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## ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

### Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, January 12, 2024, at Elkhart County Visitors Center, 3421 Cassopolis Street, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Mr. Dan Shoup, Commission President and Board of Directors  
Ms. Gita Patel, Commission Vice President (via Zoom)  
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer (via Zoom)  
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission  
Mr. Anant Patel, Commission  
Mr. Doug Risser, Commission  
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission

ATTENDING: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President  
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors Vice President (Zoom)  
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors  
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors  
Ms. Brittany Short, Board of Directors  
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director  
Mr. Terry Mark, Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Mr. Anant Patel, Commission

### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m.

### APPROVE NOVEMBER MINUTES

*Ms. G. Patel moved to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2023, meeting. Mr. D. Risser seconded. It was approved with all in favor.*

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App was not in attendance. He will provide a year-end financial report to all members next week.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

*Ms. B. Ronzone moved to accept the slate of officers presented in the November 10, 2023, meeting: Mr. Dan Shoup as president, Ms. Gita Patel as vice president, and Mr. Rick Jenkins as secretary-treasurer. Mr. D. Risser seconded. It was approved with all in favor.*

## BUREAU UPDATE

Mr. J. Hunsberger presented the 2024 Elkhart County Area Guides, which again features two different covers with People & Places Along the Heritage Trail on one and Amish County along the Heritage Trail on the other. He said the production run was reduced slightly to match demand. There are significant updates on the maps. He said the Amish Country cover is more in demand, so 75 percent of guides have that cover. There was general discussion on demand for printed collateral. Mr. J. Hunsberger said the ECCVB staff tracks downloads of digital guide. He said the event calendar on the website drove significant traffic as the result of a campaign built to highlight the calendar.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that the ECCVB staff is planning a Restaurant Week campaign. It has been something that has been considered for a number of years. In a related development, the ECCVB was approached by Culinary Crossroads to do an On the Road Dinner series event which identifies chefs and celebrate the region's culinary talent. The goal is to curate a one-of-a-kind dinner experience. The On the Road Dinner will be Tuesday, March 26, at Elcona Country Club, which is providing the space and front-of-house staff. Ruhe152, West on Warren and Artisan will be the participating restaurants. It is expected to be a great evening, and the ECCVB will be purchasing a table.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the ECCVB has engaged with the Hunden Group to better understand the rugby experience as it relates to the Moose Rugby Grounds. Hunden Group will study business opportunities and potential next steps for the growth of that facility.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the ECCVB has engaged two consultants, one for an economic impact study incorporating the proposed amphitheater, Lerner Theatre and other downtown sites and the second is a hotel study of Elkhart and Goshen. The report from the economic impact study has been provided to hotel study consultant. He said the draft economic impact report is positive and reinforces the need for continued investment. He said the aquatics center is a significant driver of economic activity, which will be supported by the NAIA swimming championship coming in 2025 and 2026 to aquatic center. There was general discussion on swimming events and economic impact.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that he has worked with a lobbyist from Barnes & Thornburg, Mr. Jake German, and has been in communication with the Republican Party delegation to pass the enabling legislation at the state level for an increase of the visitor assessment. He said it's important to be prepared to build the business case to implement at the county level by the Elkhart County Council. There is work ongoing to

decide which bill that it can be added to in this session of the General Assembly. There was general discussion on the visitors assessment, otherwise known as the innkeepers tax. He said he will likely be traveling to Indianapolis next week for meetings.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the Vibrant Communities organizing group met with the Action Agenda now complete. He said there will be an open house celebration in each community to present each community's Action Agenda. There are plans for a speaker series starting March 19-20 with Chuck Marohn will be the speaker. He is the founder of Strong Towns, which has started to really challenge the thinking on the development pattern in the U.S. and effective forms of development in the built environment.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, March 8, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Terry Mark  
Staff Recorder

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