

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, September 14, 2018

8 a.m.

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

PRESENT: Mr. D. Shoup, Commission
Ms. G. Patel, Commission
Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission
Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Ms. B. Ronzone, 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. A. Dawson, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder
Mr. J. Hunsberger, ECCVB Staff

ABSENT: Mr. S. Baker, Commission
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. D. Shoup announced that a tribute stone at Wellfield Botanic Gardens was purchased in recognition of Ms. Beth Ronzone's of her service as commission president.

APPROVE MAY MINUTES

Mr. L. King moved to approve the minutes of the May 9 meeting as submitted. Ms. E. Billey seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke referred members to the written report distributed in advance of the meeting. She said the cash balance is \$1.6 million, and that all travel guide sales revenue has been collected.

She said the income statement shows that room tax revenue did reach the \$2.1 million budgeted amount. She said she calculated that room tax revenue was up 8.4 percent over the previous year. Mr. L. King asked about the \$80,000 profit from the travel guide sales. Ms. D. Lawson said the credit is due to the ECCVB methodology that works very well. She said Ms. Janis Logsdon is two months ahead on sales and is at 90 percent of the goal. She said the profits go into a bifurcated fund, allowing for expenditures on functions that don't fit with use of innkeepers tax.

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.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. D. Shoup reported on the subcommittee that has met multiple times re: the possible move of the Elkhart County Visitor Center to the Aldi building. Ms. D. Lawson said the meetings studied proposals for the current building and the former Aldi building on Cassopolis Street. Mr. D. Shoup said the subcommittee is ready to make a recommendation to accept the proposal from JSK to lease space at the former Aldi building.

Mr. Cullen Stanger and Mr. Matt VanSoest of Ancon Construction introduced themselves and presented additional details about the work it has been doing on behalf of JSK and Mr. A. Patel on the proposal.

Mr. M. VanSoest explained the proposed floor plan for the space. He said the visitor center is 43 feet by 28 feet and is slightly larger than current. He said there are nine offices, a conference room and a creative zone. He said the space contains existing restrooms, but they are not ADA accessible, so two new restrooms will be added to make that space ADA compliant. He said the visitor center includes a large conference room that is 21 by 36, very similar to the current conference room and it opens out to rest of the visitor center. Mr. C. Stanger said that exterior concepts are to make it look not like an Aldi building. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. A. Patel said he is working with the city of Elkhart on a new road at the property's perimeter that would improve drainage and landscaping on the property. The new road would bisect the Aldi lot.

Discussion ensued on the smaller conference room, which has a capacity of 20-22 and would be, used for board meetings.

Ms. D. Lawson said the proposal is 1,800 square feet larger than existing visitor center and gives the ECCVB room to grow. She said the cost per square foot is the same at both properties, but the Aldi property has more square footage. She said the proposal to stay in the building would have charged the ECCVB a higher rate for improvements requested. Mr. A. Patel said there will be a cost savings on insurance at the Aldi property because of full sprinkler coverage.

Ms. D. Lawson said the lease at the existing visitor center expires at the end of May 2019. Mr. A. Patel said the ECCVB could move in earlier, but that the first lease payment would not be until

June 2019. Mr. A. Patel said the goal for finishing the buildout is March. Mr. C. Stanger estimated a four-month construction time frame that could be affected by approvals.

Mr. L. King said the proposal is exciting. Having more space will enable the ECCVB to take care of more visitors. Mr. K. Janowsky said the subcommittee looked at the Aldi proposal with a very critical eye, to be able to defend it. He said the subcommittee went back to the drawing board twice and had taken a pass. He credited Mr. A. Patel for his patience and helpfulness. Mr. K. Janowsky said the subcommittee was prepared to pass despite Mr. A. Patel's relationship to the board. He said this is the best decision.

Mr. A. Patel and Ms. G. Patel excused themselves from the room for further discussion.

General discussion on the proposal ensued. Ms. D. Lawson said there will be conflict-of-interest paperwork sent to the Elkhart County Commissioners acknowledging Mr. A. Patel's interest in the commission and the project. The commissioners will address it at their Monday meeting. According to Tom Byers, the Elkhart County administration, this situation is very typical. Mr. Byers said if the ECCVB commission and board approve, the county commissioners will respect that decision. Mr. B. Hoffer said he prefers the county commissioners make their move first, but Mr. Byers said the county commissioners would prefer tax commission/board make their decision first.

Mr. D. Shoup asked for approval of the Aldi proposal pending approval by Elkhart County.

From the commission, Mr. R. Jenkins moved to accept the proposal pending further approvals. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

From the board, Mr. A. Dawson moved to accept the proposal pending further approvals by Elkhart County. Ms. E. Billey seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson introduced Mr. Jon Hunsberger as the new director of destination development. She said Mr. Hunsberger had worked for the city of Goshen and city of Indianapolis, with the planning department in Goshen and industrial redevelopment in Indianapolis. She said she is thrilled to have Mr. Hunsberger on board here.

Mr. J. Hunsberger shared the CERTEC report on economic impact, drawn from a survey of visitors and businesses. The economic impact of tourism on Elkhart County is nearly \$550 million in 2017. Lodging guests were the biggest contributor. Six percent of all jobs from tourism/hospitality. Tourism generated \$129 million in tax revenue, up from \$114 million in 2015.

Ms. D. Lawson said the economic impact numbers showed a 6 percent increase over 2015 and that things are definitely headed in the right direction.

Ms. D. Lawson said ECCVB accreditation was completed with flying colors. There are 16 domains or areas, and 92 standards to achieve. Notably, the ECCVB was given an “exemplary” rating on board report.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB is working with Destination Think! on defining the niches. She said the ECCVB recently received the first full report. The next step is going through the passionography. Also going through place identity. Niche workshops on June 26 included 89 participants from all over Elkhart County.

Ms. D. Lawson said the 2019 budget was submitted to county, and it was just approved. She distributed copies of the Visual Guide to Elkhart County, in which all images were taken by visitors and posted on Instagram, broken down by categories. She said these will be used in a special promotion. She said the ECCVB has been working with the Elkhart County Food Council, and she distributed copies of a brochure designed by Ms. Amanda Eckelbarger. She said Vibrant Communities is moving ahead, with the Community Foundation of Elkhart County partnering for 2019. She offered copies of the book “Building a Vibrant Community” by Quint Studer, which members of the Vibrant Communities organizing team have read. She said there are businesses that have broken records this year. It’s a very good time for our economy.

SET NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Nov. 9, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder