

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, May 9, 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. S. Baker, Commission
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission
Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Mr. L. King, Board of Directors
Ms. E. Billey, Board of Directors
Ms. K. Clarke, Board of Directors
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors
Mr. D. Bearss, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission
Mr. A. Dawson, Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m. by Mr. D. Shoup.

APPROVE MARCH MINUTES

Mr. L. King moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2018, meeting as presented. Mr. K. Janowsky seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke referred members to the written report that was distributed before the meeting. She said the balance sheet totaled \$1.7 million, not counting partner contributions. She said accounts receivable totaled \$19,000, of that \$16,000 is for the travel guide and is mostly collectible. She discussed the income statement, which showed that lodging revenue is up 13.4 percent over 2017 and almost 20 percent over 2016. She said there was nothing out of the ordinary under expenses.

Mr. D. Bearss moved to accept the financial report. Ms. G. Patel seconded. A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

It was reported that the Indiana state association of destination marketing organizations and the state board of accounts are working on the issue of access by DMOs to innkeepers tax collections. Members are optimistic that there will be a favorable resolution.

Ms. D. Lawson discussed the exhaustive accreditation process that the ECCVB underwent recently. She said this process gave ECCVB an exemplary rating on our business plan and reporting process.

Ms. D. Lawson highlighted a new program of the ECCVB with Midwest Living magazine in which the Chicago market is targeted, in conjunction with a partnership with the state of Indiana, in which a travel guide is bundled with an issue of the magazine. She said the early reports are showing good results with responses. Ms. D. Lawson also showed members the issue of TravelIN magazine, in which it is the first time the ECCVB advertised in that publication.

Ms. D. Lawson showed various collateral pieces — the Quilt Gardens rack card, the Exit 92 rack card, and the historic walking tours rack card — being given out in presentations to city and town councils. Exit 92 rack card. Middlebury walking tours. Elkhart and Goshen also doing walking tours. Communities are learning about the process. Travel guide also inserted in The Hart.

Ms. D. Lawson said an ECCVB subcommittee is awaiting information on the cost per square foot of a potential move to the former Aldi building on State Road 19. She said there has been a meeting with vendors to assess technology upgrade costs. Ms. D. Lawson said these reports will give us more information to make a decision. She said there might be a need for a special meeting to review the information. General discussion ensued on the challenges of construction bidding and the demand for contractors.

Ms. D. Lawson reviewed four significant projects that are in process or on the horizon with consultants Destination Think! She said the place identity project may be completed in early September with visual identity and brand book, with a soft launch also in September. She said the niche segmentation project examining niche markets that the ECCVB can target would lead to a program involving marketing, messaging, and developing services. This would have target dates of 2019 for completion with a launch in 2020. She said the third project is further engagement from residents — called “passionography,” and involves finding locals who have an interest in the pertinent niches and to engage them to be part of the conversation. This is expected to be completed by December 2018. She said the fourth project is customer journey mapping — understanding where and how to talk to the visitors, when to deliver messages, and the visitors’ decision-making process. Ms. D. Lawson said these initiatives will help build a stronger cohesive message for business growth, talent attraction and communications.

Ms. D. Lawson said Vibrant Communities activities include outreach by the steering committee and leadership to residents who have not already been engaged in the Vibrant Communities movement. These outreach activities are communicating elements of the place identity and testing those ideas. She said enFocus will be deploying interns to events to do intercept surveys and will be asking questions related to community pride, awareness of Vibrant Communities, and feelings of hope. There will be a possible large event in the fall to reveal place identity and celebrate Little BIG Idea Grant winners. She said ETHOS Innovation Center in Elkhart is a potential location. General discussion ensued on the Little BIG Idea Grants and Placemaking Indiana. Ms. D. Lawson recognized Mr. A. Dawson and Ms. Suzie Weirick, who are the co-chairs of Vibrant Communities.

Ms. D. Lawson reviewed progress on the Live Work Play Capacity Grants program. She said the city of Nappanee has launched a new visual identity and website, and hired a communications director. She also highlighted the formation of the Nappanee Arts Council, which has created a new public art display with a flower theme and creating an “art path” in a city park for public art installations. She said Arts councils around the county are getting active, and residents are demonstrating increasing appreciation of public art.

Ms. D. Lawson said North Pointe Plaza has been sold to Tiara RV Sales. She said the ECCVB will be helping convene neighborhood stakeholders to talk about future of this area.

Ms. D. Lawson said she attended the first board meeting of the South Bend Elkhart Region. She said that Mr. Pete McCown and Mr. John Affleck-Graves have met with the Lilly Foundation, which advised the South Bend Elkhart Region to develop a regional plan. There is the potential for even greater investment from Lilly than from Regional Cities.

Ms. D. Lawson said every sector of the economy is doing very well. In March, hotels in Elkhart County outperformed St. Joseph County on some measures. She said attractions are also doing very well, and 2018 is absolutely the best year ever.

Ms. D. Lawson said Idea Week was an outstanding series of events for St. Joseph and Elkhart counties. She said she attended the Tony Hsieh presentation at the Lerner Theatre, and his message was perfectly aligned with the Vibrant Communities quality-of-place message. She said Ms. Sonya Nash of the ECCVB staff is working with Acts of Service to connect volunteers and volunteer hours with projects and events.

Ms. D. Lawson announced that Mr. Mike Huber of the ECCVB staff has accepted a position with Abonmarche and will be leaving soon.

Ms. D. Lawson highlighted success of the River Bend Film Festival. She said the ECCVB is working hard with Goshen to develop some type of film institute or academy.

SET NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Sept. 14, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Terry Mark
Staff Recorder**