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ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, September 11, 2020, 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
Mr. Scott Baker, Commission (via Zoom)
Mr. Kurt Janowsky, Commission (via Zoom)
Ms. Beth Ronzone, Commission (via Zoom)

ATTENDING: Mr. Levi King, Board of Directors President
Ms. Eleanor Billey, Board of Directors Vice President
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer (via Zoom)
Mr. Dan Bearss, Board of Directors (via Zoom)
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors (via Zoom)
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. Diana Lawson, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director
Mr. Terry Mark, ECCVB Staff Recorder

ABSENT: Mr. Anant Patel, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. D. Shoup called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

JULY MINUTES

Mr. B. Hoffer moved to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2020, meeting as submitted. Mr. R. Jenkins seconded. There was a vote and it was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App said the August financial statement shows that not a lot has changed. He said ECCVB staff is watching every dollar in, with \$991,000 through August in room revenue, ahead of projection. He said Ms. Cindy Ostrom on the staff has been working with delinquent accounts to at least get reports filed. He said he was awaiting proper documentation to begin to settle up on the \$141,000 Payroll Protection Program loan and \$160,000 EIDL loan. He said 100% of PPP expenses were for payroll items. There are two major expenditures before year end, \$60,000 for website and database management and \$50,000 for Vibrant Communities. In 2021 we will begin building up financial reserves. General discussion ensued on the PPP program.

Mr. K. Janowsky moved to accept 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 ECCVB is working with the Economic Development Corp. of Elkhart County on an EDA grant with EDC as lead applicant to support Project Amp. This is a project that would be focused on digital training workshops, marketing, and technical assistance. It's anticipated that this project can get underway at end of year and could provide support leading into holiday time.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said Vibrant Communities took a step back with pandemic. However, organizers have started thinking of and planning for the future, starting with a summer retreat to think through COVID. The Vibrant Communities organizing team concluded that we need to focus on neighborhoods, considering restart of Little Big Idea Grant with a focus on microgrants for neighborhoods. Mr. J. Hunsberger said there is also consensus to work on Action Agenda 2.0, getting out to community and understand what their needs are. A majority of the first 77 Action Agenda items are completed or started. The hope is that Action Agenda 2.0 will be the next plan for the community to rally around.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that Champion Placemakers, which is a significant part of our business plan, has gotten underway with staff doing virtual workshops with the businesses and people really making Elkhart County great. The workshops will help the businesses

understand the Well Crafted destination brand and storytelling. He credited the ECCVB staff for doing a great job presenting in the workshops.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the staff has worked with the police department concerning transient activity around the Elkhart County Visitor Center. Exterior improvements that are in the works are new lights for the parking lot and a new access drive for the loading dock at the rear of the building.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the ECCVB received the Tenacity in Travel Award as part of the Groups Today Readers' Choice Awards in recognition for the We Believe in Here digital campaign. This is a tribute to the staff for making lemonade out of lemons.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said ECCVB staff have been participating in a number of virtual meetings – with groups for FAM tours, staff meetings, information exchange meetings with partners. This reflects a high interest in travel and tourism. The meetings with partners have been very successful in engaging and understanding current situation.

Mr. J. Hunsberger reported that the Safecation Staycation campaign has eight participating hotels which are working with local attractions and restaurants to offer packages to visitors. The response has been very positive with some sold-out nights. The packages have been well received and is the result of the creativity from partner exchange meetings.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the ECCVB has been working with the Northern Indiana Tourism Development Commission on a 2020 getaway campaign promoting outdoors, family and shopping activities. Holiday promotions are also being planned. Digital referrals from Indiana's Cool North up 501 percent compared with 2019.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said the 2021 Business Plan will focus on innovation, inspiration and collaboration. He said the ECCVB staff took a deep breath to look forward as the pandemic revealed our true selves. Our guiding lights will be in these four areas: (1) We Believe in Communities – Vibrant Communities serves as the mechanism to build relationships and work with partners on quality of place; (2) We Believe in People – Champion Placemakers are really about the people and it's our people who are Well Crafted and relationships can be cultivated; (3) We Believe in Fun – fun is a core belief if that we want people to be enjoying themselves whether on trails, admiring pottery, Quilt Gardens, Heritage Trail, events and festivals; (4) We Believe in Us – we are resilient and, when faced with adversity, have leveraged relationships and collaborative spirit. We will really lean into that for 2021.

Ms. D. Lawson provided an overview of transition to Mr. J. Hunsberger. She congratulated him for doing an incredible job, and behind him is an incredible staff. She said staff are not yes people and will push back and give their point of view. She said she has been communicating to key stakeholders about transition. She said it's been emotional and wonderful. She said there will be a seamless transition and thanked board and commission members for feedback and conversation.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, at 8 a.m.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark
Staff Recorder

WE