

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, May 12, 2017

8 a.m.

Elkhart County Visitors Center, 219 Caravan Drive, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission

Mr. D. Shoup, Commission

Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission

Mr. A. Patel, Commission

Ms. G. Patel, Commission

Mr. S. Baker, Commission

Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission

Mr. L. King, Board of Directors

Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors

Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors

Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors

Mr. A. Dawson, Board of Directors

Ms. D. Lawson, Executive Director

Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. B. Ronzone called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m.

APPROVE MARCH MINUTES

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to approve the March 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. D. Shoup seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke reported that the balance sheet had \$1.44 million, not including funds for partner projects set aside for specific initiatives. She said there is an ongoing accounts receivable problem with one major partner. Ms. D. Lawson said these patterns are not uncommon but in the end there was rarely a large negative impact. Ms. D. Lawson reported Mr. B. Hoffer has had discussions with the Elkhart County attorney and they have agreed that the Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau should again receive more detailed statements on payment history. There was general discussion on collection procedures.

Ms. K. Clarke said some expenses are slightly over budget but she has been assured that it will be brought under control. There was general discussion about travel guide revenue and expenses. Ms. D. Lawson explained that we end up with about a \$60,000 profit. The profits go into the ECCVB's discretionary fund that is then used for special projects.

Mr. L. King moved to accept the financial report. Mr. R. Jenkins seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson said year-to-date there has been a 6 percent increase in collections of lodging tax. There was general discussion about the negative impact of the Exit 92 closure.

Ms. D. Lawson reported that the first set of new travel plazas on the Indiana Toll Road have opened. These are the ones with the smaller footprint. There was discussion about the logistics of the store and the implications when the Indiana Toll Road gets busier. Ms. D. Lawson said she sees potential for this to aid local restaurants.

Ms. D. Lawson gave an update on the North Pointe Plaza project. She said the Elkhart Redevelopment Commission seems poised to move forward and do something, as new businesses have helped more funding accumulate in the tax-increment financing district balance. There will be landscaping, sidewalk updates and improvements to Cassopolis Street. Ms. D. Lawson proposed inviting Mr. Mike Machlan of the City of Elkhart to present at an upcoming meeting on improvements. The city is interested in having some green space, perhaps a dog park, at North Pointe. Because TIF can't fund maintenance expenses, it may be that an association of property owners could form here and the city contracts with them for maintenance. Green space could have activated with programs, which could be paid for by an association or the ECCVB. Either the ECCVB will have to organize the association or use another approach. Ms. D. Lawson asked for ideas and volunteers to be engaged in the planning.

Ms. D. Lawson said the Northern Indiana Tourism Development Commission submitted its proposal to ITRCC to continue be the provider of travel services at Indiana Toll Road service plazas. NITDC has developed an advocacy team which will be looking at ideas to better market northern Indiana.

Ms. D. Lawson said Elkhart and Middlebury guided walking tours have been developed and are ready to launch.

Ms. D. Lawson said the bike share program is continuing to move forward. There will perhaps be a bike share station at the Elkhart County Visitor Center.

The new bike/walk outdoor trail guide is completed and ready to go to print. It will have routes, tips and information.

Ms. D. Lawson said the co-op advertising campaign with the Indiana Office of Tourism Development has been performing well. The website component with IOTD has contributed to increase in unique visits to the ECCVB website.

The Live Work Play capacity grants continues to perform well in each of the communities. Ms. D. Lawson and Mr. T. Mark described the convening of countywide communicators.

Ms. D. Lawson gave an update of Seward Johnson sculptures, with the life-size sculptures and the monumental installed in 57 locations throughout Elkhart County downtowns and Quilt Gardens.

Ms. D. Lawson said the Destination Think research project to look into Place DNA and community identity will officially start in fall 2017. This will fit into the Vibrant Communities initiative on the topic on community pride.

Mr. A. Dawson said the Elkhart County schools are working on a work ethic initiative. The program is starting with Elkhart schools but will be reaching out to the other school systems.

The Regional Development Authority Talent Attraction and Retention Committee's work is moving forward and expected to be complete in June.

It was noted that the Elkhart Jazz Festival will recognize the ECCVB for sponsoring the festival for each of its 30 years. Ms. D. Lawson served on the original committee.

Ms. D. Lawson said Mr. Mike Huber has talked with the Elkhart police chief and they are exploring convening a meeting with hotels on how to recognize and deal with drug activity. There is an educational program that the Elkhart police can offer. There was agreement that this is a good project to pursue. Mr. D. Shoup warned about a new substance called "gray death" that is very dangerous and hotels should be aware of it.

Ms. D. Lawson said there is an unplanned expense in the budget related to a lawsuit that the ECCVB was tangentially involved in re: a sister city cultural exchange trip with China in 2011. Ms. D. Lawson has been subpoenaed to give a deposition. There was general discussion about the lawsuit. The unplanned expense is for legal expenses related to responding to the deposition.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Sept. 8, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. A. Dawson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. L. King seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder