

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**ZOOM Meeting**  
**Friday, August 7, 2020**

**Attending:** Jeffrey Brown, Toby Miles, Bob DuBois, Mark Truett, Jackie Dikos, Jimia Smith, Andrew Newport, Norman Burns, Scott Spilman, Angie Frazier. Chris Stice also was in attendance.

**Not Attending:** Jeremy Geisendorff and Gary Miller.

**Also attending:**

Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Betsy Ekelof, Operations Director; Tina Rodgers, Director of Resources; Laura Kelner, Director of Sales; Sarah Billman, Assistant Director Visitor Services; Ashley Ledford, Director of Marketing & Promotions; Carol Sergi, Director of Workforce Strategy; Christine Altman, Counsel; and, Perry Williams, Chair, Hamilton County Visitor and Convention Commission.

**I. Welcome**

President Bob DuBois opened the meeting at 8:32 a.m.

**II. June Regular Meeting Minutes**

The June regular meeting minutes were presented for review. J. Brown moved both minutes be approved. A. Newport seconded. Motion passed.

- a) B. Myers introduced C. Stice who has replaced A. Patterson as the Hamilton County Parks Department Director and will serve out the balance of Patterson's term.

**III. Financials & Metrics**

- a) **Occupancy Reports** – B. Myers reported that the June hotel occupancy report showed 37.2% compared to Indiana with 42.9%, Hendricks County with 46.9% and Marion County with 36.3%. Both Marion and Hamilton Counties are impacted by the type of business they attract. Downtown Indy's convention in the central business district and Hamilton County's upper scale hotel properties highly dependent on the business transient weekday business. Indiana, Hendricks County and other communities get more pass-through general transient business. In addition, as of June Hamilton County had 7.1% more hotel rooms in the inventory compared to Hendricks County with 3.4% and Marion County with -2.1%. Grand Park opened the latter part of June, which helped significantly. The July unadjusted occupancy rate was 56.1%.
- b) **Tax Collections Reports** – Annual tax collections for November 2019-June 2020 totaled \$2,151,336 gross as of the August deposit, leaving a balance of \$960,488 to be collected for the remaining four months of the year. July's revenue has been trending significantly higher and we have some properties working to catch up on deferred tax payments. Staff feels the goal is still reachable. B. Myers also called attention to a cash flow estimator report which shows the current anticipated operating reserves being at around \$600,000-\$700,000.
- c) **Budget Reports** – While the 2020 revised budget from May is still not updated, staff is working from that significantly reduced budget and that activity is obvious in this report. Cash on hand as of August 6, 2020 is \$982,066. Year-to-date total revenue is \$2,018,979 and expenses are \$2,143,022. Staff is examining each and every expense but also prioritizing marketing and advertising spending as was presented in the "plus budget" to work on improving hotel stays during the many weekends that Grand Park is not hosting games, especially in August and September.

J. Brown moved that the financial report be accepted as presented. N. Burns seconded. Motion passed.

#### IV. 2020 Pandemic Emergency Planning

- a) **Final 100-Day Emergency Plan Activities** – With the close of June comes the end of the three months defined in the emergency a plan as the “survival phase.” K. Radcliff presented a written update to the board on where the staff ended June.
- b) **2021 Recovery Planning Update** – Moving into the “stabilization phase,” where attention is turning to the office building, workplace, our upcoming 2021 staff planning retreat, a fall digital campaign and ongoing support for our hotels, partners and the sports market. This stabilization phase, also presented in a written report, lasts through 2020 and then leads HCT to a “recover” phase for 2021-2022. The final “thrive” phase will be 2023 and forward when a 2030 vision plan will be in place. Several board members commended the staff on its planning and thoughtful re-direction during these challenging times as tough decisions were being made.
- c) **Office Opening Report** – T. Rodgers noted that a little more than half the staff is coming in fairly regularly, although the goal is to keep staffing levels to no more than 7 per day given the way the office space is configured. Staff members are given a choice. An in-person picnic was held in June, and the staff will gather together safely in August for a planning retreat to keep people connected. Work is beginning 4500 square feet of office space with the letting go of the two other spaces being rented through 2020.
- d) **Staffing Discussions** – B. Myers presented the final staffing report approved by the executive committee. In total, 1 staff member chose not to return, and 8 other staff positions are being terminated in total. Already these talented individuals are missed as work begins to ramp up, but the remaining staff understands and is working hard to close the gaps. As of July 1, all but the most senior staff members will return to normal wages and the hope is the two final staff members identified will be back on board in late July or early August. In total there will be 13 full-time and 2 part-time staff members at the new HCT/HCEDC. Two of those staffers are technically paid for through the contract with the economic development corporation. Prior to the pandemic, for the record, staff totaled 3 part-time and 21 full-time.
- e) **Office Discussions** – B. Myers noted that several discussions have taken place about the office situation, but given the times and also the complex nature of the lease agreement with the Tourism Commission, staff and leadership are recommending we remain in place. Everyone agreed.

#### V. Old Business

- a) **Audit & 990s Updates** – B. Ekelof asked if everyone had seen the 990s report and if there were any questions on that and the final 2019 audit report. There were none. J. Brown. B. Dubois and N. Burns, who attended the audit review, applauded Ekelof and the staff on their rigor as the audit was clean. N. Burns asked about the credit card reporting tools that HCT uses and Ekelof noted that HCT uses a Concur system which is quote rigorous and approved by the auditor, allowing them to see each receipt. All credit cards reports require a lot of detail and explanation. Burns moved that the audit report be accepted. J. Brown seconded. Motion passed.
- b) **Funding Agreement** – C. Altman updated everyone on the 2020 funding agreement with the Tourism Commission and said everyone is closer on the revised language and should be able to approve in August. Key changes included 1) the commission’s concern about protection of cash on hand should HCT be subject to a lawsuit of any kind and 2) wanting to segregate the HCT money from the commission money so as to not be obligated should a “garnishment” be required. In addition, the Commission wishes to have the ability to withhold funds should HCT do something of significant concern (e.g. embezzlement, fraud). She noted that these were reasonable requests. B. Myers reminded everyone that the Board had previously authorized the officers to approve the contract once they felt comfortable

with the language but Altman suggested a re-affirmation given the length of time that had passed. With that, A. Newport moved that the officers be given authority to execute the revised contract with legal counsel and J. Brown seconded. Motion passed.

#### **VI. New Business**

- a) **Pulliam Grant Budget Amendment** – B. Myers announced that the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust has awarded Hamilton County Tourism, and its partners at Visit Indy, \$275,000 to launch a new branding initiative from 2020-2022 for the White River. The money will transcend three budget years. She noted that there may be additional budget amendments prior to the last meeting in November. The amendment added \$105,000 to the revenue line items under grants, but really net \$80,000 because in the May budget the anticipated \$25,000 in grant revenue had been included. That money will support a portion of an HCT staffer to manage the project – a request approved by the granting agency. S. Spillman moved that the budget be amended and J. Smith seconded. Motion passed.
- b) **Other New Business and News to Note** – B. Myers noted that the County Council budget hearing will take place this month. A. Ledford announced that HCT has committed \$50,000 toward a fall road trip social media/digital campaign to hopefully drive fall room, restaurant and ticket sales.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting automatically adjourned at 9:10 a.m. without a motion.