

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**August 6, 2021**  
**Minutes of the Board Meeting**  
**Conner Prairie, 13400 Allisonville Road, Fishers, IN 46038**

**Attending the meeting in person:**

Norman Burns, Bob DuBois, Jimia Smith, Scott Spillman, Mark Truett, Toby Miles, Chris Stice, Angie Frazier.

**Attending the meeting virtually:**

Jeffrey Brown and Gary Miller.

**Also attending in person or virtual:**

Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Betsy Ekelof, Operations Director; Ashley Ledford, Director of Marketing & Promotions; Sarah Billman, Visitor Experience Manager; Tina Rodgers, Assistant Director of Resources; Mike Thibieau, Vice President, Workforce Strategy; Christine Altman, Legal Counsel.

**Not attending:**

Andrew Newport

**I. Welcome**

B. DuBois then welcomed everyone to the regular meeting of the Board of Directors at 8:34 a.m.

**II. June 2021 Minutes for Review**

B. DuBois asked if there were any additions or corrections to the June 2021 HCT Board minutes. M. Truett moved that the minutes be approved as presented. S. Spillman seconded. Motion passed.

**III. 2021 Financials & Metrics**

- A. Occupancy Report** -- B. Myers reported hotel business activity through June 2021. Occupancy stood at 49%, up from 33% in 2020 (which included the lockdown period). The county is second from the bottom in its comp set. The winter months were challenging, and the report shows continued strain from the lack of business transient travel despite healthy weekend numbers. For the first half of the year, weekday occupancy is 60.2% and weekend occupancy is at 70.9%. Overall, RevPAR was at \$53.60, with ADR up 10.8% and 7.9% more rooms in the market.
- B. Tax Collection Reports** -- B. Myers noted that through August 2021, lodging tax remittances totaled \$2,627,618.01 before bond debt service, up 20% or \$437,618.01 over budget. HCT had budgeted very conservatively in Summer 2020 for the 2021 calendar year. A very lean winter has given way to a very healthy spring and summer.
- C. 2021 Budget Report** -- B. Ekelof provided a balance sheet which included \$1.6 million in total cash on hand. Spending for the year through July totaled \$2 million or 49% through budget. Income through the July deposit totaled \$1,834,134 leaving a negative net income to spend of \$169,679. But all categories of spending are on track, she noted. Cash flow is impacted due to the nature of the seasonality of tax remittances. M. Truett moved that the financials be accepted as presented. G. Miller seconded. Motion passed.
- D. Additional Budget Spending & Amendments** -- B. Myers reminded the Board that in May and June, the staff had presented \$315,000 in additional investments for calendar year 2021 that it would like to make to support recovery. Recommendations had been made, and she presented a report that shows line item changes in the budget as a result of those recommended approval. She asked the Board to approve those line item changes. They included changes to nine categories and totaled \$315,000. Support to cover these additional expenditures would come from the \$352,695 in the Federal PPP 100% forgiven "loan" that would be posted as income. N. Burns moved that the budget be amended as presented in the detailed document provided to the Board. A. Frazier seconded. Motion passed.

#### IV. Old Business

- A. Audit Report & 990s Review** -- B. Ekelof noted that the 990s and Audit report were available and provided to the Board for Review. They were completed by the firm Peachin Schwarz & Weingardt, Fishers. There were no qualifications or concerns noted in the year-end audit. J. Brown and B. DuBois from the HCT Board along with Christian Renner from the Tourism Commission attended the review prior to distribution to the Board. J. Brown congratulated B. Ekelof and the staff on their good work. While there were some adjusting entries, it was noted that for how difficult the year was and how under-staffed the accounting department was, the audit was clear. There being no concerns, J. Brown moved that the Board accept the financial reports for 2020 as presented. M. Truett seconded. Motion passed.
- B. ARPA Rescue Funds Updates** -- B. Myers provided a report from the ARPA meeting that reviewed what to do with any recovery of revenue that might pass through the county's federal distribution of the funds. Ideas were discussed about use of the funds, but as the application for ARPA county support had not yet been published, no decisions were made. It is now noted that HCT -- due to the county's financial situation -- will need to apply for funds rather than the Tourism Commission being reimbursed for lost revenue. She said an application would be made under the guidelines provided and more information should be available in October.
- C. Human Resources Task Force Volunteers** -- B. Myers reminded everyone that a wage survey had been approved by the Board and was part of the additional budget amendments presented to the Board at this meeting. T. Rodgers then explained that a task force was needed to review the findings and make recommendations on salary adjustments if needed. She asked for volunteers to serve. A. Frazier, J. Brown, G. Miller and J. Smith all agreed. T. Rodgers said she would reach out to set up a meeting once we knew when the study would be completed.
- D. Sports & Entertainment Task Force Report** -- K. Radcliff presented a study report from the Task Force providing them with data, context and information on the two meetings it has had to discuss the idea of expanding focus on these two areas. Hotel members of the Task Force are especially concerned that the Grand Park rebate and commission structure be re-defined so as to not be as onerous on the lodging industry. They want full transparency as to how much money is collected and how the receipts are distributed. J. Brown asked that the funding streams be clearly defined. B. DuBois agreed and said transparency should be an important bi-product of this study. HCT is working with the EDA on a grant application to support this vision as well. More information will be presented at the October meeting.

#### E. New Business

- A. HCEDC HCT Amended MOU** -- B. Myers asked that this be tabled until further clarification in October.
- B. HCT Project Support Considerations** -- B. Myers asked the Board for consideration of a \$50,000 grant to Nickel Plate Heritage Railroad to complete its second dining car. She noted that since re-opening (other than the Caboose rides), passenger ridership was strong, and the existing dining car was regularly selling out for food and drink trains. The Board expressed concern about additional support for the project given how much it had already committed. B. Myers acknowledged this concern. N. Burns noted that Conner Prairie and many other attractions have needs as well and do not have access to additional grant funds. It was suggested that instead of a grant, a potentially forgivable low-interest loan might be made to the NPHRR as it was acknowledged that the second dining car might make it more viable in meeting its other obligations for the near future. The Board asked that the HCT attorney draft papers to support a loan for the NPHRR with favorable terms and bring it to the Board at its October meeting for consideration.
- As the meeting was growing long, B. Myers briefly explained the desire to work with the Nickel Plate Arts, Inc. to support transfer of the building to it with some additional funds to support much-needed repair and maintenance that was deferred in 2020 due to the pandemic and funding crisis. The Board expressed concern over the idea without a plan of action and more information. B. Myers acknowledged that concern and said she would work with Nickel Plate Arts and bring this idea back to the Board, with more information, in the future.

**C. Equipment Retirement** -- B. Ekelof presented a list of items to be retired or transferred, three laptops and a piece of phone equipment now that HCT has gone 100% mobile. The value of all four items is \$0. J. Smith moved that the retirements be made. S. Spillman seconded. Motion passed.

There being no further business, C. Stice move that the meeting be adjourned at 10:23 a.m. A. Frazier seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.