



eccvb.org

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ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, September 13, 2019, at Elkhart County Visitors Center, 3421 Cassopolis Street, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Mr. Dan Shoup, Commission President and Board
Ms. Gita Patel, Commission Vice President
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission
Mr. Kurt Janowsky, Commission
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission

ATTENDING: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President
Ms. Eleanor Billey, Board of Directors Vice President
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. Diana Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Terry Mark, ECCVB Staff
Ms. Janis Logsdon, ECCVB Staff

ABSENT: Mr. Anant Patel, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Dan Shoup called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

APPROVE MAY MINUTES

Ms. D. Lawson initiated a discussion on meeting processes of the tax commission and board, the contract for services between the commission and board, and the historical context of the innkeepers tax in Indiana. Ms. D. Lawson said there has been an effort by the Indiana State Board of Accounts and Indiana Tourism Association to standardize processes. This includes three requirements: (1) a contract; (2) the commission president presents a monthly request to county treasurer to transfer funds from commission's line item to the not-for-profit's account; and (3) a gateway account operated by state board

of accounts. Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB must file financial information annually and have an annual audit required by state. General discussion on audits and process ensued.

Mr. R. Jenkins moved to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2019, meeting. Ms. G. Patel seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

CORPORATE BRAND & DESTINATION BRAND

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB staff has been working on two important projects. The first is a new corporate logo with the hero line of “We believe in here.” The other project was the Place Identity project engaging stakeholders, residents, businesses, to determine who we are.

Ms. J. Logsdon reviewed the discovery process of surveys and workshops. The place identity comes together around the stories of Elkhart County. The process identified what makes Elkhart County significant and distinctive. The Amish community and continuous craftsmanship are at the top of the hierarchy. The brand development process reviewed multiple concepts. Place DNA is who we are, but a brand strategy is a choice. Attributes that contribute include industry, heritage, landscape, craftsmanship, and entrepreneurial, community spirit. The brand story, brand presence and brand essence presented.

Ms. J. Logsdon presented the destination brand — Well Crafted — in two different color palettes. It will be used in all collateral materials, area guide, social media, and merchandise. General discussion ensued on the look and elements of the brand. Consensus developed around the version of the brand with light-colored text on a blue background.

Ms. J. Logsdon reviewed the niche experience development process — identifying the niches that contribute most, close gaps, and reinforces place identity. The three are Cultural Explorer, Creatives, and Roadtrippers. The action plan is to grow the Elkhart County destination in the right way, by speaking to those audiences.

The vision for Cultural Explorers is Elkhart County is a destination where you can immerse yourself in different cultures and the maker’s stories. There was general discussion on niche audiences and opportunities. Ms. J. Logsdon will send the slide presentation to commission and board members

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to endorse and support the Elkhart County CVB on the corporate brand and destination brand. Ms. B. Ronzone seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. King referred members to the printed report. On the income statement, room tax year-to-date is \$1.7 million. Mr. L. King said room tax collections are down 6 percent year-to-date. In 2018 collections were up 12 percent year-to-date.

Ms. D. Lawson said the economy does seem to be getting a little soft. She said the 2019 budget is secure, and in 2020 if we have to make adjustments, then we will. Ms. D. Lawson said that in 30 years, the Elkhart County CVB has never spent more than it had in revenue.

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson presented the fourth quarter project summary. She said we have never been as busy as we have this year, and that the staff has been amazing. Ms. D. Lawson said amid all the projects, the Elkhart County CVB also moved to a new Visitor Center. There will be an open house on Oct. 22 from 4 to 7 p.m., and commission members were invited to attend.

Ms. D. Lawson said the 2020 Business Plan will be presented in the November meeting. There will be a brand-new Heritage Trail audio driving tour. Sample audio from new Heritage Trail tour played.

Ms. D. Lawson shared the look of the new corporate logo collateral pieces such as letterhead, note cards and stationery.

Ms. D. Lawson said the Elkhart County CVB submitted an application to the Community Foundation of Elkhart County for Vibrant Communities' further development of a Placemaking Academy. The Elkhart County Placemaking Academy can be delivered to various audiences to educate and inspire. The application is a two-year request at more than \$200,000, and the match would be through sponsorships not from ECCVB. The foundation is very interested in this project and the Elkhart Chamber of Commerce has committed to include this in its 2020 Leadership Academy, and it is hoped to deliver the academy regionally.

Mr. R. Jenkins moved to authorize Ms. D. Lawson to proceed on discussions of the potential Placemaking Academy for which an application is pending. Ms. G. Patel seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. D. Lawson distributed a draft letter to the Elkhart County Treasurer for review. She said the draft letter was provided by the Indiana Tourism Association and would be edited slightly by Mr. B. Hoffer. The letter's topic is on taxation of short-term rentals and tax collection disclosure.

Ms. D. Lawson said the state of Indiana has passed legislation that all short-term rentals must collect state and lodging taxes and file with the county treasurer. She said Airbnb and other short-term rental services have affected the Elkhart County destination in a significant way.

Ms. D. Lawson said she will be meeting with the Elkhart County Treasurer to inquire if they will be comfortable with sharing of monthly lodging tax collections information.

Ms. D. Lawson distributed copies of a Memorandum of Agreement prepared by Mr. B. Hoffer that will serve as an agreement between the commission and board starting in 2020. There was general discussion on terms and the process. Ms. D. Lawson distributed copies of a confidentiality agreement between the treasurer and tourism agencies.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to approve and empower the president to sign the agreement. Mr. R. Jenkins seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

Mr. L. King raised for discussion a letter sent by Ms. Kim Clarke to other board members. He distributed copies to commission members. The letter outlines concerns that Ms. K. Clarke says needs to be addressed. Mr. L. King said the letter has an incorrect point on the budget for the Visitor Center. The letter also alleges frivolous spending. The consensus of board members is that they are unhappy with the contents and sentiments of the letter. Mr. L. King said the Elkhart County CVB staff actually reviewed the technology proposal for the Visitor Center and very responsibly assessed the actual needs and purchased what was needed. Mr. K. Janowsky said it is too late in the game to manage expenses after the money is spent. Ms. D. Lawson said she plans to meet with Mr. L. King, Mr. D. Shoup and Mr. B. Hoffer to discuss next steps. Ms. E. Billey said she did not feel that Ms. K. Clarke meant well with this letter. Ms. B. Ronzone said that the Elkhart County CVB has a history of financial responsibility.

Ms. B. Ronzone moved to show full support of Ms. D. Lawson and the Elkhart County CVB staff on their handling of this project. Ms. G. Patel seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

SET NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be 8 a.m. Friday, November 8, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder