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ELKHART COUNTY CVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, May 8, 2020, at Elkhart County Visitors Center, 3421 Cassopolis Street, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President
Ms. Eleanor Billey, Board of Directors Vice President
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Mr. Dan Shoup, Board of Directors and Innkeepers Tax Commission president (in-person)

ATTENDING: Ms. Gita Patel, Commission Vice President
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission
Ms. Diana Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Terry Mark, Staff Recorder
Ms. Amanda Eckelbarger, ECCVB Staff
Ms. Cindy Ostrom, ECCVB Staff

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. L. King called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. D. Bearss moved to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2020, meeting. Mr. B. Hoffer seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App said the ECCVB applied to the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), which could provide up to 2.5 times our rent and utilities, equaling \$1.9 million. The ECCVB was approved to receive \$140,000 in a loan that will be forgivable. He said the ECCVB must submit financials up to that point in September. He shared

financial projections with the effects of the COVID-19 response, modifying expected revenue. The worst-case scenario shows no room tax or receivables, with only cash on hand, resulting in net loss of \$229,000. He said conservative projections showing realistic figures results total revenue of \$1.958 million and a profit of \$262,000. He said he feels good about this projection.

Mr. D. Bearss asked whether the PPP required any special accounting in order to submit documents on back end. Mr. L. App said we will just show standard income statement, and that PPP administrators just need proof that we used the money we said we would up front. Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB will submit payroll records.

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

BUREAU UPDATE

Ms. D. Lawson said it has been an interesting process over the last several weeks. ECCVB staff have been working remotely, and they have been incredible. She said she is very proud of the staff, which has developed an efficient system of staff meetings at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., then breaking out into project teams to work on specific goals. She said the staff will start coming back on Monday, scheduling who is in and who is out.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB is working on advocacy, reaching out to our stakeholders, checking in and building relationships. She said we're working hard to provide partners with things they might need, including things like organizing hotels and other groups into "hives" to share information. She said we have been in that mitigation phase for six to eight weeks. She said we are referring to the phase as economy reopens as a "re-boot." The ECCVB has seen quite a bit of community pride through the Love Notes and We Believe in Here campaigns.

Ms. D. Lawson said that with the second part of the re-boot that the tone and message will start to change a little bit. While it will not push anyone to come to Elkhart County, we will be saying in a softer way that we are ready to welcome them back. Then in the "re-imagine" phase we will start thinking about what we have learned, and how that influences change in how we do business.

Ms. D. Lawson said that the Elkhart County Visitor Center is not opening yet in following the governor's executive orders. The projected opening is June 14. Plans include taking temperature of staff, perhaps using technology, increased sanitation practices, and having fewer brochures out. Ms. D. Lawson said we're trying to make those who travel here feel more comfortable and safer. ECCVB staff will be wearing masks. The Visitor Center won't reopen until we feel very comfortable that we can keep staff and visitors safe.

Ms. A. Eckelbarger said the new corporate brand has become an important of how we have helped community recover from COVID-19. The Tomorrow campaign has a number of beautiful videos from arts

organizations. The ECCVB is also reaching out to DMOs across the country to say that we believe in them. This has been well received and opened doors to some cross promotion.

Mr. A. Dawson and Ms. Suzie Weirick will be taping their presentation for the City Nation Place conference to be presented virtually. They will be telling story of Elkhart County's Vibrant Communities, how that got residents engaged and how developing those relationships translated to the Well Crafted brand. Videos to be presented at City Nation Place and for a National Tourism Week promotion plays on the screen.

Ms. D. Lawson described an initiative called informally Project Q. It started with a proposal by Goshen Mayor Jeremy Stutsman for Elkhart County cities and towns to fund a program managed by the ECCVB to help small businesses. ECCVB staff developed a three-part project to help small businesses at no cost to them. The program addresses the huge shift in the way consumers behave with respect to digital and e-commerce engagement through workshops that would help small businesses get prepared. The workshops would include modules on storytelling, social media strategies, search engine optimization, content marketing, and digital photography. The second part of the project is a promotions piece through a buy-local campaign encouraging residents to support the local businesses that they love. The third part is a technical assistance grant program to help small businesses develop a basic website and get set up on social media. She said Mayor Stutsman has raised \$40K (with contributions from each city and Elkhart County). There have also been conversation with James Turnwald of MACOG to find funding for these other pieces. It will be a three-month process. Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB is feeling confident that we can get this started in some way, as Project Q aligns with business plan for 2020. This would be the first time the cities, county, EDC and ECCVB, chambers have come together to work on a project to help small businesses.

Ms. D. Lawson said the ECCVB has developed Zoom partner meetings on communications, social media, and the destination brand. It has been uplifting to see how positively people have responded.

Ms. D. Lawson said the Quilt Gardens project budget is down to the absolute essentials. The ECCVB staff reached out to Quilt Gardens partners when it became apparent that we couldn't fund the project because we didn't have the resources. Quilt Gardens sites agreed to fund their own sites. ECCVB will continue to promote through promotion and earned media. She said it's incredible that sites stepped up, paid for flowers, and said this is really important to them.

Ms. D. Lawson reviewed some upcoming events, including a robotics competition at ETHOS with about 250 participants in mid-June, RV Dealer Week in September, and two swim meets at the Elkhart aquatics center that will bring in many people. She said the Elkhart County destination fits into the sweet spot of immediate travel forecasts – a location on an interstate, being considered a rural destination, and being able to provide experiences through Heritage Trail and Quilt Gardens. ECCVB staff will be messaging the idea of “near-cation” encouraging local and regional travel.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, July 10, 2020

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder

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