB to get the Gold Cup this summer that will have 600 competitors. Josh Larson, track operator, stated the grant request for \$10,000 would place asphalt on the backside of the starting hill and continue to the entrance of the track. This asphalt will help with erosion, staging and overall maintenance of the course. Currently competitors have to walk thru mud and need to carry their bikes up the starting hill. The track currently uses tarps to help with some of the mud and erosion issues but that barely meets ABA standards. Larson said they have rebuilt parts of the course to ensure better run-off and have prepared the land for asphalt. Maul complimented Star City BMX on what they have been able to accomplish at the track. Thimgan commented that there is a three year old child that currently competes at the track so it encompasses a large demographic. Waite asked if the entire track was asphalt to which Larson commented only the banks/turns were. With no further questions, they were excused.

Perrett stated that the past grants have been a wise investment. Perrett made a motion to approve the \$10,000 grant request from Star City BMX to asphalt the starting hill, entrance to the track and up to the finish line. Dickerson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

University of Nebraska State Museum Grant Request:

Mark Harris, associate director of University of Nebraska State Museum and Dr. Gabor Racz, collection manager of UNL's Manter Laboratory of Parasitology presented their grant request. Harris passed out a handout which overviewed the study of parasitology. Harris said for decades Morrill Hall has used private funds and has borrowed collections for the third floor Cooper exhibits. He stated it is expensive to produce new exhibits when you fabricate them professionally. Harris said that UNL has the second largest collection of animal parasites in the western hemisphere and is the most important systematic parasitology center in the world. Parasites are widespread globally but make up the smallest collection at Morrill Hall. Due to their size, it is difficult to exhibit them. Harris wants to use their grant request to build an exhibit that expands on the strangeness of parasites, the positive and negative effects of them and explain their roadmap. The exhibit would also display animal species that are hosts for parasites and will highlight part of the collection from the zoology department. Harris intends to spend \$8,000-\$10,000 in new donor funds to promote this exhibit throughout 2017. Lattimer asked when the exhibit will open. Harris said from March-December 2017. Lattimer asked Harris to walkthrough what the exhibit will all include. Harris gave a broad concept and stated that the space is 1,600 square feet and the ceiling will display an 100 foot blue tapeworm. A scientific artist will blow up microscopic parasites renderings and there will be displays talking about how the Nebraska environment is affected by parasites (plants, animals, etc.). The exhibit will also discuss what happens worldwide when there are disruptions due to parasites. There will be 3-D models of actual parasites and also species from the zoology collection on display. They intend to sway away from the "gross factor" and focus on the "cool factor". Maul asked if this exhibit will bring in outside people since it is one of the largest collections in the world. Dr. Racz said students especially come from around the world come to study at UNL due to this collection and it is an outlet to introduce the subject and collection to worldwide. Dr. Racz hopes it will generate interest in the study of parasitology,

especially at UNL, as well as spotlight the research the university does. Maul asked if it would be appropriate to mention in the next visitors guide that this is the only collection of its kind. Dr. Racz stated that the next biggest exhibit is in Japan and there are none in Europe. This collection is nothing that one would find at the Smithsonian or at the Natural History Museum in London. Lattimer asked who will be helping with media promotion of the exhibit. Harris responded they will use their internal communications person, Mandy Hasse in addition to pulling assistance from other UNL departments. Fellers said this exhibit reminds him of the television show 'Mysteries at the Museum' and will draw attention. Ireland observed that a major focus of 2017 at museums will be the states sesquicentennial and this exhibit will provide different programing that may help create more hotel overnights as a sidebar activity. Harris stated that 2017 will also mark the 90th anniversary of the building. Wear asked if this collection will bring individuals in the medical field. Dr. Racz answered that the Manter Laboratory already has several in the medical field that come to study but it will be good to engage more early on and emphasize that UNL is a leading institution in Biology, Parasitology, etc. With no further questions they were excused.

Lattimer opened the grant up for discussion. Ireland stated that it is not the job of the VPC to instruct how the museum should do outreach but said they could create a computer based kiosk to continue this exhibit after 2017. Ireland made a motion to approve the \$10,000 grant to the University of Nebraska State Museum for the creation of the parasitology exhibit. Wear seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of February Minutes:

Lattimer asked for a motion to accept the February minutes. Ireland made the motion and it was seconded by Perrett. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of April Financials:

Kalkwarf presented the financial dating from July 2015 through April 2016. Income is \$1,562,230 including \$236,428 for NORCECA Women's Olympic Volleyball and \$35,000 for 2015 State Games of America. Expenses are \$1,708,218 and noted that the increase in sports event promotion over budget was NORCECA which was balanced by the income reflected. There is a net loss of \$145,988 but will be addressed in the next agenda item regarding the ½% Event Promotion Lodging Tax Request. Lattimer asked if there were questions regarding the financials. With no questions, Morgan made a motion to accept the financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Dickerson. Motion carried unanimously.

