

MINUTES

ELKHART COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

COMMISSION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, May 10, 2019

8 a.m.

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

PRESENT: Mr. D. Shoup, Commission and Board
Mr. S. Baker, Commission
Mr. K. Janowsky, Commission
Mr. R. Jenkins, Commission
Mr. A. Patel, Commission
Ms. G. Patel, 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
Mr. B. Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. D. Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. T. Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Ms. B. Ronzone, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVE MARCH MINUTES

Ms. E. Billey moved to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2019 meeting. Ms. K. Clarke seconded. ***A vote was taken and it was approved with all in favor.***

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. K. Clarke referred members to financial report distributed in advance. She said there was of travel guide remaining in accounts receivable, and much of the property/equipment on the balance sheet will go away with the move. Ms. D. Lawson said they are looking for a way to work through furnishings and fixtures at the current visitor center. She asked whether there is a not-for-profit that would be interested in taking the tables and chairs. ECCVB staff is not looking to sell, but rather, gift the furnishings and fixtures. She said the other option of disposing of furnishings and fixtures would be an auctioneer who could pick them up.

Ms. K. Clarke said room tax collections looks like it's down compared to last year. She said there appears to still be some confusion with the Elkhart County Treasurer's office on what's delinquent. Ms. D. Lawson said the Elkhart County Treasurer's office is reporting that certain lodging properties are delinquent and when Ms. Cindy Ostrom calls, she finds that they are not delinquent. She said this is a continuing problem with ECCVB not having accurate information.

Ms. D. Lawson said that the State Board of Accounts has decided that the issue of receiving information from the county treasurer is valid. She said that statewide in July, county treasurers will have their state meeting and the State Board of Accounts will tell them that they can share information with the Innkeeper's Tax Commission treasurer and that person can designate others to receive the information. Mr. B. Hoffer said that it will be a required provision that there is an agreement with county and fortunately that's in place. There was an agreement drafted by Mr. B. Hoffer and the county attorney and presented to the Elkhart County Treasurer, but they did not agree to it.

Ms. K. Clarke said there were eight attendees budgeted for the City Nation Place conference, but now that is up to 15 people. Therefore that budget line is over-budget but we will find other ways to pay for it. Ms. D. Lawson said the conference will be a good event and said among the attendees will be two representatives of the South Bend Elkhart Regional Partnership.

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.***

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson said that with the Elkhart Jazz Festival coming up members should submit their requests for passes and tickets.

Ms. D. Lawson discussed the new laws that passed the Indiana Legislature, including one in which small short-term rentals will now be required to collect lodging tax and sales tax. There was general discussion on the room tax from short-term rentals such as Airbnb. There is a question about how this affects bed and breakfasts and campgrounds, because Elkhart County is the only county in the state that has a provision that exempts lodging properties with less than 30 rooms from collecting room tax.

Mr. A. Dawson said the Vibrant Communities project is going well. He reminded everyone of the next Community Champions Roundtable meeting at Ox Bow County Park on May 15. He said he and Suzie Weirick as co-chairs will do another countywide tour to visit elected officials to advocate for placemaking and quality of place.

Ms. D. Lawson discussed two research projects related to Vibrant Communities: One is a countywide project to identify metrics and measure changes; the second is for measuring downtown vibrancy. She said that by the end of the year we will have benchmarks for Elkhart County's downtowns so we can pay attention to what is going on and help communities identify areas that they need to work on.

Ms. D. Lawson said the advocacy meetings are going well. So far ECCVB staff and board and commission members are meeting with members of the Elkhart County Council and will continue to do these and help them understand what we do.

Ms. D. Lawson said all programs are moving ahead and within budget. ECCVB staff's plates are extremely full but are managing well, working collaboratively and filling in as needed. The place identity process should be complete by September, including information on how to proceed with the niches. ECCVB staff are also working on a brand-new website. Ms. D. Lawson met last week with Chris Stager of the Economic Development Corporation on how we can work more collaboratively. Their website may feature a push to ECCVB website to promote our quality-of-place messages.

Ms. D. Lawson said the South Bend Elkhart Region received a \$42 million grant from Lilly Foundation, with Notre Dame to manage. The grant is targeted for workforce development, training and education focused on advanced manufacturing.

Ms. D. Lawson said she will be meeting with Mr. Pete McCown on matters related to projecting a stronger message about the South Bend Elkhart region in the South Bend airport. She will also be speaking about the benefits of Elkhart aquatics center. With three events, including two large events (i.e. 800 room night demands for two nights, 1,200 room nights for three nights), there have been concerns about Beacon aquatics center manager conveying negative messages about Elkhart lodging properties.

Ms. D. Lawson presented on an effort to refresh the corporate brand. She distributed proposals prepared by The Flatland. There was general discussion on the proposed logos. She said the corporate brand needs to stand alone and separate from the destination brand. The reason to seek a one-year bridge rather than waiting till 2020 is that the current logo is difficult to work with. The general consensus is that the "shutters" logo is the preferred.

SET NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Friday, Sept. 13, 2019, at 8 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder