

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION AND ECCVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friday, March 11, 2016

8 a.m.

**Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau, 219 Caravan Drive, Elkhart, IN
46514**

PRESENT: Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission
Mr. D. Shoup, Commission
Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission
Mr. S. Baker, Commission
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission
Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Mr. L. King, Board of Directors
Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors
Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors
Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Executive Director
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Ms. G. Patel, Commission
Mr. J. Siegmann, Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVE JANUARY MINUTES

Mr. Dan Shoup moved to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2016, meeting as presented. Mr. Dan Bearss seconded. **A vote was taken and it passed with all in favor.**

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Kim Clarke gave the financial report. She said there is \$1.5 million in cash in the bank, including a large check received in January for the remainder of room tax from 2015. January lodging was higher in 2016, continuing trend. Discussion ensued over a delinquent account. Ms. Diana Lawson said the issue is being worked on by the ECCVB staff and owner. Mr. Levi King moved to approve the financial report. Mr. Rick Jenkins seconded. **A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.**

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ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2016, 8 A.M.
ELKHART COUNTY VISITORS CENTER
ELKHART, IN**

Agenda

8 a.m.	I.	Call to Order	B. Ronzone
8:05-8:10	II.	Approve January Minutes	B. Ronzone
8:10-8:20	III.	Financial Report	K. Clarke
8:20-8:50	IV.	Bureau Update	D. Lawson
8:50-8:55	VII.	Other Business	
8:55-9	VIII.	Set May 13, 2016, Meeting	B. Ronzone
9 a.m.	IX.	Adjourn	B. Ronzone

BUREAU REPORT

Ms. Lawson announced the departure of Ms. Denise Kolb-Hernandez from the ECCVB staff. She said she initiated a search for Ms. Kolb-Hernandez's replacement, she was approached by Ms. Janis Logsdon of Amish Acres. Ms. Lawson said she interviewed several people for the position. She said Ms. Logsdon is knowledgeable, skilled and well-respected in field of tourism marketing. Ms. Logsdon will be starting next week, and Ms. Kolb-Hernandez's last day is March 18.

Ms. Lawson distributed copies of the 2016 area guide. She noted the masthead change, to Heritage Trail Adventures from Amish Country. The change has been very well accepted, particularly in the cities. There was not much pushback. Ms. Lawson noted that Amish Country still featured prominently on the cover and inside as a product.

Ms. Lawson said the ECCVB is on target on the work in the 2016 business plan.

Ms. Lawson reported on the tremendous success of the Vibrant Communities initiative. There was good attendance for meetings for Middlebury/Bristol (80), Goshen (120-130), Elkhart (175-180), Nappanee/Wakarusa (65) and Countywide (130 over two meetings). She said Mr. Terry Mark, ECCVB staff, and Mr. Kyle May, Planning-NEXT consultant, have been working on reaching out to minority communities, noting that Vibrant Communities has done everything it can to include diversity of feedback. The meetings have been a tremendous experience and people excited to share their ideas and what they love. Discussion ensued about some attempts to derail the Vibrant Communities process with unfounded accusations.

Ms. Lawson reported that communities are coming up with programs they want funded for next three years through the Live-Work-Play grants in collaboration with the Community Foundation of Elkhart County. Each city has presented wonderful ideas that are all very different. Ms. Lawson explained the structure and process of the program in greater detail.

Ms. Lawson asked for the commission and board's support for the ECCVB to engage in a comprehensive planning process for the downtown Elkhart Market District in downtown Elkhart. The Market District is an area that includes proposed redevelopment of the old YMCA property. The Elkhart Redevelopment Commission and Community Foundation would like a comprehensive plan for the area. The idea is that the planning process would be funded by the Redevelopment Commission but not led by it but rather by residents and stakeholders. Mr. Pete McCown, president of the Community Foundation, has received agreement from Mr. David Weaver to chair this initiative and put together group of 15-17 stakeholders. Ms. Lawson said the natatorium/community center at the old YMCA property has the potential to be a huge asset for tourism for attracting events such as swimming competitions and visitors. Discussion ensued with questions posed by Mr. Brian Hoffer, Mr. R. Jenkins and Mr. Kurt Janowsky. The ECCVB would be contracted by the Redevelopment Commission for the comprehensive plan, something that has been done before, and would be the organizer of the process. Ms. Lawson said there is a proposal on the table from JPR, DCI and Planning-NEXT for the comprehensive plan. Ms. Lawson said the ECCVB would be investing its staff time and serve as the conduit for funding for the comprehensive plan. Because a solid communication strategy is essential for the Market

District proposal, the ECCVB would be at the table anyway. Mr. L. King said he was in favor because the ECCVB staff knows the area well. He also noted that studies show the natatorium will create 10,000 room nights in lodging. **Mr. D. Bearss moved to accept the proposal for the ECCVB to participate in the comprehensive planning process for the Elkhart Market District. Mr. B. Hoffer seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.**

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kurt Janowsky described a new concert series starting at Wellfield Botanic Gardens. Discussion ensued around proposed a proposed partnership of Wellfield and Ruthmere.

Ms. D. Lawson said the proposed enabling legislation for 1 percentage point increase in the Elkhart County Innkeepers Tax went nowhere in the Indiana legislative session and died. The ECCVB will try again next year. The Regional Cities did get fully funded.

Mr. D. Bearss described difficulties in negotiating the Northern Indiana Tourism Development Council's relationship with the new operators of the Indiana Toll Road. Specifically, while there is excitement over the proposed changes to the travel plazas, there has also been uncertainty over the NITDC's role in presenting its messages to the 10 million to 15 million travelers who stop at the travel plazas. Mr. D. Bearss said private for-profit leaders are not really in tune with local hospitality needs and NITDC is in negotiations over new contractual relationship. Ms. D. Lawson said there is a risk of a for-profit vendor to take over management of marketing messages from NITDC, thus shutting out/creating difficulties for smaller, local tourism businesses. Thus, there is a need to make our voice heard on this issue. Discussion ensued. Mr. K. Janowsky, Mr. A.J. Patel and Mr. D. Bearss agreed to help with this process in terms of seeking legal counsel with the proper connections to work on this issue.

Mr. B. Hoffer described an agreement he reached with Craig Buche, Elkhart County counsel, on measuring/tracking the Elkhart County Treasurer's office's receipts of innkeepers tax payments, but the elected treasurer didn't agree to it. Mr. B. Hoffer said we need to determine how important this is to us and how hard to push. The ECCVB has been able to get the information it needs, but it hasn't been easy.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. May 13, 2016.

Mr. L. King moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. D. Bearss seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Mark
Staff Recorder