

Visitors Promotion Committee
May 6, 2015
MINUTES

In attendance: Kerry Eagan, Julie Lattimer, Becky Perrett, Roland Morgan, Dave Wheaton, Colette Wear, Lynne Ireland, Roma Amundson, Trent Fellers, Amy Dickerson and Michelle Waite

Staff attending: Derek Feyerherm, Kathy Dvorak, Jeff Maul, Kyle Fischer, Ron Kalkwarf

Guests: Craig Fritz, Dan Soltys, Tammy Samuel, Dave Mlnarik and Trudy Pedley

Call to Order and Introductions: Julie Lattimer called the meeting to order at 1:35pm and introductions were made. Kerry Eagan walked through the Visitor Improvement Fund as anticipated on June 30, 2015, stating there should be an estimated \$360,000 available for grants at the end of the fiscal year. Ireland asked if funds not used were rolled over to the next year and Eagan stated yes.

Abbott Motocross Park Funding Request: The grant request from the Visitors Improvement Fund for \$221,196.53 is to complete a four phase facility improvement project to enhance visitor experience and attract national sanctioned events that would provide a positive economic impact. Craig Fritz gave a brief background on the Abbott Motocross Park stating it is a public off-road sports park that is open year-round for public use and hosts competitive and special events where the majority of participants are from out of town.

Phase 1 of the project is to install a permanent office building on-site to serve multiple purposes for daily customer use and event headquarters. A modular building donated by Lincoln Public Schools would be moved to this location and remodeled to fit needs as well as ADA compliant.

Phase 2 is to install permanent fencing. This phase consists of two parts: using chain link fence around the perimeter of riding areas to act as a barrier for viewing areas and to control traffic patterns and creating infield access that is fenced with wood field fencing and a pedestrian culvert to safely access the infield for better viewing areas. This permanent fencing makes the facility safer and is necessary for hosting sanctioned events.

Phase 3 is for the installation of a 24' x 36' park shelter and furnish the shelter with twelve picnic tables and two grills. The park shelter will enhance the users experience by providing a shaded structure that makes spectators feel more comfortable. This shelter could also be used for special events and organization gatherings.

Phase 4 is to widen the entryway to the facility to allow for separate entrance and exit lanes. This will be done by adding a new entry lane and gate to the current entryway that is separated by a ticket booth. This is needed to implement a more efficient process for rider check-in on riding days and general admission entry on event days, and eliminates traffic congestion.

Fritz stated that along with the improvements that Improvement Funds are requested for, additional improvements to enhance the facility will be made at the expense of Abbott Motocross Park. Those improvements include planting shade trees and landscaping, additional spectator bleachers, adding

rocked access roads and walkways and installing a bike-wash station. The project impact would make them eligible for nationally sanctioned events.

Dickerson questioned the estimated number of hotel rooms utilized based on projected regional/national event attendance. Fritz stated this number was based on past events. Maul asked how many regional/national events do they anticipate securing. Fritz stated they have a 75% shot at getting one in 2016 if facilities are in place which would yield closer to 300-350 room nights. It is imperative to get that first event and once that is secured, there is a possibility of getting two additional events. Three events would equate to 600 room nights times \$375 which equates to \$225,000 in economic impact. Fellers asked what is considered the region. Fritz stated the region covers anywhere from Wichita, KS, Garwin, IA, and towns/cities in Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. There is no other track in Nebraska that can hold such events. This will also provide a training track for local kids. Perrett asked who participates in such events. Fritz responded anyone from the age of 4 through 50 years with the number of participants increasing each year. Lattimer asked of all the phases, which were required to bid on regional/national events and Fritz stated for sure Phase 1 and 2. Maul asked taking into consideration the recent newspaper article, what is the future of the Abbott complex as a whole. Soltys stated that financially the complex as a whole is fine and is funded by the Ethel Abbott foundation; however, the buildings are aging and the heating/ac is aging along with the fact that supporters want to fund teams rather than youth sports as a whole. Dickerson asked about timing and funding source of the additional improvements and Soltys stated they would have to coincide with the other phases and would come out of operating costs. Eagan asked about the irrigation system. Soltys said currently a portable water truck holding 40- 60 gallons is used and is an inefficient way and are looking at an additional portable watering system – a permanent watering system is not recommended as there is no return on investment.

