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## ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

### Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, March 12, 2021, 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 (Zoom)  
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer (Zoom)  
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission (Zoom)  
Mr. Anant Patel, Commission  
Mr. Doug Risser, Commission  
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission (Zoom)

ATTENDING: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President  
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer  
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors (Zoom)  
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors (Zoom)  
Ms. Brittany Short, Board of Directors (Zoom)  
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director  
Mr. Terry Mark, ECCVB Staff Recorder  
Ms. Amanda Eckelbarger, ECCVB Staff  
Ms. Cindy Ostrom, ECCVB Staff

ABSENT: Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors

### CALL TO ORDER

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

### APPROVE JANUARY MINUTES

*Mr. R. Jenkins moved to approve the January 8, 2021, minutes. Mr. D. Risser seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.*

### APPOINTMENT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. D. Shoup introduced Ms. B. Short, who was recommended by Mr. L. King in a letter to be appointed to the ECCVB board of directors. He noted Ms. B. Short's involvement in the Friend of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail group as president. Mr. J. Hunsberger also said that Ms. B. Short has participated in the ECCVB's Champion Placemakers webinars and her involvement in the Friends of the Pumpkinvine board.

*Mr. A. Patel moved to appoint Ms. B. Short to the ECCVB board of directors. Ms. B. Ronzone seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.*

## FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App referred everyone to the printed financial report. He said the COVID-adjusted budget projects revenue of \$1.8 million, and expenses are budgeted to match. The ECCVB staff will adjust if there is a shortfall. He said excess revenue will be used to build cash reserves. He said Ms. Cindy Ostrom is working on forgiveness of Payroll Protection Program loan. The ECCVB applied in February for PPP loan and received \$109,000. Mr. L. App said innkeepers tax revenue was higher than budgeted in January and February by \$25,000, and the first quarter should be ahead by \$59,000. He said things are going really well so far in 2021, with economic reports indicating a strong year and a particularly strong recovery for the tourism industry.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the staff has been working with KeyBank to understand the requirements of the new financial assistance programs. Ms. C. Ostrom said the first round of PPP from 2020 has not been written off yet. Mr. J. Hunsberger said the board, commission and staff have been working hard to make difficult decisions, but have been able to continue doing the work. He said it's better to have a conservative budget.

*Mr. A. Patel moved to approve the financial report. Mr. R. Jenkins seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.*

## BUREAU UPDATE

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the combination of the spring season, warm weather and vaccinations has industry experts in anticipation of a strong third and fourth quarter. He said residents and tourists are ready to be out, events are being booked, and ECCVB staff is receiving sponsorship applications that we have been able to approve. He said event organizers better understand how to do events. While we are not expecting a full recovery, there will be a significant one. He said group tours have been the slowest to recover.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the second round of Champion Placemakers workshops is starting April 15. The first round was two cohorts and from that we learned how we could refine the experience. The second round is one cohort, with the number of presentations shortened to six. There will perhaps be another round of Champion Placemakers later this year. Zoom meetings have opened participation to some who may not have, but it has come at the cost of face-to-face interactions.

Mr. J. Hunsberger the Indiana Destination Development Corp.'s campaigns. He said the IDDC, led by CEO Elaine Bedel, has been doing good work in promoting Indiana in ways they have not been. The Hoosiers by Choice campaign features people who moved to Indiana. Also, the IN Crowd campaign was rolled out during March Madness and features Richard Worsham of Janus Motorcycles. The video was shown. Mr. J. Hunsberger said it is a great example of telling our story, drawing upon Elkhart County's place DNA and identity as makers.

Mr. J. Hunsberger talked about the Vibrant Communities initiative coming upon five years. There is work now trying to reimagine the next five years of Vibrant Communities, beginning the planning work to renew the Action Agenda. The ECCVB is working with Planning Next to understand successes and plan to do another community outreach. It will be a keystone project in connecting to community. Also, the Vibrant Neighborhoods program is an effort to dig deeper into neighborhoods, trying to activate vibrancy of love of community. Vibrant Neighborhoods provides micro-grants with the help of the Community Foundation of Elkhart County to do something fun or beautification activities. There are plans to do a follow-up survey to the 2019 resident sentiment survey that was conducted in collaboration with IUSB. The 2021 survey is starting with a random sampling of 5,000 Elkhart County residents.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said events at the Elkhart Health and Aquatics Center, which opened in 2020 and suffered from the pandemic disrupting events, had some successes in 2021. The ECCVB is expecting further major events and has been learning from this experience as the audience is different from others.

Mr. J. Hunsberger described the Indiana Cool North campaign's spring break push starting March 24, following a successful campaign 2020. Website traffic from campaign was a 343 percent increase. The Northern Indiana Tourism Development Commission has started in advocating for northern Indiana through NIA (Northern Indiana Advocacy). The primary goal is having a collective voice representing northern Indiana and also working with northeast Indiana. He said it will help with having a voice on state commissions and advancing legislation in the best interests of northern Indiana.

## OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. J. Hunsberger discussed a conversation with Elkhart County Commissioner Suzie Weirick about the \$40 million that Elkhart County will receive from the new COVID relief package. The funding must go to COVID-related expenditures for businesses such as hospitality and restaurants that were most affected. It is unknown how this program will be rolled out. Mr. A. Dawson said that between Elkhart County and the cities of Elkhart and Goshen, the area will receive \$70 million. He said while it's not clear how it could be spent, it will be a big help.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, May 14, 2021.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark  
Staff Recorder

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