

**Minutes**  
**Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board**  
**March 19 2008**

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board met at Extraordinary Ventures at 200 S. Elliot Rd. Chapel Hill at 8:00 a.m. Host: Marc Roth

**Board Members Present:** Lee Pavao, Bob Ward, Linda Convisor, Rachel Hawkins, Rick Strunk, Moses Carey, Jr., Jim Ward, Liz Parham, Creston Woods, Dave Gephart, Jon Wilner

**Members Absent:** Frances Dancy, Mark Sherburne

**Other's Present:** Willie Best, Orange County Asst. Manager

**Staff Present:** Laurie Paolicelli, Linda Ekeland, Tina Fuller

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Lee Pavao, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Pavao motioned to approve the February 20th, 2008 minutes. Dave Gephart moved to accept, all board members were in agreement and motion was carried unanimously.

Chair Pavao introduced Marc Roth, Executive Director of Extraordinary Ventures, Inc.

Mr. Roth informed board members on the dream behind Extraordinary Ventures – a non-profit organization in which the facility serves as a meeting venue for business, religious and social groups and a recreation center for mentally challenged and autistic persons 15 yrs and up. Revenue received from the meeting space rentals support Extraordinary Ventures commitment to provide employment and social engagement for these citizens of the community.

Chair Pavao gave Paolicelli the floor for the Executive Directors' report.

## **REPORTS**

### **Executive Directors Report**

Paolicelli briefly spoke on current events. Paolicelli then directed members to a handout previewing the strategic plan of action for the budget year 2008-2009. She stated that with the predicted recession the Visitors Bureau would scale back on out-of-state marketing and concentrate more on local marketing, within 200 miles to include Richmond, Charlotte, Greenville and Wilmington. Paolicelli discussed the goals for marketing and sales to include further testing of gay, food and heritage tourism markets. Paolicelli explained the tourism opportunities for enticing visitor and conference bookings. Some of the strategies and tactics include offering transportation to groups (a meeting with Duke Energy is lined up), strengthening NCHSAA and arts community relationships. Marketing costs were also discussed. The Visitors Bureau will continue to promote Hillsborough and Carrboro by directing visitors to our toll-free line, website and visitor center.

A discussion ensued on the decision for cutting back on out-of-state marketing when the long-term objective of the Visitors Bureau is to bring people in from all over. It was determined that the decision is short-term and based on the current state of the economy. It was also determined that 66% of marketing funds would go locally/regionally and 33% would be spent on national group markets. In a more stable economy the numbers may be 50/50.

Paolicelli informed members that the amount of visitors to the Visitor Center is going down due to lack of parking which may be a result of the Courtyard parking issue causing more of their employees as well as other employees using the Bentley Building parking lot. Discussion followed.

### **Sales Report**

Staff member Linda Ekeland gave a summary on her recent travel to Charlotte. Ekeland and seven (7) industry partners including the Friday Center spent three days in Charlotte targeting key companies i.e. Philip Morris, UNC Charlotte, and Wachovia in an effort to lure them to Chapel Hill. A drawing for a "Chapel Hill Weekend Getaway" will be offered to any meeting planner who books a program with a minimum of 15 room nights anytime during June 15<sup>th</sup>-September 15<sup>th</sup>. Included in the package are tickets to Carolina-Notre Dame football game, dinner at the new Shula's restaurant, breakfast at The Franklin, Friday nights on the Front Porch (Carolina Inn) package, Two nights stay at the Sienna and gift baskets from several other hotels. Key chains with business cards and a promotional postcard mailing were also part of this blitz. Drawing will be held September 16<sup>th</sup>. Ekeland stated that she would be able to track the outcome. She also stated that the Charlotte Blitz was so successful that some hoteliers showed an interest in doing a blitz quarterly. Board member Jon Wilner suggested a promotion on the Arts and offered an incentive from the Arts Center the next time around.

## **Budget & Finance**

Paolicelli informed board members that the budget is basically the same as last year with the exception of the fund balance. There will be no fund balance appropriated for 2008-2009. The ideal fund balance would stay at 12%, however that may increase if there is any surplus at the end of this fiscal year. Orange County allocates 100% of the occupancy tax collected to the Visitors Bureau; Chapel Hill allocates about 10% of their total occupancy tax collections to visitor services. Pavao updated Paolicelli and the full board about his meeting with Town Manager Roger Stancil last month where he requested 1% of the total 3 % that the town collects. Concern was expressed that council members would use the recent 1% county increase as a reason to deny the request. Board member Jim Ward assured other members that he would advocate the cause.

New and increased expenses include an 8-12 passenger vehicle, dues, promoting/hosting the Festival of the Book, and marketing research. Decreased expenses include phone and postage due to more usage of the Internet

Chair Pavao invited questions, discussion etc. With none, Pavao motioned to approve the 2008/2009 budget. Dave Gephart moved to accept, Moses Carey, Jr. seconded. With all members in favor, the 2008/2009 proposed budget will go to the Budget Dept.

Finance Committee Chair Moses Carey, Jr., reviewed the current budget and reported that all looks normal and reiterated that the fund balance would not be spent until needed. Chair Pavao motioned to accept, Moses Carey, Jr. so moved, Rick Strunk seconded. With all in favor the current MTD/YTD budget is approved.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Board member Creston Woods informed that at their request DOT has put new signage on Pittsboro Street in an effort to decrease fender benders. Guests will now be greeted at the first entranceway with exits now at the former entrance point.

The CHOCVB is currently collaborating with the O.C. Parks & Rec. Dept. in designing a sponsorship brochure for the new West 10 Soccer Center.

Construction is on target with the new parking lot and facilities in Hillsborough. Details can be found on the County's website. The parking garage will add about 20% more public parking spaces.

The EDC is hosting their annual State of the Local Economy at the Carolina Club. The guest speaker is Charles Hayes, President and CEO of Research Triangle Regional Partnership who will give his perspective on economics.

Paolicelli informed board members that this is Moses Carey's last official meeting. BOCC Barry Jacobs will fill the seat for the remainder of Carey's term.

Congratulations to the Carolina Inn for their award from Meeting Professionals International bi-monthly meeting and golf tournament at Finley.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Board member Jim Ward complimented on the collaboration with UNC athletics but raised the question on the VB's relationship with the hospital. Ward expressed his opinion that it should be the same. Paolicelli agreed and contact information was given.

Trolley update: Paolicelli updated board that she continues to pursue newer, environmentally sound, tour bus options, similar to, but very different from, the town's Trolley of more than a decade ago. She reported that several members of the original trolley committee she began one year ago, were still hard at work on the subject. Recent meetings with the Advanced Energy Group out of Raleigh, former commissioner Steve Halkiotis and community citizen Marty Mandell, offered new hope into an electronic tour bus produced in Chattanooga. At that meeting it was suggested that Scott Gardner, community relations with Duke Energy and Stick Williams with Duke Energy be approached to sponsor a part of the Trolley in keeping with Duke's PR efforts in Orange County.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Pavao motioned to adjourn, Moses Carey, jr. so moved to accept with Jim Ward seconding. With all business of the Board completed, Chair Pavao adjourned the meeting at 9:44 a.m.

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Minutes Drafted by:  
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

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Minutes Accepted by:  
Lee Pavao, Chair

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Date

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Date