Lattimer thanked Fritz and Soltys for their presentation and excused them. Lattimer then opened the floor for discussion. Morgan asked if they were required to obtain additional bids. Eagan stated they were not required statutorily. Lattimer stated that historically this group provides a lot of the labor themselves. Fischer asked Maul/Feyerherm what is the market. Feyerherm stated they will see a return if they put in the improvements similar to what Star City BMX did and yes, there will be a significant return. Maul stated the motocross market is undefined but is very club oriented.

Lattimer asked Eagan if all projects fell within enhancing the facilities. Eagan replied yes. Eagan stated access off of I-80 provided tremendous potential. Original improvement funds provided helped with paving and the VPC has approved smaller amounts off and on. Waite asked if all four phases needed to be done. Maul stated the office building and fencing would definitely need to be completed; the rest is important would be beneficial. Eagan stated the County Board is scheduled to do a site visit. Feyerherm stated that this track is not just for motocross; runners use it as well. Maul stated the partnership between I-80 Speedway is and a good sign. Lattimer commented there is potential for a bigger draw than tennis and the committee gave \$50,000 of the Woods Tennis Center \$250,000 ask. Dickerson stated getting even one event could pay off. Amundson reiterated they are asking for \$221,000+ and asked what funds they are using to putting in shade trees, landscaping, and bleachers, etc. Lattimer said Abbott is paying for these. Eagan asked if this could be done over several years. Lattimer asked what exactly is required. Eagan commented Phase 1 & 2 could get them going. Dickerson felt all four phases should be kept together. Eagan stated it would be good to know how much they are bringing to the table. Dickerson asked if there was any danger in it going away. Eagan stated they are obligated to operate the track for twenty years per their commitment to the Trails Foundation. Lattimer suggested funding Phases 1, 2 & 4; for approximately \$190,000. Morgan

commented he thought the cost of Phase 1 is a little high; however it is often more costly to retrofit than build new. Amundson suggested if the committee could ask for more information and move a decision to the next meeting. Eagan suggested to make a recommendation and allow the County Board to ask additional questions. Perrett asked if Phases 1, 2 & 4 are approved, will they have enough money to complete the rest of the project? Morgan commented their facility improvement budget is significantly higher in 2015 than 2014. Dickerson made a motion to give Abbott Motocross Park \$150,000 to be spent on Phases 1, 2 & 4 and to encourage grantee to get additional bids and other donations to offset the difference in cost. Morgan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Lancaster County Agricultural Society Funding Request: Amy Dickerson began the conversation saying their grant request is for an event that has a dual mechanism involving the Lancaster County Super Fair and a closing ceremony for the State Games of America working in conjunction with the Nebraska Sports Council. Amy also stated there is an urgency for this request as this idea needs to be marketed now. Amy introduced Tammy Samuel and Trudy Pedley of LEC and Dave Mlnarik of Nebraska Sports Council. Tammy representing the Lancaster Event Center, stated the grant request is for \$10,000 to expand or improve an existing visitor attraction and the Nebraska Sports Council request will be used for the promotion and advertising costs associated with such exhibit. The exact use would be for a State Games of America and 4-H/FFA Closing Ceremony at the Lancaster County Super Fair. More specifically to invite State Games Participants, family and fans out to the Super Fair to be recognized with the 4-H/FFA competitors on August 2nd, at 8:30 p.m. with fireworks to follow at 9:30 p.m., weather permitting. August 2nd is the last day for 4-H competitors. The event would be held at the Muhlbach Motorsports Complex. It is anticipated there could be as many as 5,000. Tammy presented possible details of the event with joint presentations by the Ag Society Board and County Board as well as the State Games officials.

Lattimer asked if there were any questions and Fellers asked how many participants are expected. Maul provided information of 20,000 athletes with an anticipated total of 60,000 including family and friends; approximately 12,000 athletes would be from Nebraska, leaving 8,000 from out of state. 20-30% would be staying in Lincoln and looking for something else to do. Lattimer asked the committee if they preferred to vote on both requests after the second presentation as they are connected. The committee preferred to wait to vote on the Ag Society request until hearing both presentations.

