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ELKHART COUNTY INNKEEPERS TAX COMMISSION

Minutes of Public Meeting

Friday, September 13, 2024, at Elkhart County Visitors Center, 3421 Cassopolis Street, Elkhart, IN

PRESENT: Mr. Rick Jenkins, Commission Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Dan Boecher, 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
Mr. Larry App, Board of Directors Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Arvis Dawson, Board of Directors
Mr. Brian Hoffer, Board of Directors
Ms. Brittany Short, Board of Directors
Mr. Jon Hunsberger, Executive Director
Ms. Cindy Ostrom, ECCVB Staff

ABSENT: Mr. Dan Shoup, Commission President and Board of Directors
Ms. Gita Patel, Commission Vice President
Mr. Anant Patel, Commission

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

APPROVE MINUTES

Mr. D. Risser moved to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2024, and May 10, 2024, meetings. Ms. B. Ronzone seconded. It was approved with all in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. L. App reported that through August the Elkhart County CVB is on track to fulfill its contract within budget. He said the Elkhart County CVB staff is working hard on the 2025 business plan and budget. He said the balance sheet looks strong, as does the profit-and-loss statement. He said there will likely be the customary minor adjustments made on the financials.

Ms. B. Ronzone moved to accept the financial report. Mr. D. Rosser seconded. It was approved with all in favor.

BUREAU UPDATE

Mr. J. Hunsberger said that consultants Mr. Don Anderson of DCI and Mr. Mitch Nichols of Nichols Tourism Group have been retained to help the Elkhart County CVB begin the process of exploring the business case to support increasing the visitor assessment tax to up to 8 percent, which was enabled by legislation in 2024. Mr. J. Hunsberger said the consultants will explore projects and plans that increase tourism and improve the visitor experience, justifying an increase, in meetings with stakeholders and leaders. He said it's possible this could be included in the annual budget request in July 2025.

Mr. J. Hunsberger reviewed recent staff changes. Ms. Jessica Risner has been hired as destination sales manager, working with group markets such as motorcoach, rallies and sports. Ms. Maddy Gordon has left as destination development manager. Elkhart County CVB staff members with new titles are Ms. Amanda Eckelbarger, director of strategic initiatives; Ms. Jessica Barnhart, director of IT and online strategies; and Ms. Janis Logsdon, director of marketing and sales. The changes align with the goals and reporting connected to the strategic plan.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said FiredUp! Culture, which works on culture change, leadership development and team building across the country, has been retained to work with Elkhart County CVB in individual sessions and then a team summit.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said Mr. Joe Veneto of Experience Lab has been working on an experience audit of the Elkhart County destination. There have been on-site visits, including an upcoming trip to meet with several partners and stakeholders and final report by the end of 2024. He said the work will continue in 2025.

Mr. J. Hunsberger highlighted upcoming events: the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds' holiday lights, including an artisan market; former Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard speaking in Goshen on Sept. 19; Wellfield Botanic Gardens' Summer Evening in the Gardens, also on Sept. 19; and the Lerner 100 Celebration kicking off on Nov. 24 with a silent film.

Mr. J. Hunsberger said Elkhart County CVB staff is working on the 2025 business plan, which will be presented along with the 2025 budget at the November meeting for approval.

NEXT MEETING

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Mark & Cindy Ostrom
Elkhart County CVB staff

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