

Freedom's Frontier

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Reply to 643 Massachusetts Street, Suite 301
Lawrence, KS 66044-2292
785-842-8556

August 9, 2007

Members of the City Commission
Members of the County Commission
Joan Golden, President, Lawrence Chamber of Commerce

Dear Friends:

I write to you in my capacity as chair of Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. In October 2006, after substantial local efforts, the United States Congress passed legislation creating Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, a heritage area that includes forty-one counties in eastern Kansas and western Missouri. For years to come, this designation will be a recognition of the role this region played in our nation's development. Lawrence and Douglas County are part of this heritage area, which has now organized with its own board of trustees and an exciting partnership group in the forty-one counties.

The designation of this heritage area affords this region the remarkable opportunity to focus our collective efforts on the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region. Lawrence already has an active and professional Convention and Visitors Bureau supported by the City of Lawrence and the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce. Douglas County supports various local treasures in the Watkins Museum, several historical sites, and the Douglas County Historical Society. The confluence of these important resources presents a unique opportunity for this region to bring together all its efforts and resources to focus the attention of the region, and even the nation, upon the extraordinary history, heritage, and cultural assets located in Lawrence and Douglas County. Although all these entities have been and will continue to be very successful, in the opinion of many people, the time has come to bring these groups together in order to achieve the maximum impact and the most effective use of resources in promoting, protecting, and facilitating the role of Lawrence and Douglas County in preserving our history and traditions for the next several decades.

FREEDOM'S FRONTIER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA COUNTIES

KANSAS: Allen • Anderson • Atchison • Bourbon • Chautauqua • Cherokee • Clay • Coffey • Crawford • DeWitt • Douglas • Franklin • Geary • Jefferson • Johnson • Labette • Leavenworth • Lin • Miami • Montgomery • Neosho • Osage • Pottawatomie • Riley • Shawnee • Wabash • Wilson • Woodson • Wyandotte MISSOURI: Barton • Bates • Buchanan • Cass • Clay • Dallas • Johnson • Lafayette • Platte • Ray • St. Clair • Vernon

Post Office Box 586
Lawrence, KS 66044
Ph 785-865-4494
Fx 785-865-4400

In the last few months, I have had the privilege of working with a group of committed citizens, who have met to try to envision an appropriate organizational structure that would capitalize on all the current investments related to cultural tourism, historical assets, and the heritage area. This group of citizens includes representatives of the City of Lawrence, Douglas County, the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitors Bureau Advisory Board, the Watkins Museum Board, Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area Board of Trustees, and citizens at large. Their names are listed in Attachment 1 to this letter. After considering the interests of all the entities involved, this group recommends that a new 501(c)(6) corporation be formed and that the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Lawrence, Douglas County, and Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area be founders of this freestanding corporation. Under the umbrella of this corporation, the city, the county, and Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area could contract for management, direction, and overall policy development with the corporation. Any entity contracting with the corporation would be a "module" within the 501(c)(6) corporation and would be a part of the overall corporation. The contracts of each module would specify the duties expected by the funding sources.

Thus, for example, Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area would expect overall management and staffing and would retain its own board of trustees in development of the heritage area. Similarly, the City of Lawrence could specify by contract the duties it expects from the Convention and Visitors Bureau in exchange for transient guest tax funds that are currently directed under contract to the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce. A similar arrangement could be set up with the county for its historical and museum responsibilities.

The new corporation would be headed by a chief executive officer (CEO), who would be hired by and report to a board of directors composed of the following: the city manager, one member of the city commission, the county administrator, one member of the county commission, the chair and one additional member of the board of Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, the chair of the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, and the president and CEO of the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce. The chairperson of the board would be selected by the members of the board. The CEO would be an ex officio member of the board and would be empowered to utilize funds and staff to carry out the contracted-for duties.

The new umbrella corporation would be funded by those resources that are currently directed by the contracting entities. Thus, those resources that the city contracts for with the Convention and Visitors Bureau would be channeled through the new corporation. Similarly, the county would contract for its historical and

museum functions. The group tentatively recommends that the new corporation be called "Destination Management, Inc." to connote the important economic, educational, and historical benefits of cultural tourism and heritage areas. In addition, we will need to identify a location that will provide high visibility and communicate the priority to be given to cultural tourism and historical endeavors in this community. The current Convention and Visitors Bureau is housed within the Chamber of Commerce offices. The new corporation will require more space for both visibility and management purposes. If any of the public entities can provide space temporarily or permanently, these options should be explored.

The benefits of pulling together and coordinating all the efforts devoted to tourism and heritage endeavors in this region are obvious. This new organization would provide a clear focal point for these activities. It would allow greater flexibility to accomplish the important purposes of focusing and prioritizing the use of resources dedicated to cultural tourism and historical and heritage-area efforts. In addition, it would ensure the strong management of all the activities occurring in Lawrence and Douglas County. Each of the governmental units would then have an entity to which to turn when applicants seek support for activities related to tourism, culture, and history.

There are many important goals. Among the most important is bringing focus and coordination to all the remarkable historical and cultural activities that occur in Lawrence and Douglas County. Another is to provide a structure that will ensure that Lawrence and Douglas County remain the central point for management and organization in Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. Finally, in a time of very tight public resources, it is essential that these resources be targeted to maximize the impact of all these efforts. Pulling these great community resources together under one umbrella entity would—in the view of those who have been studying the possibility—have these effects. We are exceedingly fortunate at this point in history to have an opportunity to accomplish this and to have the initial leadership of Judy Billings, the current Director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, as we transition to this new entity.

We make this recommendation knowing that this is a significant change in the way that the various functions have been accomplished in the past. The opportunity to be the home of Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area presents us with an occasion in this community to coordinate our efforts, maximize the use of our resources, and inject new energy into our commitment to tourism and the telling of our historical stories.

It has been a great privilege to work with this group of community leaders to seek a thoughtful, visionary approach that will facilitate efforts to tell our powerful stories to our own people and to those outside of this community. I am deeply grateful to representatives of the City of Lawrence, the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, and the Douglas County Commission, as well as countless private citizens, for their tireless volunteer efforts to draw attention to the extraordinary panorama of history that is our legacy. All the entities involved have viewed these efforts as investments in the future of Lawrence and Douglas County. I present this proposal to you with the full confidence that all of those involved are interested in moving forward toward an exciting future for cultural tourism and heritage endeavors at this critical time and in this important place.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deanell", followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the right.

Deanell Reece Tacha

cc: City Manager Dave Corliss
County Administrator Craig Weinaug
Lawrence Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Lavern Squier

Attachment 1

Study Committee:

Mike Amyx
David Dunfield
Derek Felch
Joan Golden
Charles Jones
Jim Martin
Fred Six
Lavern Squier
Deanell Reece Tacha

A local attorney has volunteered to draft appropriate incorporation documents as a pro bono contribution to the effort.

Attachment 2

Proposed Timetable:

To facilitate the approval of the new corporation, we suggest that approval be obtained from the various entities between August 1-September 15, and we note the following opportunities to present our proposal:

8/21	Heritage Board meets
8/22 (a.m.)	Chamber of Commerce (full board) meets
8/22	Convention and Visitors Bureau Advisory Board meets
8/22 (p.m.)	County Commission meets
8/28	City Commission action

In addition, during September and October, we could undertake physical moves, consider financial issues, and plan the budget. We currently propose a tentative start date of November 1 for the new corporation.