Nebraska Sports Council Funding Request: Mlnarik stated that since the grant request from the Nebraska Sports Council is in conjunction with the Lancaster County Ag Society funding request, the basics of the request have been covered. The NSC request is for \$10,000 for expanding and improving an existing visitor attraction, specifically the State Games of America and will be used for closing ceremony activities at the Lancaster County Super Fair on August 6, 2015. Funds will be used for promotion and advertising costs associated with this activity. Mlnarik also expressed the need for quick action as time was now to do such advertising and promotion. Mlnarik stated the closing ceremony activities were a great way to tie up the State Games of America. Mlnarik also stated this would be a very positive direction for the SGA and that the 2019 RFP will be coming out after this summer and NSC will want to apply. Mlnarik stated that SGA volunteers will be allowed to attend the closing ceremonies at the Lancaster County Super Fair free of charge and will spend money for a benefit of the fair.

Dickerson asked Pedley if she had anything to add and Pedley stated that the Super Fair has grown tremendously since 2010 and this exposure would be wonderful for the fair.

Lattimer asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Wear and Wheaton asked when the e-blasts will happen as room and flight reservations need to be made now. Most participants will drive so not as much urgency for reservations. Dickerson stated the program needs to go to the printer by May 15 which will list the sponsors. Lattimer stated the County Board would be listed as a sponsor if the grants were approved.

The guests and Dickerson were excused and additional discussion ensued. Lattimer stated she loved the idea of the two organizations working together. Thought it was a little odd they were asking for a grant as they would do this even if they didn't get the grants. Amundson stated the County Board has a relationship with the Ag Society so they want it to be successful. Perrett stated she liked it as it balances out any money for SGA; Maul stated the CVB did provide funds via bid fees. Ireland asked how would the sponsorship be listed and Maul stated it would be listed as the Lancaster County Board with the other sponsors and that \$10,000 would be a silver level sponsorship package. Wear asked if grant money could go for marketing. Eagan stated that if facilities are deemed adequate, money can be used for marketing. Eagan questioned whether this would be used for medals and fireworks as that would not be considered operating costs. Eagan then read the rules on what is not qualified and it stated that funds cannot be used for operational expenses. Several VPC members did not see these as operational expenses as it is a new event and would have not occurred without these funds. Lattimer made the motion to grant \$10,000 to the Lancaster Ag Society to create an additional promotional attraction partnership with State Games of America. Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Lattimer then made the motion to deem the facilities adequate to allow improvement funds for use of promotion and to grant \$10,000 to the Nebraska Sports Council to do proactive marketing for the SuperFair to keep State Games of America participants in Lincoln. Perrett seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of February Minutes: Perrett made the motion to approve the minutes of February 11, 2015, and seconded by Ireland. Motion carried.

Approval of April Financials: Kalkwarf presented the profit and loss statement for the period July, 2014 through April, 2015, stating that total income was \$1,439,210 which is slightly over budget due to increases in Visitors Guide advertising and USA Roller Skating rebates along with grant income. Expenses were \$1,541,204 with areas of note being salaries which is down due to one less employee; meetings and conferences being over, but under in travel which offsets the difference; and postage is under as have not yet seen an increase in requests for Visitor's Guides. Net income is (\$101,994). Lattimer requested a motion to approve the financials as presented which was done by Morgan and seconded by Wheaton. Motion carried.

½% CVB/Event Promotion Lodging Tax Request: Maul presented the request to the VPC Committee for the release of ½% of lodging tax funds to cover past and existing fees that need to be paid. Breakdown of requested funds: \$85,000 NSAA Girls State Basketball; \$85,000 NSAA Boys Basketball; \$10,000 Formula SAE.

Maul also asked that funds may be requested four times per year in the new budget year rather than in six month increments presently.

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; seconded by Dickerson. Motion carried.

CVB FY 2015-16 Budget: Maul presented the proposed budget for the fiscal year July, 2015 through June, 2016 stating they try not to have any huge changes from year to year. Room Tax-CVB reflects a proposed increase of 5.5% which would still not max-out what could be asked for; Room Tax-Bid Fees remain the same; and other income is down 47.6% as it is a non-roller skating year. Total proposed budget income is \$1,888,620. Budgeted expenses are comparable to previous year with the exception of Travel and Training which is down due to attending one or two less trade shows; Auto Expense is up as will do more outreach; Rent is up significantly due to the move to 1128 Lincoln Mall and the auditing requirements for the new lease; Garage Rental and Parking down as parking is provided at new location – only need to pay for parking at the Visitor’s Center; Professional Fees are up due to more web hosting will be required with the expansion of the sports webpage; Event Promotion up due to increased activity with association sports and Sports Event Promotion down as it will be a non-roller skating year and do not need to plan for NSAA wrestling. Net income estimated at \$1,439.