½% CVB/Event Promotion Lodging Tax Request:

Maul noted that Meyer started the meeting by explaining that the CVB can access bid fee funds from the improvement fund and this ½% request is from the improvement fund. These improvement funds can be used for promotion when facilities are deemed adequate. Maul stated that the CVB generally requests the ½% twice a year but there was not a need for these funds in the first half of the fiscal year. Maul pointed to a handout in the packets which outlined the request for \$180,000 of the improvement fund. Dickerson asked if the ½% request is allowed by statute. Maul said that of the 2% improvement fund, 1% is used for major grant requests, ½% for minor grants and ½% for bid requests. These designations of the fund are part of an agreement with the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners and the Chamber of Commerce. Lattimer made a motion to deem the facilities in Lancaster County as adequate and to approve the use of improvement fund dollars for promotion as presented. The motion was seconded by Morgan. Motion carried unanimously.

CVB FY 2016/17 Budget:

Maul presented the FY 2016/2017 budget. Room tax income is \$1.7 million from the promotion fund which is a 15.1% increase based on the conservative/aggressive figures projected by Meyer. Any excess from the promotion fund will remain at the county to be used for additional promotion needs. As a result of the 15.1% increase in room tax, the room-tax bid fee request decreased over FY 2015/2016. Under expense, travel and training is up 22% as a result of adding two additional tradeshow. Dues and subscriptions have an increase due to professional development of the staff including Leadership Lincoln and other certification. Equipment and maintenance is up due to a need to purchase additional software licenses. Printing costs decreased as a result of not publishing a hardcopy of the meeting planner guide. Utilities decreased due to being rolled into the rent payment. Public relations is down as specialty items for promotion are being purchased in FY 2015-2016. Event promotion is up due to new event growth in the areas of cultural tourism such as Lincoln Calling. Sports event promotion increased as a result of USA Roller Sports returning to Lincoln and other new events such as Major League Triathlon. Depreciation is down as several items have been fully depreciated over the years. Net income is budgeted at \$1,064. Maul stated that the recommendation of the VPC will be carried to the county board for final vote the last week in May. Dickerson made a motion to approve the FY 2016/2017 budget as presented. Wheaton seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Director's Report:

Maul said 2016 was off to a great start and is slated to be one of the busiest years especially in May. Maul reviewed a list of events that have occurred so far and outlined events that will continue through the summer. Events include the Cattlemen's Ball which Kelsey Bousquet sits on the local organizing committee and USA Roller Sports which will be a month in duration this summer. Maul commented that State Games of America was in Lincoln last week for a site visit to look at Lincoln again in 2019 or 2021. Geiger and Associates will bring 26 media writers to Lincoln this week in conjunction with the Nebraska Tourism Commission. The Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown will kick-off the last week in May. Planning is underway for the 2017 Solar Eclipse. Maul is working with the Astronomy Department on UNL on an event. USA Roller Sports will occur at Speedway Village and need a subfloor to put between the turf in the fieldhouse and the competition floors. Maul recognized Fellers for his work with Fischer on exploring the use of city keno funds to purchase the subfloor. The use of these funds was not a good fit but there are discussions with Mayor Beutler's office to have the JPA purchase the floor. Rick Hoppe, Councilman Carl Eskridge, Maul and representatives from Speedway will meet on Friday. If JPA funds cannot be used, there most likely will be a grant request for improvement funds from the county board. Schorr asked if this avenue would be used similar to SMG's grant for the fencing at the festival space. Maul answered yes. Fellers said there is support at the JPA to use these funds. Wear questioned who would own the floor. Maul said the JPA would. Fischer noted that the city owns the competition floor USA Roller Sports uses and this will be an additional asset to accompany the floor. Wheaton asked who would store the floor. Maul answered that Speedway has agreed to house the floor. Maul noted that NSAA State Baseball will be in Lincoln starting over the weekend. He reminded the committee that there is a current split with Sarpy County to alternate hosting Classes A & B. There is a current bid to do the same for the next five years however due to conflicts with the Nebraska Cornhuskers Baseball schedule at Haymarket Park, Lincoln may lose the bid. Currently in 2016, the majority of the state tournament will be held at Sherman Field unlike Sarpy County which can utilize Warner Park. Maul said the 2nd year of GoodGuys "Day at the Hay" will occur June 25th in the Festival Space at Pinnacle Bank Arena. Work is ongoing with the

