

# Nebraska Travel Association

Quarterly Meeting

Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Lied Lodge & Conference Center

Nebraska City, NE

## Minutes

A quarterly meeting of the Nebraska Travel Association (NETA) was held at the Lied Lodge & Conference Center in Nebraska City, NE on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The meeting was held at the conclusion of the 2018 Nebraska Tourism Conference. All executive board members were present (David Fudge [North Platte], President; Traci Jeffrey [Norfolk], Vice President; Kristina Reeves [Chadron], Treasurer; Jarrod McCartney [Red Cloud], Secretary; and Carol Schlegel [McCook], Past President). A total of 35 people attended the meeting, including Nebraska Tourism Commission Director John Ricks.

The meeting was **called to order** at 8:31am.

**Minutes** from the August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting conducted via the Zoom teleconferencing service were reviewed. Lisa Burke (North Platte) made a motion to approve. Michele Hayes (Omaha) seconded. Motion passed without debate.

Treasurer Reeves gave the **Financial Report**. A balance sheet and budget were attached to the agenda that was handed out at the meeting. The reports show total assets of \$73,204.20 with a gross profit of \$20,403.24 and a budget of \$27,730.00 for July 2018 through June 2019. There were some questions about aspects of the Profit & Loss sheet, with President Fudge explaining NETA's money market account and CDs. Terri Licking (Thedford) made a motion to approve. Roger Jasnoch (Kearney) seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion moved onto the **Brochure Swap** site location selection. Bids from Seward and Broken Bow were reviewed. Both were strong candidates but the general consensus was that the Seward facility was likelier a better fit for the pallets/forklifts. Jasnoch made a motion to accept Seward's bid. Kevin Howard (Sidney) seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Seward will be the host city for the 2019 NETA Brochure Swap, which will be on May 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> and located at the Seward County Fairgrounds. May 14<sup>th</sup> will be the NETA meeting and the 15<sup>th</sup> will be the Brochure Swap.

Jasnoch provided the **Legislative Update** to the group. He summarized NETA Lobbyist Andy Pollock's presentation at the Tourism Conference the day before. Brad Mellema (Grand Island) discussed Tourism Improvement Districts (TID) and noted that Senator Quick from Grand Island is still interested in working on the idea if NETA is. Jasnoch discussed Pollock's thoughts on the Agritourism Liability law and Pollock's advice to add some defining language about weather as weather is not presently listed as an inherent risk. NTC Director John Ricks revealed to the group that the State of Nebraska did eventually take the \$1 million it had said it would take from the NTC on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Some discussion about Legislative Bills 802 and 940 occurred, with Jasnoch pointing out the history behind LB940 and the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF). Jasnoch noted that the LB940 will allow for greater flexibility and cast a broader net in terms of who can seek funding—something that will likely be of immense benefit to smaller and rural communities. Schlegel wrapped up legislative discussion by noting that those

interested in being on the NETA call should contact her and accept the Google group invitation to be part of the calls.

Next, Fudge discussed **NETA sponsoring the American Bus Association (ABA) meeting in Omaha**, which will take place January 10-14, 2020 in Omaha. Fudge provided some background about ABA and discussed an agreement between NETA and several CVBs from around the state to partner on a \$50,000 platinum sponsorship. It was noted that the Iowa Group Travel Association had already secured one of the 2 platinum sponsorships. The general consensus was that NETA should ban together to sponsor ABA in Omaha under the NETA flag.

**Tourism Industry Funding** was the next topic of discussion. NTC Director Ricks noted that in the most recent survey, Nebraska had at least moved up from 50<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup> in the rankings of states people are most likely to visit. Ricks gave background on the tourism budget, noting that Nebraska dedicates about \$6.5 million to tourism while the national average budget is \$20.2 million. He stated that it would be nice to move closer to the \$13.1 million median. It was pointed out that Nebraska's model of raising revenue for tourism taxes the industry itself (lodging tax). Ricks noted that California has a statewide TID and spreads the tax across multiple industries that benefit from tourism or are direct corollaries to tourism. Ricks noted that a \$1.6 million media budget will likely not get the new campaign out as far as we would like. Mellema used this to segue into a discussion about the new ad campaign, "Nebraska: Honestly, it's not for everyone." Mellema advised the group to support the new campaign collectively and to change the way we think of ourselves as a tourist destination. Additional positive discussion about the new campaign and reactions (both positive and negative) went on for a few minutes as did discussion about how to promote the state at trade shows.