Lattimer asked for a motion to approve the budget as presented with was done by Wheaton and seconded by Morgan. Motion carried.

Director’s Report: Maul stated that the Visitors Center activity is up with 584 visitors and 161 telephone inquiries. Maul is working with Hillis to seasonally decorate the Visitor Center to make it more inviting. Also planning to grow the brochure inventory to include more than just hotels/attractions and asked if anyone had brochures they would like to provide.

Maul gave a planning update for the 2015 State Games of America which will be held July 28 – August 2, 2015. 2,800 athletes have registered from 44 states so far and the CVB is reaching out to get additional states. The CVB is focusing on creating a welcoming atmosphere and a VIP Reception. Volunteers can sign up SGA2015.com or Like on Facebook! Maul is confident this will be the largest State Games of America ever.

Maul reported that an agreement for the 2015/2016 fiscal year has been made with Snitily Carr for magazine ad placement. Tracie Simpson will be attending a brochure swap in York on May 14, 2015, which will be a distribution event for 16 I-80 Welcome Centers. Information sheets will be distributed to each center as a reminder of major events in Lincoln, which will serve as a new information source for our Visitors Center. There will be a follow-up brochure drop-off with the I-80 run at the end of June.

The 2015 Be A Tourist campaign kicked off its 12th year in conjunction with National Tourism Week. There are a total of 28 attractions/events and new this year are six theatre stages; and, there will be 25 prize packages. Passports will be available at the Party in the Parks information table on May 16th. Maul stated that retirement communities have been using these to get their residents out and about the community.

The 2015 Lincoln Marathon was another success with over 50 volunteers at the CVB/Chamber water station.

Upcoming events of note include the office move to 3 Landmark Centre, 1128 Lincoln Mall. The main

office will be closed May 20- 22 and reopen for business on May 26, 2015. There will be a ribbon cutting on June 17 and everyone will be invited. Other events include the National Science Olympiad, May 13-17; NSAA State Baseball, May 15- 21; Formula SAE, June 17-20; International Thespian Festival, June 22-27; and the Goodguys Car Show, June 27 at the Pinnacle Bank Arena festival space. This is the first year for the Goodguys Car Show and anticipate 1,200 cars.

Derek Feyerherm gave a sales report stating there have been 63 sales leads for 22,382 room nights of which 70% are new leads and 62% of those are regional or national. Six proposals have been submitted for consideration and 55 leads are currently pending for 17,659 room nights. Twenty-one events have been booked for 8,036 room nights of which 52% are new events and 40% are regional/national. There are multiple events secured for Lincoln, but waiting on contracts to be finalized.

Derek Bombeck attended the National Association of Sports Commissions trade show in Milwaukee, WI, April 27 – 30 and had 31 appointments with sports right holders. Discussions are being held to create a sports driven “Team Nebraska” for tradeshow cooperation.

The CVB is working with VIPA Solution to enhance the Lincoln.org website to include the ability to search by sports type and facility name. It is hoped this enhancement will be completed for a June 30 launch date. A sports-specific RFP will be added to the website and improvements to the photo library and event calendar will be made as well.

Derek also gave a USA Roller Sports update and the coordination with SMG and the Speedway Sporting Village to bring this event back to Lincoln.

New Business: Lattimer stated there was one item of new business – revisions to the grant guidelines; specifically item #2 which was moved from the second page to the first page. Eagan suggested language for special meetings be removed and a strike-through version used for review. Discussion was also held on #16 with regard to recognition of the “Lancaster County Visitor Improvement Fund” being featured in pertinent materials and suggestion this requirement be incorporated in the contract and proof of such be furnished before money is received. Eagan stated he would draft contract language and it was determined to table that change at this time. Perrett suggested that the word chance in #8 be changed to opportunity and all agreed.

Adjourn: Ireland mentioned the Haymarket Development Corporation is launching the Haymarket walking tour on May 19. This is the tour the VPC approved funds for a brochure about a year ago. Maul will send out the invitation details. There being no further discussion Lattimer adjourned the meeting at 3:38 pm.