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ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, September 9, 2022, 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
Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission
Mr. Doug Risser, Commission

ATTENDING: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors Vice President
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. Brittany Short, Board of Directors
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director
Ms. Janis Logsdon, Assistant Director
Mr. Terry Mark, Staff Recorder
Mr. Mike Huber, Abonmarche Consultants
Mr. Mitch Nichols, Nichols Tourism Group
Mr. Don Anderson, Destination Consultancy

ABSENT: Mr. Anant Patel, Commission
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. D. Shoup called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m.

APPROVE MAY MINUTES

Mr. D. Risser moved to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2022, meeting. Mr. S. Baker seconded. It was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App reported that revenues are in line with expectations through the first eight months of 2022. He said that expenses are also as anticipated in the budget. He said room tax revenue has been higher than anticipated and that there should be a little carryover into 2023. He said the balance sheet is looking good. There was general discussion on revenue vs. projections.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said occupancy from construction workers has far exceeded what was expected. He said the new Amazon facility is expected to be in operation by December, and it's not certain what that will mean with lodging demand. There was general discussion on the Amazon distribution hub.

Ms. G. Patel moved to accept the financial report. Mr. S. Baker seconded. It was approved with all in favor.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A new Well Crafted video was shown on the video screen. The video will be on the website's home page, replacing the previous version which was launched in early 2020. Mr. J. Hunsberger said the Elkhart County CVB was excited to work with Vala Marketing on this video. He said they understood very well with what we need.

Mr. M. Huber of Abonmarche Consultants described the process of working with Elkhart County CVB staff and others on strategic plan. Mr. J. Hunsberger said that with so much change in the community and organization that this was a good opportunity to review where we've been and where we're going. He said the strategic plan will put us in a good place.

Mr. M. Huber said the objective is to set a new course direction for the Elkhart County CVB for the next three to five years. He said there were three primary components with assessments looking at the organization, community and destination, and industry. He said the research was very thorough in integrating entire community with feedback. He said the strategic plan will determine the direction, identifying opportunities and new directions, and making sure they were in alignment. He presented the strategic plan document as among the deliverables, as well as to present and communicate the strategy. The strategic plan team will also deliver a stand-alone advocacy and communications plan.

Mr. M. Huber said the research found that Elkhart County destination performance was generally stable. He said a visitor profile found that visitors skewed to a mature demographic and that there is a fairly large cohort of day visitors. He said that things are going generally well, but there are red flags to pay attention to.

Mr. M. Nichols said it is notable that Elkhart County residents valued the visitor industry and understood how it benefits the county. The strategies for the future are divided into four pillars: (1) Diversify: communicating with and reaching external visitors; (2) Curate: product development; (3) Balance: Focus

on the organization and ensuring communications matches product development; (4) Advocate: Communicating what the organization is doing and how it benefits Elkhart County.

Mr. J. Hunsberger described how the strategic plan will be integrated into business plan by organizing the many tactics into a story that explains —project by project — what we are doing, why we're doing it, and what is its impact.

There was general discussion on how to better communicate to residents and encourage cross-fertilization and awareness of local assets, the scope of the work, and understanding what is happening and how much progress is being made. There was consensus that board members' responsibility is to provide oversight but not micromanagement.

Mr. R. Jenkins moves to recommend to the board of directors that the strategic plan be adopted. Mr. S. Baker seconded. It was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

Mr. J. Hunsberger said there has been great activity on the Quilt Gardens and Epic Art Adventures passports, with more than 1,000 passports have been activated. He said the Vibrant Communities action agenda process is wrapping up. He said Planning Next, the firm facilitating the process, will be back in Elkhart County on Sept. 13 and will be revealing to community.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 8 a.m. Friday, November 11.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder