

## **MINUTES**

### **ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

### **COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **PUBLIC MEETING**

**Friday, March 9, 2018**

**8 a.m.**

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

PRESENT: Mr. D. Shoup, Commission  
Ms. G. Patel, Commission  
Mr. S. Baker, Commission  
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission  
Mr. A. Patel, Commission  
Mr. L. King, Board of Directors  
Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors  
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors  
Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors  
Mr. A. Dawson, Board of Directors  
Ms. D. Lawson, Chief Executive Officer  
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder  
Ms. J. Logsdon, ECCVB Staff

ABSENT: Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission  
Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission  
Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m.

### **APPROVE JANUARY MINUTES**

*Mr. L. King moved to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2018, meeting as submitted. Ms. E. Billey seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.*

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Mr. L. King presented the financial report in Ms. K. Clarke's absence and references the printed report. The ECCVB's cash balance in the bank is \$1.902 million. Ms. D. Lawson said that is because there has been an influx of innkeepers tax revenue from funds held over from the previous year. Mr. L. King said accounts receivable totaled \$43,000, primarily from unpaid travel guide invoices. Ms. D. Lawson said that partners usually respond fairly quickly to payment invoices. On income statement, the innkeepers tax collected year-to-date is \$1,041,000. Travel guide sales were up 3 percent compared to 2017. Ms. D. Lawson said increases in travel guide revenue are limited by the number of pages in publications. To gain

larger increases, the ECCVB would have to add more pages, but that is not a good model to pursue.

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

## **BUREAU UPDATE**

Ms. D. Lawson introduced the Place DNA research project. Working with Destination Think, which has conducted multiple meetings and performed extensive research. The idea was to have the community tell us who they think we are. ECCVB staff took the full report and worked to organize it to a consumable format. Ms. D. Lawson noted the project was managed through Vibrant Communities because it is more than a tourism product.

Ms. J. Logsdon presented a slide deck prepared by staff. She said Place DNA encompasses projected and perceived messages. Place DNA is the core identity of a place — what the world would miss, what it feels like to live there, how it is changing. The Place DNA process was driven by the people who live in Elkhart County. The research process included survey, workshop and observation of social media channels. Survey respondents represented Elkhart County diversity very well. A word cloud prepared by Destination Think showed the predominant themes revealed were: people, craftsmanship and industry. The aspects of Place DNA were organized into a hierarchy of ascending importance — diversity, green but urban, Amish community, continuous craftsmanship. What makes Elkhart County, Elkhart County is the common thread of craftsmanship. Place DNA traces through history of one-time leading industries, showing that “it’s not the what, it’s the who.” This thread connects craftsmanship, makers of recreational vehicles, craft beer, food, Amish quilts and furniture, for example. Simply stated, we are a community of makers.

Ms. D. Lawson said “community of makers” is not going to be the brand, but it’s a way for us to talk about ourselves, to communicate. She said the reception to this report has been positive. The next step is to have conversations, getting out there to start the buzz in smaller groups. As we gain consensus, then we will start talking about it in a broader sense. The expectation is to get there by last quarter of 2018. ECCVB is also engaging in other research projects to identify niches and also working with stakeholders and begin communicating pride of place on a regional basis. General discussion ensued.

There was general discussion on the prior weekend’s What’s Next college recruiting tour of Elkhart County organized by the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce. This was the first time anyone locally attempted to stage this type of event. Outreach to high school students and the approximately 40,000 college students already here were discussed.

Mr. B. Hoffer reviewed a meeting between the ECCVB, Elkhart County Treasurer and county attorney. There is an impasse on the ECCVB’s request for greater access to collections information. Ms. D. Lawson said that she learned from the Indiana Tourism Association that there are conversations about this happening at the state level. State board of accounts and

treasurer are talking about how to bring resolution to this without altering laws of individual jurisdictions. Mr. B. Hoffer said if the state board of accounts takes a position on this, then elected treasurers will comply. General discussion ensued on the issue of collection of innkeepers tax.

Mr. D. Shoup reviewed the status of the ECCVB's potential move to a building owned by Mr. A. Patel in the former Aldi building on Cassopolis Street. ECCVB staff has been reviewing building needs vs. available space and cost. There was general discussion on building design plans, costs, space needs and on the North Pointe area. It was noted that there is a local buyer for the North Pointe shopping center.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB won the award for Best Festival or Event from the ITA for the Quilt Gardens. Also, Vibrant Communities won an award for outstanding outreach and communication from the Hoosier Planning Awards.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB wants to have additional meetings to define strategy for enabling legislation for an increase in the innkeepers tax. She has been in contact with State Sen. Ryan Mishler to set up a meeting that also includes State Rep. Doug Miller.

Ms. D. Lawson suggested inviting Crystal Welsh and Mark Brinson to the next meeting to provide updates on downtown Elkhart and Goshen.

#### **SET NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be 8 a.m. May 11, 2018.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark  
Staff Recorder