

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friday, May 13, 2016

8 a.m.

Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau

219 Caravan Drive

Elkhart, IN 46514

PRESENT: Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission
Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission
Mr. S. Baker, Commission
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission
Ms. G. Patel, Commission
Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors
Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors
Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Executive Director
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder
Mr. M. Huber, Staff
Ms. J. Logsdon, Staff

ABSENT: Mr. D. Shoup, Commission
Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Mr. L. King, Board of Directors
Mr. J. Siegmann, Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 p.m.

APPROVE MARCH MINUTES

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to approve the minutes of the March 11 meeting. Mr. S. Baker seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke said there is a cash balance of \$1.2 million. Collections from room tax are increasing steadily over last year, about 10 percent. She said accounts receivable have also been higher, but a payment plan was set up with one account. Invoicing for this year's travel guide invoicing was mailed out a bit later than usual. Ms. D. Lawson said hotels doing well and are healthy. The CVB has seen an uptick in revenue, from demand and ADR (average daily rate).

Mr. R. Jenkins moved to approve the financial report. Ms. E. Billey seconded. A vote was taken with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson explained that the Vibrant Communities Summit on the Future will be June 7 at the Lerner Theatre with guest speaker Jamie Bennett. The Draft Action Agenda will be on display in the Crystal Ballroom, set up by community. She said interest in individual community meetings have overperformed, with many people being engaged. The organizing team is also looking at what's next -- workshops perhaps starting in August/September, extending into 2017. Workshops would be based on top themes, led by an expert, to assist in moving forward with projects. Another idea would be a \$50,000 pod to give out in small increments for innovative ideas and smaller projects. The hope is to reach younger innovators and millennials. Mr. D. Bearss suggested setting up a subcommittee, get millennials in a room, set up the framework and let them go. Mr. K. Janowsky spoke of the positive impact of quality of place and residents becoming more of a cheerleader. There was general consensus that the grant program is an idea with a lot of promise. Discussion ensued on the size of micro-grant program and other Vibrant Communities matters.

Ms. D. Lawson also discussed the Quilt Gardens' 10th anniversary next year. There have been meetings with community leaders to develop plans and special projects for this milestone.

Ms. D. Lawson showed a model of one of the billboards in the Exit 92 campaign, which recently launched to position hotels and restaurants at the Elkhart exit as the premier stop on the Indiana Toll Road. The campaign includes billboards, barrier signs, rack cards and an ad in the toll road guide.

Ms. D. Lawson said meetings will start soon on the Goshen weekends campaign, which will place an emphasis on overnight stays in Goshen and directing visitors to downtown attractions and activities. Gina Leichty of Eyedart Creative Studio will again take the lead on this campaign.

Ms. D. Lawson explained that she has been involved in the Michiana Area Council of Governments' active transportation planning process to put together network of paths. She is also participating in a national transportation long-range planning process involving mass transportation and active transportation.

Mr. M. Huber reviewed the preliminary report from Hunden's study of North Pointe development. The study included a market analysis of retail, housing, office, hotel and lodging. The report showed strong performance in the hospitality industry in the last year, but identified concern in possible saturation in certain lodging type. The report's analysis included investigation of outlet mall opportunities, which showed some potential. However, the amount of land available at Exit 92 would be a barrier to development of an outlet mall. The report also noted a potential opportunity for a water park hotel. The report also contained many ideas and concepts to create a more neighborhood-like feel, with some green space, connecting with

walking paths, active recreation i.e. play structure being incorporated into the North Pointe area.

Mr. M. Huber said the discussion of a sports complex has led to a potential investment in two-sheet ice rink, which would be attractive to the Elkhart Community Schools as a way to attract families and students. This potential development may be clustered with the aquatics center development in the downtown Elkhart Market District. The CVB is also working with Elkhart schools to look at sports field development, particularly lacrosse and rugby being expanded. Ms. D. Lawson said the Regional Cities initiative has opened the door for people to have bigger ideas. Colleges from Goshen College, Notre Dame and IUSB, and secondary school systems are all interested in being more engaged. Discussion ensued on impact of hotels on TIF. The CVB is considering a message from hotel owners to the Elkhart Redevelopment Commission acknowledging the success of the Exit 92 campaign and a thank-you for the commission's \$100,000 investment, which matched the CVB's investment for a total of \$200,000.

Ms. D. Lawson noted that there will be a new member of the Elkhart County Council, Tina Wenger, and a new Elkhart County commissioner, Suzie Weirick.

Ms. D. Lawson said that looking ahead to the 2017 focus of work that outdoor recreation is going to be a theme, along with arts and downtowns.

Ms. D. Lawson explained the formation of the new Friends of the Lerner group. Its purpose is to serve as a promoter to develop programming for the Lerner. Discussion ensued on balancing the various needs of the Lerner/Crystal Ballroom, managing events and the complicated business model. Ms. D. Lawson recognized the success of the government and private sector working together at the Lerner.

Ms. D. Lawson introduced Ms. J. Logsdon as the CVB's new director of marketing and advertising and is doing an excellent job with a seamless transition into the role.

Ms. D. Lawson explained the CVB is in the process of working with human resources consultant Sandy Dunbar in reviewing job descriptions to align with the business plan.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. S. Baker gave an update on his project to build a second hotel in Goshen. The new hotel will be Glo by Best Western, featuring a contemporary design. He is attempting to be the first one of this new concept to be built, and is working with designers to customize to their needs. He recently acquired land under contract right next to Fidler Pond Park, and rooms will overlook the water. He is in discussions with builders and for financing. He is hoping to open in the spring of 2017 or spring 2018.

Ms. D. Lawson announced that Ms. E. Billey is retiring from Lerner Theatre. There will be an open house in her honor from 2 to 5 p.m. May 26 in the Cittadine Room at the Lerner Theatre.

Ms. G. Patel announced that she is hoping to open two new hotels in July and August.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, Sept. 9, 2016.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. G. Patel seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Mark
Staff Recorder