

Nebraska Travel Association

Quarterly Meeting / Brochure Swap
May 14, 2019
Junto Vineyard & Events Center
Seward, NE

Minutes

A quarterly meeting of the Nebraska Travel Association (NETA) was held at the Junto Vineyard & Event Center near Seward, NE on Tuesday, May 14th, 2019. The meeting was held prior to the annual Brochure Swap, held at the Seward County Fairgrounds the following day. Executive Board members present were David Fudge [North Platte], President; Traci Jeffrey [Norfolk], Vice President; Jarrod McCartney [Red Cloud], Secretary; and Carol Schlegel [McCook], Past President). Treasurer Kristina Reeves (Treasurer) was not in attendance. 27 people attended the meeting.

The meeting was **called to order** at 3:07pm. Fudge briefly introduced the executive board to first time attendees of the meeting.

Minutes from the February 1st, 2019 meeting that followed the conclusion of the annual Legislative Luncheon in Lincoln were submitted for approval. Karla Nieden-Streeks (Gering) made a motion to approve. Schlegel seconded. Motion passed unanimously without debate.

Fudge 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 \$83,754.94 with \$21,397.30 in net income for July 2018 through June 2019. The American Bus Association sponsorship and money that was collected for that accounts for the increase in total assets. Accordingly, that surplus is committed to the ABA sponsorship. Roger Jasnoch (Kearney) made a motion to approve the balance and Jeffrey seconded. Motion passed unanimously without debate.

At 3:12pm Fudge recognized new members and attendees and had the group introduce themselves to the entire assembly. Newcomers from Kimball, Seward, and Chadron were in attendance.

At 3:16pm NETA lobbyist Andy Pollock from Remboldt Ludtke LLP presented a **legislative update**. Pollock noted that debate about the current budget and property tax relief was the present focus of the unicameral. He expected the budget for tourism, which experienced an increase, would be retained. He noted the passage of LB57, which is intended to help AirBnB rentals avoid overregulation from municipalities but which will also require the AirBnB platform to collect sales and lodging taxes instead of the individual proprietor. Pollock also noted that LB187, which would have altered the Civic and Community Center Financing Fund in a way that would promote funding of a sports facility, did not pass. LB637, which will allow the Nebraska Tourism Commission to sell products featuring the new slogan and logo, passed.

A Q&A session followed and particular member concerns were addressed by Pollock.

Jasnoch noted that *the next Legislative Luncheon is set for Wednesday, Feb. 12th in Lincoln* at a site yet to be determined.

***UPDATE As of May 21st, 2019 LB294 passed, though the Governor still has veto power over it. Pollock pointed out, “The Governor has authority to line-item veto the budget, and some line-item vetoes may be in the offing, but we’ve heard nothing to suggest that he would make any veto to the NTC budget”

At 3:27pm Fudge presented a new **management proposal** for the NETA organization. The proposal was submitted at NETA’s request by Remboldt Ludtke LLP & Wendy Morrissey. Fudge provided some context for the NACVB/NETA merger, the intended scope of the NETA organization, and the difficulty of expanding or progressing the functionality and influence of the group as it is reliant on volunteer efforts from people who already have full time jobs and other commitments. Fudge turned the discussion over to Pollock who introduced Morrissey and reviewed her credentials with the group. Prior to the meeting, NETA Executive Board members had been given a resume from Morrissey and were able to have a discussion.

Pollock noted that Morrissey would work with Remboldt & Ludtke on NETA’s behalf and that the scope of the proposal includes not only Morrissey in a management role, but also retains Pollock and Nick Paden’s services as lobbyists. It would also create a Political Action Committee (PAC) that Pollock believes is a necessary component of continued political viability. The cost for the proposal would essentially increase the \$19,000 NETA presently pays for Remboldt & Ludtke’s services to \$35,000 per year but add Morrissey’s management duties and the PAC. Morrissey’s proposed management duties are available upon request and spelled out in some detail in the proposal, but would essentially allow NETA members and the executive board to focus on big picture issues and political engagement instead of administrative details.

Morrissey gave an overview of her skills and professional background, including relevant work for the Turfgrass Association and the University of Nebraska’s Agronomy Department. Morrissey also has a marketing background. Morrissey, Pollock, and the NETA Board acknowledged that adding \$16,000 for her services would require NETA to grow its membership and consider restructuring fees. Fudge then turned discussion over to the group and asked for feedback and ideas on how to grow membership/revenue.

A question was asked about how the board would function should Morrissey be hired—it was determined that the board would need to remain active (see note above about big picture issues and political engagement). Niedan-Streeks noted how NETA needed to communicate the importance of the organization to a wider audience and Pollock noted that at present NETA is too small and isolated of a group to have the impact we desire. Jasnoch and others noted that having management would allow the board members to develop policy and communicate more effectively. Brad Mellema (Grand Island) asked a question about additional expenses not covered in the proposal and it was noted that mileage and other expenses would likely exist. At this point, Pollock and Morrissey left the room to await the group’s decision.

Fudge transitioned to discussing NETA’s financial situation and how we would pay for Morrissey’s services. It was noted that for 2019-2020 we would have essentially about 2 years or so of reserve funding at our present level of organizational activity. It was posited that we could tap into the reserve to pay for the expanded management services if necessary and that the contract was only for 1 year. The contract length would give NETA time to see if Morrissey’s work would bring in more income and that we could re-evaluate the relationship if growth does not occur. Discussion went on for a little while and it was noted that NETA currently has a little over 80 members. Schlegel pointed out that for a

statewide organization with its influence in multiple economic sectors, 80 members was not that impressive. The conclusion from the entire group was that we need to grow to be taken seriously. It was also noted that the money sitting in reserve was not helping NETA meet its objective of helping tourism. Fudge pointed out the absence of tourism in the recent Blueprint Nebraska campaign as evidence that for many in the state tourism is an afterthought or at least not taken as seriously as it should be.

Niedan-Streeks made a motion to approve the proposal from Remboldt Ludtke & Wendy Morrissey. Mellema seconded. Kevin Howard (Sidney) pointed out a concern that an increase in dues for members would hurt small businesses and effectively force them out of the organization. It was suggested that their possibly be a tiered membership plan. A concerned was also raised that NETA had not yet had the time to vet Morrissey's resume. Mellema suggested that the motion be modified to give the executive board time to vet the candidate. *Niedan-Streeks modified the motion.* Mellema seconded. Motion passed, 16-0 (it should be noted that not all in attendance were NETA members and therefore this likely passed unanimously).

Next, Fudge moved on to discussion about NETA getting behind doing more robust data collection via NAICS codes and exploring using NAICS as a funding mechanism for tourism in the state. Jasnoch pointed out that it would be useful for NETA to lead the discussion on this topic so that it would be apparent that there is support for it beyond the NTC.

Mellema discussed the Upper Midwest CVB Conference that will be held in Fargo, ND in September 2019. He announced that Missouri had recently been added to the states that represent the Upper Midwest CVB.

At 4:25pm, Schlegel gave instructions for the Brochure Swap that took place the following day.

It was noted during the meeting that the Tourism Commission had selected Grand Island for the 2020 Travel Conference, South Sioux City for the 2021 Travel Conference, and Gering for 2022. Everyone was reminded that the 2019 Conference will be in North Platte.

With their being no further business, Schlegel motioned for adjournment. Karen Baker seconded. Motion passed. The meeting **adjourned** at approximately 4:29pm.

The **Next Meeting** of the Nebraska Travel Association will be in October in North Platte during the annual Nebraska Travel Conference, with the exact date and time TBD.

ATTENDEES: **Jarrold McCartney** (Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce); **David Fudge** (NEBRASKAland Days); **Brad Mellema** (Grand Island CVB); **Roger Jasnoch** (Kearney CVB); **Carol Schlegel** (McCook/Red Willow County CVB); **Traci Jeffrey** (Norfolk Area Visitors Bureau); **Andy Pollock**; **Wendy Morrissey**; **Lori Cox**; **Karen Kollars** (Nebraska Tourism Commission); **Stacie Welken**, **Karla Nieden Streeks** (Gering); **Karen Baker** (Blair); **Courtney Schlake**; **Tom Watt** (Thomas County); **Twyla Watt** (Thomas County); **Sherry Ramig**; **Sue Imig** (Seward County); **Mary Meyer** (Seward County); **Kylee Odenbach** (Northwest Nebraska Tourism); **Karmen Morse** (Cozad Chamber of Commerce); **Sarah Neben** (Lexington Chamber of Commerce); **Michele Hayes**; **Christa Monti** (Boys Town); **Fred Uhg** (Sarpy County); **Kevin Howard** (Cheyenne County); **Rocha**; **Austad**.