Discussion transitioned back to how to fund the industry going forward. Fudge and Ricks discussed using **NAIC codes** and Ricks pointed out that collecting this way, even at 0.5% would increase the tourism budget by \$18 million. It is also a continual funding mechanism that draws from a variety of sources that reap revenue from tourism instead of limiting it to lodging taxes. Ricks also pointed out that using NAIC codes would make it so the legislature could not simply sweep out the money for alternative uses when it faced a budget crunch—it would have to end the tourism commission, etc to take the money. Jasnoch asked about whether or not it would be possible to breakdown the NAIC codes at the county level. Ricks responded that this could be accomplished. Someone in the audience asked if this meant lodging taxes would be eliminated. It was noted that this was a possibility, but something that would have to be ironed out should we move forward with alternative ideas about funding the industry. It was noted that, conceivably, a county could still impose lodging, occupancy or other taxes but that further discussion and consultation was needed.

Fudge and others noted that it would be critical to get broad industry support beyond the NTC and CVBs in order to make a NAIC codes model work. NETA will need to get attractions, restaurants, hotels, and a variety of tourism related businesses or businesses who benefit from tourism to get on board should we move forward with the idea. Fudge and the group brainstormed a possible list of partners NETA and the industry would need to work with to make something happen which includes but is not limited to the following: NETA's legislative committee; lodging/hotel association; restaurant association; wine and grape growers association; State Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Major Events (i.e. College World Series, Nebraskaland, etc); AAA, CVBs, attractions, Game & Parks; tourism commissioners; History Nebraska; museums and museum groups; Humanities Nebraska, etc. It was also suggested that we talk to the Department of Revenue about NAICS codes. Discussion shifted to short-term rentals like Air BnB and if legislation to compel them to collect lodging tax was in the offing. Ricks gave an overview of how

lodging taxes work in the state of Nebraska at the state and the county level. Some discussion was had about the omnibus bill Governor Ricketts vetoed at the end of the last legislative session that included legislation on short-term rentals. It was noted that the omnibus bill was vetoed because it included Land Bank legislation and that short-term rentals would likely be revisited in the next session.

Burke motioned that NETA pursue alternative or additional funding mechanisms for the tourism industry. Licking seconded. No vote was held but the general consensus was that we should explore our options and explore creating partnerships.

Mellema discussed forming a subcommittee of members of the former NACVB that merged with NETA so that Nebraska would get representation at events like the Upper Midwest Convention & Visitors Bureau conference in Fargo, ND. He noted that trainings were very CVB specific.

It was noted that the NETA website would be a good location for training materials, new videos, etc. Burke asked about other committees under NETA. Fudge and others listed: Legislative, Marketing & PR, UMCVB, and Brochure Swap. It was noted that NETA should do a fundraiser with shirts, shotglasses, etc, connected to the new tourism slogan.

**Scholarship** winners spoke up and thanked NETA for allowing them to attend the Nebraska Tourism Conference. Winners introduced themselves.

With their being no further business, the meeting **adjourned** at approximately 9:30am.

The **Next Meeting** of the Nebraska Travel Association will be *February 1<sup>st</sup> in Lincoln at the NSEA Building*, the day of the NETA Legislative Luncheon.

ATTENDEES: **Jarrold McCartney** (Willa Cather Foundaton; Red Cloud Heritage Tourism); **David Fudge** (NEBRASKAland Days); **Beth Foland** (Nebraska Life Magazine); **Brad Mellema** (Grand Island CVB); **Sharon Hambek** (Seward Visitors Committee); **Jeanne Wiemer** (Seward); **Kirsten Parker** (Golden Spike Tower); **Jeanna Stavas** (Whispering Pines B&B); **Karen Baker** (Nebraska Association of B&Bs); **Denise DuVall** (Lied Lodge & Conference Center); **Stacie Wilken** (Norfolk Area Visitors Bureau); **Sandy Stolder** (Gandy House B&B; Humboldt); **Roger Jasnoch** (Kearney CVB); **Connie Van Nostrand** (Lied Lodge & Arbor Day Farm); **Tracie Simpson** (Lincoln CVB); **Fred Uhg** (Sarpy County Tourism); **Dean Jacobs** (Cherry County Tourism); **Suzane Schmidt** (Game & Parks); **Michele Hayes** (Visit Omaha); **Connie Brott** (Hayes Center Visitors Committee); **Becky Uehling** (Ogallala/Keith County Chamber); **Lisa Burke** (North Platte CVB); **Terri Licking** (Sandhills Scenic Byway); **Kevin Howard** (Sidney CVB); **Patty Glidden** (Sandhills Motel & Glidden Canoe Rental); **Judy McCune** (Cambridge); **David Sawyer** (Burwell Economic Development); **Abby Schademan** (Wayne Area Economic Development); **John Ricks** (Nebraska Tourism Commission); **Carol Reichel**; **Jane Gustafson** (Game & Parks); **Christa Monti** (Boys Town); **Kayla Gasker** (National Park Service—Scottsbluff); **Bob Sautter** (York CVB); **Deb Loseke** (Columbus CVB); **Carol Schlegel** (McCook/Red Willow County CVB); **Traci Jeffrey** (Norfolk Area Visitors Bureau); **Kristina Reeves** (Discover Northwest Nebraska)