

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**Minutes of the Annual & February Meetings**  
**Thursday, April 9, 2020**  
**VIA ZOOM**

**Attending the Meeting in Person:** Bob DuBois, Andrew Newport, Jimia Smith, Norman Burns, Mark Truett, Angie Frazier, Gary Miller, Toby Miles, Jackie Dikos and Scott Spillman.

**Not Attending:** Jeremy Geisendorff and Jeffrey Brown.

**Also attending:**

Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Betsy Ekelof, Operations Director; Tina Rodgers, Assistant Director of Resources; Christine Altman, Counsel.

**I. Welcome**

President Bob DuBois opened the meeting via Zoom call due to the Governor's stay-at-home order at 8:35 a.m.

**II. Deferral of March Meeting Minutes**

The Board agreed to suspend with review of the March minutes until the May 1, 2020 meeting.

**III. COVID19 Emergency Business Planning**

B. DuBois reported that he first worked with the HCT leadership team beginning the week of March 16 after it was determined that employees should begin working at home when Coronavirus cases began escalating in Indiana.

Immediately the staff halted ad campaigns that could be paused and began work on a #LoveHC social media campaign to the local market that promoted Hamilton County social service agencies as well as the hospitality and healthcare communities. It offered communications services to the county's emergency services and social services support organizations and began blogging and promoting restaurants offering takeout services with the governor's mandate to close in-house seating.

B. Myers met with B. DuBois March 19 to review early revenue forecasts as it became apparent that hotel occupancies would decline significantly for the rest of March and into April and May as predicted.

US Travel released a report by Tourism Economics that at the time predicted the pandemic would create seven times the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and dramatically reduce hotel revenue for the rest of 2020.

An executive committee meeting was scheduled March 24 to discuss a 90-day emergency business plan and recommendations for significant budget cuts – likely at least \$2.5 million.

Because HCT works on "in-year" tax remittances from hotel room sales and because hotels and Grand Park immediately began reporting significant cancellations of events and games, it was obvious that significant cuts in every area would be needed despite available operating reserves.

After extensive review, five positions were terminated and seven staff furloughed as the HCT administrative team continued to study the rapidly unfolding situation. During this time, CARES Act legislation was passed, but it became apparent HCT could not wait to determine eligibility for support although research began immediately to be informed about available funding opportunities.

The executive committee met March 24 and reviewed a preliminary budget and proposed staff reductions. After much discussion the plan was approved and staff would be notified the next day, which was the end of the payroll period. It also approved the staff to apply for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) through the SBA and wait to hear if it would eventually be eligible for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

The entire Board and Tourism Commission were notified at 9 a.m. on March 25 of the staff reductions soon after the last calls were made. A. Frazier commented she thought the Board should have been notified earlier given that she immediately began receiving inquiries from staff asking if she knew of the plans. B. Myers apologized for not letting the full board before the calls began. Human resource decisions are handled by the executive committee but something as significant as this should have merited earlier notification, B. Myers acknowledged and apologized.

The remaining 12 staff members were asked to take a 25-50% wage reduction for April-June or choose furlough or termination. All agreed to take the wage reduction. Other benefits were cut as well including the second employer health savings account deposit and the 401-k employer match.

She noted that the decision to terminate positions was predicated on likely significant shortfalls in both 2020 and 2021 as reported by Tourism Economics. J. Brown mentioned that CBRE had just issued a dire long-range forecast report. She noted that while every effort would be made to retain staff and continue marketing, revenues may be far short of projections and significant cuts all around would be likely.

The Board agreed to the emergency business plan and temporary budget but noted that it would likely be an evolving situation without a clear path forward with the need for many adjustments. B. Myers agreed and said she would bring a revised budget and preliminary way forward plan to the May 1 Board meeting but acknowledged it may require many alterations in the future.

The staff was strongly encouraged to seek out the PPP program as it provides the best interest rate and forgivable loans for those staff retained. B. Myers noted that 501-(c)-6 associations were not eligible for the program currently but US Travel and others were aggressively seeking inclusion into the program and staff would monitor the situation.

N. Burns moved that the plan be put into place with this understanding and M. Truett seconded. Motion passed.

J. Brown moved that the meeting be adjourned at 9:19 a.m. G. Miller seconded. Motion passed.