



eccvb.org

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ELKHART COUNTY CVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, March 10, 2023, at Elkhart County Visitors Center, 3421 Cassopolis Street, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors Vice President (by Zoom)
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors (by Zoom)
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. Brittany Short, Board of Directors
Mr. Dan Shoup, Commission President and Board of Directors

ATTENDING: Ms. Gita Patel, Commission Vice President
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer (by Zoom)
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission
Mr. Anant Patel, Commission
Mr. Doug Risser, Commission
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director
Ms. Janis Logsdon, Assistant Director
Mr. Terry Mark, Staff Recorder
Ms. Amanda Eckelbarger, ECCVB Staff
Mr. William Knox, Legacy Sports Group

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. L. King called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

APPROVE JANUARY MINUTES

Ms. B. Short moved to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2023, meeting. Mr. L. App seconded. There was a vote, and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App said that after two months of 2023 cash balances and revenues were looking good, including the carryover of the innkeepers tax from 2022. He said that to reduce carryover in the future, he likely will recommend an increase to \$2.6 million revenue in the annual budget. He thanked the Elkhart County CVB staff for its work on behalf of the community. In response to a question about the SBA loan, Mr. L. App said the loan is for 10 years and there is hardly any interest being paid. He said there has been consideration given to paying it off in full.

Mr. B. Hoffer moved to approve the financial report. Ms. B. Short seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

LEGACY SPORTS GROUP PRESENTATION

Mr. J. Hunsberger introduced Mr. W. Knox of Legacy Sports Group, which was contracted by the Elkhart County CVB to study the sports market and potential opportunities in Elkhart County.

Mr. W. Knox said that sports tourism is a \$39.7 billion dollar industry in the U.S. He said Legacy Sports Group studied Elkhart County venues and the market with the goal of providing the Elkhart County CVB with an action plan based on sound research and analysis. He said most of the sports facilities that provide opportunity are privately owned such as the aquatics center in Elkhart. He said Legacy Sports Group's findings are that Elkhart County is well positioned to pursue sports tourism. He said that trends in participation show that swimming and basketball are growing. He said there is a need to have a welcoming hotel community, and the local hotels do welcome sports teams but that there are some issues around rebate requests. He said the Moose Rugby Grounds presents an opportunity because it's a niche not being sought by other facilities. He said there are impending challenges including regional competition, condition of facilities, relationships with event rights holders, and event incentive programs.

Mr. W. Knox answered a number of questions about the sports market. He said a planned sports facility in Mishawaka is funded by a collaboration of the city, private developer and state READI grant. He said that rugby represents a tremendous opportunity, with the Moose Rugby Grounds having potential access to more acreage to develop and a building. He said that sports tourism is essentially recession-proof. He said the bicycling potential depends on having the right infrastructure. He said hockey infrastructure is expensive and, with many tournaments preferring access to three or four sheets, it will be interesting to observe how it develops. He said the upper St. Joseph River as a venue for rowing is an asset that should be evaluated.

BUREAU UPDATE

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that Shannon Oakes will join the staff as director of destination development on May 1. He said he is thrilled to have her on board.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said there has been significant energy and activity around events in Elkhart County. The Elkhart County CVB staff has been receiving more sponsorship requests.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that the Indiana Tourism Association has been at work advocating for enabling legislation for tourism improvement districts. He said the legislation has been assigned to committee but not been brought to consideration, which is not surprising for a proposal in its first year. He said the legislation on outdoor refreshment areas is advancing.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the presentation on the Elkhart amphitheater project is now being pushed back to April to give more people an opportunity to attend.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the Indiana Tourism Conference has much higher registration than expected. He said the result is that the Hotel Elkhart is sold out, plus 50 more rooms sold at the Hilton Garden Inn. He said around 140 are expected for the Monday night reception, and all commission and board are invited to attend.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. B. Short said there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new River Greenway Trail in Elkhart on May 11 at 11 a.m. Gov. Eric Holcomb will be present.

There was general discussion on swimming events.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, May 12, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Mark
Staff Recorder