

HAMILTON COUNTY VISITOR AND CONVENTION COMMISSION
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana
August 18, 2022
Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting

Attending the meeting:

Connor Sullivan, Kelly Tabeling, Monique Wise, Christian Renner, Howard Stevenson, Perry Williams, Kevin Walter, Robyn Pauker, Lisa Hanni, Jamie Hopwood, Andrea Brown.

Also attending the meeting in person:

Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Brad Lynn, Vice President Finance; Tina Rodgers, Director of Resources; and, Kris Kazmierczak, legal counsel. Also attending the first portion of the meeting only was Hamilton County Tourism Consultant Kye Hawkins from Advisa.

Not attending:

Jack Russell, Tiffany Pascoe, William Knox

A work session began at 5:15 p.m. with Kye Hawkins, a consultant with Advisa who has been contracted by Hamilton County Tourism to gather leadership input into the HCT Vision 2025 Plan update.

I. Welcome

R. Pauker convened the regular meeting at 6:30 p.m.

II. Minutes of the May 2022 Meeting

R. Pauker asked for any additions or changes to the May 2022 meeting minutes. There being no changes, J. Hopwood moved that the minutes be approved as presented. H. Stevenson seconded. Motion passed.

B. Myers asked that the agenda be amended to include a discussion of the 2022 Funding Agreement. L. Hanni moved that the item be added to the Financials & Metrics agenda, and C. Renner seconded. Motion passed.

III. Financials & Metrics

A. 2022 Visitor Report – B. Myers presented the first draft of a visitor report in addition to the occupancy report using the Zartico data dashboard. The new report provides more insights into the overall market conditions. Indianapolis and greater central Indiana continue to drive significant short, day, long day and overnight stays, with Indiana accounting for almost 60% of the market. Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky and Florida also provide more than 5% visitation each. Top destinations include Hamilton Town Center, Grand Park, Clay Terrace, Topgolf, Ikea and Ruoff Music Center. Efforts to create a more comprehensive report will be ongoing as the HCT staff navigates the many nuances of Zartico. Preliminary numbers for July indicate an astounding 74.1% hotel occupancy rate. Discussion took place as to how the data was collected and what would make Hamilton Town Center such a destination. B. Myers said she would verify the data collection for that area to ensure it does not include Ruoff Music Center visitors in total but is separately tracked.

B. 2022 Tax Remittance Report – Tax remittances through August total \$5,286,443.58 or 45% ahead of original forecast.

C. 2022 Tourism Commission Budget – B. Lynn reviewed the balance sheet as of July 31, 2022. The Tourism Commission had \$298,520.71 in checking after transferring the July funding agreement payment to HCT. Lynn noted under “Other Assets” that the bond entries will need adjustment, in part because the auditors have over time assumed growth in the bond reserve when that was not necessarily accurate. Lynn was waiting to discuss with the auditor the appropriate entries to finalize the details of the bond, and this should be more accurate by the November meeting.

He then noted on the Statement of Activity the Revenue-Innkeepers Tax for the year, plus \$252,312.17 in Revenue-Miscellaneous, which is the refund back from the bond after settlement. It was determined this was a commission asset and not an HCT asset and remains in reserve. He also noted the drawdowns total of \$2,536,220.35 which includes no funding agreement payments for January-March 2022.

D. 2022 HCT Budget Report – So far for the year, HCT is running \$2,456,862 net of expenses due to the \$3 million in ARPA grants from Hamilton County. Expenses total \$2,576,449 or 40% halfway through the year, in part due to summer ad campaign billing cycles. All budget categories appear to be on target. B. Lynn presented the revised balance sheet as was suggested in the 2021 CFO by Design report and as requested by the HCT Board. Current assets through June 30, 2022 total \$4,254,983 versus \$1,086,772 during the same period 2021. Again, this is primarily due to the ARPA grant from the county.

C. Renner moved that the financials be accepted as presented. K. Tabeling seconded. Motion passed.

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E. 2022 Funding Agreement Item – B. Myers noted that the Tourism Commission will reach its 2022 Hamilton County Council appropriation limit in October, even considering the additional \$1 million in appropriations approved last spring to retire the bond. This means the Tourism Commission will be an estimated \$670,000 short of its funding agreement with HCT. She requested the Tourism Commission seek additional appropriations at its November meeting. Deadline to submit an additional appropriations request would be October 14. By doing this in November, it would relieve any anxiety should it not be successful and allow for another opportunity in December. Much discussion took place around this request, trying to clarify the need and the ability to meet this request by the Commission. It was finally decided to hold a special session in October and if it advances, seek Councilor Alexander’s approval to sponsor the appropriation request, as is required. B. Myers was to reach out to the Commission for a date. J. Hopwood suggested HCT staff work with the officers to determine whether funds would be available and to clarify that availability.

IV. Old Business

A. BEST Study -- K. Radcliff notified the Commission that the selection committee had chosen Hunden Strategic Partners to lead the BEST study out of a competitive pool of proposals submitted from the country’s most well-respected consultants. Joining HSP would be MMGY NextFactor, which just led the DNEXT study, as well as Tourism Economics, which has done work for HCT before. These agencies teamed up to form a really unusual and dynamic partnership. They bring a wealth of knowledge in facility and entertainment district research, as well as in destination visioning and economic modeling. That work begins in October and several Commissioners are represented on the committee. The project will wrap up by third quarter 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 7:28 p.m.