

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, January 12, 2018

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 (by phone)
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 (by phone)
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors
Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors
Mr. A. Dawson, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Executive Director
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Ms. G. Patel, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. B. Ronzone called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

APPROVE NOVEMBER MINUTES

Mr. D. Bearss moved to approve the November 2017 minutes as submitted. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

ELECTIONS

Ms. B. Ronzone presented the 2018 slate of officers for the Elkhart County Innkeepers Tax Commission: Mr. Dan Shoup for president, Ms. Gita Patel for vice president; and Mr. Rick Jenkins for secretary/treasurer. There were no other nominations.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to accept the slate as presented. Mr. D. Shoup seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

Mr. L. King presented the 2018 slate of officers for the Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors: Mr. Levi King for president, Ms. Ellie Billey for vice president, and Ms. Kim Clarke for secretary/treasurer. There were no other nominations.

Mr. B. Hoffer moved to accept the slate as presented. Mr. A. Dawson seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU REPORT

Ms. D. Lawson distributed a printed infographic and a written 2017 review. She said the 2017 economic impact report is expected to be received by March. The firm writing the report, Certec, has done previous reports. Doing so gives the ECCVB a report using the same methodology. Ms. D. Lawson said Certec does solid research, interviewing hotels and restaurants and using Smith Travel as basis for hotel report. The ECCVB invested just under \$300,000 in marketing and advertising and generated \$24 million in visitor spending. The ECCVB distributed more than \$215,000 in sponsorships and grants. She said there are more than 5,500 jobs in tourism in Elkhart County.

Ms. D. Lawson said there were 252 separate activities in the 2017 Business Plan, many included multiple actions. Only 15 of those activities were not complete. Five or 6 were activities that we decided we didn't need to do. Of the others, it was the result of the enthusiasm of staff expecting to do better than previous year.

Ms. D. Lawson said the three highlights for 2017 were: (1) Seward Johnson was a success and created a new awareness of the Quilt Gardens. We were very pleased with the outcome and the feedback from partners. (2) Vibrant Communities was one of the best projects the ECCVB has been involved in, positioned our organization as a leader in quality of place. Regional Cities has complemented this effort. Mr. A. Dawson said Vibrant Communities has increased engagement across the board. (3) Tourism-related businesses are reporting that they're doing very well. The ECCVB has developed a solid reputation and relationships.

Ms. D. Lawson said 2018 is the year of the re-boot. Because the ECCVB has been in this business for as long as it has, and with the disruptions from technology, the staff is taking the opportunity to step back and examine what we are doing. There will be work done on place identity and DNA process, as well as niche segmentation — identifying the niches we should be focusing on. The step after that is passionography, identifying people within niches who are passionate about an interest and partnering with them to communicate about this area. The customer journey will allow us to understand the path that visitor follows, such as how they learn about our area, how they plan and what they need, what they do here, and then what they do after the trip. Experience alignment is matching up available businesses and services with expectations of visitors.

Mr. D. Bearss said the conversation in the tourism industry has started to shift to be more in alignment with Destination Think's philosophy.

Ms. D. Lawson said this work will set up for further changes in the 2019 Business Plan.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke referenced the balance sheet provided in the December 2017 board report. The ECCVB will be receiving \$935,000, completing disbursement of room tax collected in 2017. The total is up 5.3 percent in 2017. Expenses were under budget.

Ms. B. Ronzone moved to accept the financial report as presented. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

ADOPTION OF 2018 BUSINESS PLAN & BUDGET

The 2018 Business Plan and Budget was reviewed.

Mr. D. Bearss moved to adopt the 2018 Business Plan. Ms. E. Billey seconded. A vote was taken by board members and it was approved with all in favor.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to adopt the 2018 Business Plan. Mr. S. Baker seconded. A vote was taken by commission members and it was approved with all in favor.

Mr. B. Hoffer moved to adopt the 2018 Budget. Mr. A. Dawson seconded. A vote was taken by board members and it was approved with all in favor.

Ms. B. Ronzone moved to adopt 2018 Budget. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A vote was taken by commission members and it was approved with all in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. D. Lawson said she was contacted by State Rep. Doug Miller this week. Miller was the legislator who carried the legislation to increase Elkhart County's innkeepers tax. He said there is legislation moving forward in this session that provides an opportunity to seek that increase. The legislation only provides the enabling mechanism and would need to be approved at the county level. The intent would be to use additional funding on Vibrant Communities internal marketing. Ms. D. Lawson asked for thoughts on whether to pursue this, as it is not clear that existing legislation would permit this kind of use. General discussion ensued on need for internal marketing within Elkhart County and the South Bend-Elkhart region. The consensus was this could leverage further investment.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to support a one percentage point increase in the Elkhart County innkeepers tax. Ms. B. Ronzone seconded. A vote was taken of commission members and it was approved with all in favor.

Mr. D. Bearss moved to support a one percentage point increase in the Elkhart County innkeepers tax. Mr. A. Dawson seconded. A vote was taken of board members and it was approved with all in favor.

Ms. D. Lawson said she and Mr. B. Hoffer met with the Elkhart County Treasurer about the possibility of the ECCVB acting as an agent of that office so that we can have access to more information re: collection of innkeepers tax. The treasurer did not seem open to this proposal and offered an alternative that was deemed not helpful by the ECCVB. General discussion ensued. Ms. D. Lawson and Mr. B. Hoffer will continue working together and respond to the treasurer's offer.

Ms. D. Lawson said Mr. A. Patel has purchased the former Aldi building on S.R. 19 and has inquired whether this space would be suitable/acceptable for the Elkhart County Visitor Center. There are questions raised about addressing the conflict of interest. General discussion ensued on the steps Mr. A. Patel would need to follow to address conflict of interest concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments during the public comment period.

SET NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, March 9.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. L. King moved to adjourn to the meeting. Mr. D. Bearss seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder