

# RED WILLOW COUNTY VISITORS COMMITTEE

November 5, 2019

3:00 p.m.

Keystone Business Center Board Room

## Minutes

- Presiding:** Daniel Stramel  
**Present:** Ben Dutton, Tyler Loop, Dan Ebers, and Carol Schlegel  
**Absent:** Curtis Smith
- Call to Order:** **Daniel Stramel** called the Red Willow County Visitors Committee (RWCVC) meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.
- Open Meeting Act:** Open Meeting Act was available for review.
- Minutes:** There was a motion made by **Ben** and seconded by **Dan E.** to approve the October 1, 2019 minutes. Motion carried 4/0.
- Financial Status:**
- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Balance in Promotion Fund as of October 31, 2019 =          | \$ 45,982.79  |
| Balance in Improvement Fund as of October 31, 2019 =        | \$ 79,358.50  |
| Balance in Promotion Fund Budget as of October 31, 2019 =   | \$ 115,025.69 |
| Balance in Improvement Fund Budget as of October 31, 2019 = | \$ 121,000.00 |
| Petty Cash Fund as of October 31, 2019 =                    | \$ 49.74      |
- Carol stated that with collections having come in for the first two months of this fiscal year we are now 16% below our collections from last fiscal year. That is a 35% turnaround from last month when we were 19% above the previous year.
- Old Business:**
- Promotion Fund Grant Follow-ups** were submitted for the following:
- Confederation for Working Equitation National Championship  
Date: October 2-7, 2019 Amount Approved: \$ 2,500.00  
Working Equitation is a new equine discipline in the United States that has the potential to grow into a significant organization with a large membership. This was the first National Championship held and Carol suggests that we monitor its growth to firmly establish McCook as their long term location for the event.
- Nebraska Tourism Conference** – October 22-24, 2019 – North Platte – Carol, Ben and Dan E. attended the conference. The consensus from Ben and Dan E. was that we are utilizing many of the marketing techniques that were presented. During the NETA Silent Auction, Carol bid on, and won, the eLearningU Webinar Program which consists of 50 tourism webinars a year and access to 350 hours of recorded webinars. The value of this package is \$1164 and Carol won it with a \$50 bid. The first webinar is Thursday, November 7 at 1 p.m. and the topic is “*Which Type of Google Ad is Right for Your Tourism Business? Search vs Shopping vs Display and Video/YouTube?*” Anyone interested in attending these is welcome to join Carol at the Keystone. She will keep the Committee informed of future programs. She has also extended an invitation to other marketing people in town to join us for the webinars.
- Director’s Report:**
- Barnes House Project** – Carol presented the idea of using the Barnes house plans to the Museum Board of Directors, as the Barnes family donated the plans to the Museum. The Board voted unanimously for the Visitors Bureau to proceed with our plans to possibly build the house as an attraction for McCook. Carol made it clear to them that we are in the preliminary stages but wanted their blessing since they do possess the plans. Tyler asked what the next steps are in this process. Carol plans to obtain a copy of the plans from the Nebraska

Historical Society and also to have a conversation with Earl McNutt concerning the feasibility of the project in regards to Red Willow County.

Ben also suggested that we do a survey to get the public's input on possible projects as a way to get their support, and buy in, on whatever project we choose to pursue. Carol will work on presenting a survey through an online platform such as Survey Monkey as well as utilizing the Gazette and local radio stations to encourage participation.

**American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace** – Omaha, January 10-14, 2020

Through discussions with John Ricks, NTC Executive Director, Carol has secured a place at ABA where she will be able to be in the Nebraska Welcome booth. She will be registered as a member of the Nebraska Tourism Commission staff and there will be no charge except for travel expenses.

**Buffalo Commons First Tuesday** – November 5

Angus Garey and Carol will be the featured storytellers with the topic being birding stories. Everyone is welcome to attend from 7 – 8 p.m. at Sehnert's.

**Burr Oak Canyon Symposium** – October 17-18

The Symposium has been held irregularly over the past ten or fifteen years. The last event was held five years ago with 61 participants. Bruce Hoffman is one of the producers, in conjunction with McCook Community College, of the event. Bruce contacted Carol concerning a marketing grant but she thought this would be a good opportunity to test our digital marketing of events. Instead of going through the grant process, Carol directed Maly Marketing to direct some of our marketing to the symposium. There was good engagement on the ads that were placed with comments and shares. The symposium attendance was capped at 100 participants although 119 were ultimately registered. Others were turned away. In a discussion with Sharon Kircher from the college, she indicated that she felt the increase in registrations was in direct response to the digital marketing.

**McCook Community Brand/Digital Marketing** – The MEDC brought a group of marketing professionals from the City, Community Hospital, Parker Hannifin, Community Foundation and several banks along with Carol and Dawson Brunswick from the Chamber to discuss the need to improve McCook's digital presence as a whole. Much of this discussion stems from major employers in town (Hospital and Parker) having difficulty recruiting employees because it is difficult for them to get information easily on McCook when they do a Google search. Everyone agreed that if you could get people to visit, McCook "showed" well but that does not translate to our web presence.

During the discussion with the group Carol was asked to describe the process we went through in deciding on "The Capital of the Buffalo Commons" and why that resonated with us enough to commit to it as our brand. Also during the meeting Carol asked the group if it was a possibility to use the Buffalo Commons brand as the umbrella for the community. There was no direct opposition to the idea and she was tasked with contacting Maly Marketing about what it would take to modify it for use by the City, MEDC and Chamber.

Carol did express concerns that some of the discussion at the meeting seemed to indicate that not everyone was clear on the difference between a brand and a logo.

Discussion at the meeting also focused on an umbrella website however when it was described what that would look like by one of the individuals attending, it seemed to Carol to be what VisitMcCook.com already provides.

Ben is also to be a member of this Community Brand/Digital Marketing group but was unable to attend the first meeting.

**Truly360** – Truly360 is a company that Carol became aware of at the UMCVB conference in Fargo. The service they provide is to optimize a community's Google listing and to provide ongoing management. This would include staff

training, Google travel guide creation, 360-degree virtual tour creation and branded Google street view imagery. After Carol's initial conversation with Truly360, she reached out to the MEDC and Chamber with the thought that perhaps this is the way we provide that more cohesive web presence rather than establishing another website for McCook. She also recognized that with a \$30,000 price tag for a year's worth of service it would be necessary to have partners. She wanted to Visitors Committee to be aware of these discussions.

**New Business:** **Nebraska Traveler Advertising** – Carol presented the proposal to advertising in the 2020 Nebraska Traveler published by Flagship Publishing (Nebraska Life). With the use of a vanity URL we have been able to track response to the ads in the past and they have showed to be effective. **Ben** made the motion to purchase a 1/3 page ad in the upcoming issue. It was seconded by **Dan E.** Motion carried 4/0.

**Approval of Claim:** The following claims were submitted for payment.

Claim Summary – Promotion Fund 0990 879

Visa Bill

• 2-1700 Travel (Credit)	- 258.56	
• 2-1751 Adobe/NTC Conference	689.20	
• 2-6040 Educational Webinars	50.00	
• 2-6050 KNHPA Lunch	<u>94.83</u>	575.47
2-1700 Travel Expenses – NTC Conference		101.50
2-1751 HonorboundIT Service Plan		25.00
2-6000 October Wages		3,333.33
2-6030 Maly Marketing - Digital Campaign & Ad Spend		1,900.00
2-6070 Confederation for Working Equitation		<u>2,500.00</u>
		\$ 8,435.30

There was a motion made by **Tyler** and seconded by **Ben** to approve payment of the claims as stated and any additional bills that arrive by November 13 when the claims need to be submitted to the County Clerk for payment. Motion carried 4/0.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted  
Carol Schlegel  
Director