

**MINUTES**

**ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

**COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**Friday, March 10, 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  
Ms. G. Patel, Commission  
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission  
Mr. L. King, Board of Directors  
Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors  
Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors  
Mr. D. Bearss, 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. S. Baker, Commission  
Mr. A. Patel, Commission

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. B. Ronzone called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m.

**APPROVE JANUARY MINUTES**

***Mr. D. Shoup moved to approve the Jan. 13, 2017, minutes as presented. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A voice vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.***

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Ms. K. Clarke said the ECCVB had \$1.685 million in cash in hand, not including partner cash from sources such as municipalities and the community foundation. Receivables totaled \$55,000. There was nothing significant to note on the income statement. Ms. K. Clarke noted there is a large credit of \$99,000 for Exit 92 because the ECCVB haven't expended all of the money received from city of Elkhart for that program.

***Mr. R. Jenkins moved to accept the financial report. Mr. D. Shoup seconded. There was a voice vote and it was approved with all in favor.***

## **BUREAU UPDATE**

Ms. D. Lawson highlighted and distributed copies of the 2017 area guide, which includes an Epic Art Adventures insert. There are 200,000 printed each year, and this year it will be distributed through The Hart, the Goshen News' new Elkhart-oriented product. The ECCVB will also increase internal direct mail distribution to better communicate to local residents.

Exit 92 will continue to be subsidized by \$100,000 from the city of Elkhart via Tax Incremental Finance funds. Ms. D. Lawson said hotels are feeling very comfortable with how things are going. She also said she has had some conversations with Pete McCown of the Community Foundation of Elkhart County regarding what role the ECCVB can play in the aquatics center.

Ms. D. Lawson described the co-op advertising program with the Indiana Office of Tourism Development. The positives are it's a dollar-to-dollar match with state, and the state does all the creative work (television, radio, print, direct mail, event interaction). It includes two full-page ads in Southern Living and HGTV magazines. This campaign developed the "feel the urban-rural fusion" message that we like. She showed the full-page ad developed by the state's creative agency. She also showed the full-page ad developed for the Northern Indiana Tourism Development Council co-op in the May issue of Midwest Living magazine.

Mr. D. Bearss described the history and current status of NITDC's negotiations with ITRCC, the operators of the Indiana Toll Road, for the travel services contract. He also described the advocacy program that was started to support NITDC's position. The advocacy program revealed that stakeholders offered good advice on how to proceed. The result is that ITRCC has agreed to sign a new contract. The contract will be for 10 years and allows NITDC to define the space and communicate messages that we want. Diana said studies show that travelers do desire travel brochures and collateral. Mr. D. Bearss said video components will be added to travel plazas. He said the new Elkhart travel plaza will be of a limited service type. Ms. D. Lawson said this change may help Exit 92 businesses. She said the ECCVB is exploring with the city a project to develop a dog park at Exit 92.

Ms. D. Lawson described the Elkhart and Middlebury downtown walking tours and showed the rack card promoting them.

Ms. D. Lawson said Elkhart and Goshen are preparing to launch a bike share program. The Michiana Area Council of Governments will manage the program. The program will be launched sometime in the summer, and we will start seeing racks in downtown Elkhart and Goshen. Ms. D. Lawson said she hopes that bikes will be available along Cassopolis Street with the improvements being made to street and possible addition of bike lanes. There was general discussion on the mechanics and financials of a bike share programs.

Ms. D. Lawson said an outdoor bike/walk trail guide is in development and on schedule. A draft of the product will be reviewed next Thursday.

Ms. D. Lawson gave an update on the Live Work Play capacity grants program. Nappanee is implementing a communications initiative. Goshen has appointed an arts council. Middlebury is working on Vibrant Communities-related initiatives. Elkhart is working on downtown attractions.

Ms. D. Lawson said the Seward Johnson project is on schedule. The Heritage Trail has become the platform for other programs.

Ms. D. Lawson said she and Mike Huber are working with Destination Think on research to determine what our community DNA is, to help in our ongoing transition away from the Amish Country brand. The process will likely last another couple years. The ECCVB is in discussions for them to visit and determine next steps. There is some question of resources and how to move forward to pay to start the research. Ms. D. Lawson said the first part can be covered from current budget. The whole program may cost \$100,000 to \$150,000. There was general discussion on brand identity and communications.

Ms. D. Lawson gave an update on the Vibrant Communities initiative. This will be the year of implementing. Mr. A. Dawson and Suzie Weirick will be co-chairs. The Vibrant Bucks micro-grant program will be launched to support community pride. Four workshops in the works, with themes to be determined, are in the works with topics under discussion, though one will likely be place-making.

Ms. D. Lawson gave an update on the Regional Development Authority. She and Rob DeCleene are co-chairing the talent attraction and retention pillar to tackle issues of sharing our story better, getting talented newcomers plugged into community and creating the environment that makes the area attractive. The RDA is working on seeking grant from the Lilly Foundation. The work being done will be a tremendous asset in support of this grant. There was general discussion of economic and demographic trends. Elkhart County unlikely to grow much more without an increase in housing stock.

Ms. D. Lawson said the lodging tax bill is dead in the state legislature and it's not going to happen this year. She said this is not much of a surprise.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There was no one from the public to speak to the commission and board, and the public comment period was closed.

### **SET NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, May 12, 2017, at the Elkhart County Visitor Center.

### **ADJOURN**

***Mr. L. King moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. D. Shoup seconded. There was a voice vote and it was approved with all in favor.***

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark  
Staff recorder