Lincoln Calling Festival with the ultimate goal to have this event turn into a South by Southwest. A survey of attractions to identify future construction and renovation projects was sent out in February however there has only been four responses. This survey is to identify the 4-5 year plans of attractions and identify the potential impact of the improvement fund. The State Brochure Swap will be in Lexington next week and Tracie Simpson will follow this up in July with an I-80 run of rest area stops to distribute Lincoln information. Maul noted he has been asked to join the advisory board for UNL's Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management program to which he accepted. Maul stated he continues to lobby for baseball fields, basketball and volleyballs courts etc as they are need for growth in the sports market. A marketing grant has been submitted to the Nebraska Tourism Commission to produce a new promotional video for the CVB. Maul noted that a copy of the updated CVB marketing plan will be sent to committee members. Waite asked who received the attractions survey. Maul said it was sent to all the attractions in Lincoln/Lancaster County but will be resent as a result of low turnout.

Feyerherm gave a sales update. There has been 55 sales leads for 24,302 hotel room nights issued in calendar year 2016. This is more than 50% of the total issued leads for calendar year 2015. Currently 74% of the leads are regional/national in nature and 74% also are new leads to Lincoln. Additionally six proposals have been submitted for consideration. There are 30 leads awaiting decision for 12,324 hotel room nights. Currently 48 events have been booked for 18,081 hotel room nights; 61% regional/national events and 73% new business. Focus for the second half of 2016 will be multi-year renewals on events where contracts are set to expire. Feyerherm gave an update of the tradeshow remaining for 2016 and noted the new tradeshow that were reflected in the FY 2016/2017 CVB budget. Feyerherm noted that Rachel O'Donnell will be joining the CVB Sales Team, representing the social, military, education, religious and fraternal markets. She is a recent graduate of UNL's Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management program and has worked on the events team with UNL Admissions department for the past two years. Feyerherm also noted that starting June 1, he and Maul will meet individually with hotel general managers. Due to the number of new hotels opening in a short duration of time, the CVB wants to stay in front of hotels and identify additional ways to help hotels in filling the increased hotel room supply. A discussion occurred regarding the largest increase in hotel openings over a short duration of time. Feyerherm noted that from June 2015-May 2016, there will be a 15% increase in available hotel rooms. Wheaton stated his owners were not aware of all upcoming hotels being constructed otherwise most likely would not have moved forward with construction. Feyerherm commented that several of the new hotel developments broke ground before coming to the CVB to discuss the state of the tourism market in the city. Wear stated that this influx of hotel rooms will only lower hotel rates citywide. Feyerherm reinforced Maul's earlier point about the need for new sports facilities to help occupancy as the hotels being constructed are select-service/limited-service brands that do not have meeting space. Wheaton commented that the hotels that will be affected the most will be economy hotels with limited amenities.

New Business:

Maul directed the committee attention to the revised Improvement Fund Grant Guidelines in the packets. New language has been added at Kerry Eagen's request for 4F stating "General maintenance or replacement of an existing structural component in an existing facility" will not be allowed. Perrett asked if this language was a result of the grant requests from the Lied Center and State Theatre. Maul stated yes as well as to help clarify future requests. Dickerson asked the committee if there are concerns about this new language. Maul stated that the committee may need to get further clarifications on the impact this new language has on future requests. Lattimer asked if the committee can look further into this language before making a decision to approve it. Ireland stated that the

language was put forth to protect the fund and if there is not language then approval/denial of grant requests need to be consistent across the board with no favoritism to certain requests. Maul agreed that there were too many questions in the process and there is a need for clarification. This language is found in grant documents in other counties around the state but stated the committee can get further definition on what the language all entails. Perrett said the committee has often questioned previous requests on whether the project should be funded by a grant or incorporated in the operational budget of the attractions. Maul stated the committee can review the language and get further clarification at the meeting in August. Maul commented that there most likely will be a special meeting of the VPC in June to review a couple large grant requests. Morgan asked for the grant document to have updated economic impact multipliers. Dickerson asked Morgan if he is requesting a higher or lower multiplier to which Morgan answered a higher multiplier.

Adjourn: There being no further discussion Lattimer asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dickerson make a motion to adjourn. Wear seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 pm.