

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, September 8, 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

Mr. A. Patel, Commission

Ms. G. Patel, Commission

Mr. S. Baker, 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. K. Janowsky, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. B. Ronzone called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m.

APPROVE MAY MINUTES

Ms. E. Billey moved to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2017, meeting. Ms. K. Clarke seconded. ***A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.***

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke reviewed the highlights from the financial statement provided to all board and commission members. She said we have collected all travel guide receivables from outstanding accounts. She noted that on income statement, while there are accounts which are over-budget, they will be offset by other expenses that will be under-budget. Ms. D. Lawson said additional research was commissioned to verify the projections from an independent study on room nights generated from the aquatics center being built in Elkhart. The ECCVB is also studying the impact of additional hotel inventory coming in to St. Joseph County. She said the ECCVB also responded to Goshen Mayor Jeremy Stutsman's request to about \$10,000 to help pay for a

feasibility study on the city's proposed community center. She said it is a nice project that fits in on the Goshen millrace.

Mr. B. Hoffer reviewed an unusual instance in which an Indiana state employee staying at one of the local hotels filed a claim for reimbursement on the room tax. The state forwarded that request to the Elkhart County Treasurer's office, which made the reimbursement and they are crediting that out of the room tax funds. Mr. B. Hoffer noted that this is first time this has ever happened. The issue of concern is that the reimbursement was made from an account that the auditor/treasurer doesn't have authority over. There was general discussion about how to handle customers who may be exempt from paying the room tax. Ms. D. Lawson said she was surprised that the county wouldn't come to the tax commission to work on the resolution. Mr. B. Hoffer says he's not sure this was a legally acceptable way for the county to handle the issue, and he will follow up with further research.

There was additional discussion on working with the treasurer's office so that the ECCVB may have access to information that would help in determining status of collections. Mr. B. Hoffer advised the best course of action may be for Ms. D. Lawson to initiate a meeting between ECCVB and the county treasurer's office. Ms. D. Lawson said it is in the ECCVB's interests to maintain good relationships with hotels and help everyone by monitoring collections.

Mr. A.J. Patel proposed organizing an educational opportunity for hotel operators on who/what is exempt from room tax.

Mr. A. Dawson moved to approve the financial report as submitted. Mr. D. Shoup seconded. ***A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.***

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson thanked the commission and board members who have been so active. She noted that Mr. B. Hoffer helped with Seward Johnson arrangements as well as helping prepare her for a deposition as a witness on the lawsuit over the China cultural exchange visit. She thanked Mr. A. Dawson for being Vibrant Communities co-chair. She said that Ms. K. Clarke does a great job as treasurer as well as showing leadership in Middlebury in the development of walking tours and obtaining a Little BIG Idea Grant for the Middlebury Pumpkin Races.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB has conducted three annual reviews on the Live Work Play Capacity Grant Program. The exception is Nappanee, which is not yet ready for an annual review because the city just hired a communications person. The ECCVB met with Elkhart on its project for business attraction to downtown and Middlebury's on its progress on Vibrant Communities initiatives. She noted that Goshen had an impressive report and is six months ahead on its project with the Mayor's Arts Council. The Live Work Play is starting its second year of a three-year commitment.

Ms. D. Lawson said Vibrant Communities is doing extremely well. The second speaker is scheduled for Oct. 18 at the Crystal Ballroom and the topic is on placemaking. The Place DNA

workshop went very well, with high attendance from those who were very engaged. There was further discussion on individual experiences at workshop.

Ms. D. Lawson distributed copies of the Elkhart County Biking and Walking Trail Guide which was developed by the ECCVB. The ECCVB is also going to through a digital marketing assessment of social media and website activity.

Ms. D. Lawson said the end of Seward Johnson project was drawing near. She said it was one of the most successful projects the ECCVB has ever done.

Ms. D. Lawson said the North Pointe plan draft has been completed. There will be a meeting convened for property owners and feedback is being sought on the plan to create a premier experience. She noted that the city of Elkhart needs someone to manage the programming, and wants the ECCVB. There will be further discussion on how to organize this.

Ms. D. Lawson is doing presentations to RSM in Elkhart, the Indiana Arts Commission homecoming in Indianapolis, and a tourism conference in Louisville, Ky.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Nov. 10, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. B. Ronzone proposed to adjourn the meeting so that those who need to leave could do so, and others could attend a presentation from Destination Think.

Ms. G. Patel moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. K. Clarke 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