

HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana
Minutes of the Annual & February Meetings

FEBRUARY 5, 2021
Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Attending the Annual and Regular Meetings:

Bob DuBois, Andrew Newport, Jimia Smith, Norman Burns, Mark Truett, Jackie Dikos, Toby Miles, Scott Spillman, Gary Miller, Robin Turner, Angie Frazier, Chris Stice.

Not Attending: Mark Truett

Also attending:

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; Carol Sergi, Director of Marketing, Economic Development; Christine Altman, Counsel; and, Ken Alexander, Hamilton County Council representative.

I. Welcome

President Bob DuBois opened the meeting at 8:33 a.m. via Zoom. The minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting had been approved in March 2020.

He welcomed Ken Alexander, HCT's new County Council representative who said he was looking forward to working with tourism again. Alexander once served on the HCT Board of Directors when he directed Grand Park.

II. 2021 Board Appointments & Officers

B. DuBois introduced the slate of board members for 2021-2022. They included:

New Member Election (2021-22): Robin Turner, Cambria Suites Westfield/Ceres Development

Returning Member Election (2021-2022): Jeffrey Brown, Bob DuBois, Andrew Newport, Jimia Smith, Chris Stice

He asked if there was any additional candidate for the Board. There being none, C. Stice moved that the slate of board members be approved as presented. A. Frazier seconded. Motion passed.

B. DuBois then discussed the need for suspension of Bylaws to allow for a third year of service for the current pool of officers. The request had been discussed previously. The COVID-19 pandemic created a volatile year for tourism leadership, and it was thought that another year of service would allow for continuity. All officers agreed to the year-long extension. No one had any concerns about the bylaws suspension. J. Brown moved that the bylaws be suspended for one year as proposed. G. Miller seconded. Motion passed.

B. DuBois then introduced the officers up for this one-year re-election:

Returning Officer Election (1-year term extension 2021): Bob DuBois, Chair; Jeffrey Brown, Vice Chair; Norman Burns, Secretary/Treasurer; officers-at-large Andrew Newport and Scott Spillman

C. Stice moved that the slate of officers be elected as presented. J. Smith seconded. Motion passed.

III. 2020 Year in Review

B. Myers presented a short presentation on 2020 -- noting that a lot of time had already been spent considering the past year given its unprecedented nature.

Without Indiana OTA & VRBO collections, tax collections for the year would compare to 2012's revenue.

2007 – \$867 taxes per available room (or \$1115 when adjusted to 2020 w/ inflation)

2014 – \$1093 taxes per available room (or \$1217 when adjusted to 2020 w/ inflation)

2020 – \$709 taxes per available room(or \$577 when adjusted to 2007 w/o inflation)

Revenues for 2020 on 4853 rooms totaled \$3,441,995.11, or a reduction of about 40% from the previous year.

Low points of the year included:

- Saying farewell to 9 talented professional tourism family members

- Asking remaining staff to take on new multiple new tasks
- Asking remaining staff to take significant salary & benefits reductions
- Feeling adrift for awhile and craving a “north star” or a path forward
- Adjusting to the change of remote work and finding ways to connect
- Not knowing how long we would remain in single-digit occupancy rates and general worry about the future
- Safety concerns for our front-line employees, family, friends
- Constant ethical debate about “what’s the right thing to do”

High points of the year included:

- Seeing remaining 15 staff members rise to the occasion & create solutions
- Seeing how well we moved into virtual mode due to advances we had already made in software & technology pre-pandemic
- Having the Board and Tourism Commission stand strong with us
- Seeing our community rally round and support us
- Implementing successful low-budget summer and fall ad campaigns
- Executing a successful holiday campaign thanks to our supportive Hamilton County Board of Commissioners
- Helping our sports and attractions partners get much-needed PPE
- Supporting our social services agencies
- Qualifying for an IDDC grant and a PPP forgivable loan
- Getting that “north star” with a recovery plan in place

The year-end financial position at HCT is as follows:

- 12/31/2020 Cash + Receivables = \$1.68 million w/ \$180,000 in payables
- Estimated \$1,200,000+ in reserves
- \$350,000 PPP loan (est. 2/3rds forgivable)
= \$1.4+ million in reserves *estimated*

HCT leadership team is meeting to discuss prioritizing goals in 2021 once we know how the winter/spring is unfolding for revenue and will come back to the Board with recommendations that fit our 3 recovery plan goals:

1. Support/educate community partners
2. Support economic recovery
3. Support staff for retention and culture

Everyone agreed that 2020 needs to be in the rear-view mirror, but strong leadership and decisive action helped put HCT into a position for more swift recovery.

G. Miller moved that the annual meeting be adjourned. N. Burns seconded. Motion passed.

FEBRUARY 5, 2021 Minutes of the Regular Meeting

I. Welcome

B. DuBois then welcomed everyone to the regular meeting of the Board of Directors.

II. November 2020 Minutes

B. DuBois asked if there were any additions or corrections to the November 2020 HCT Board Meeting Minutes. There being none, J. Brown moved that the minutes be approved as presented. R. Turner seconded. Motion passed.

III. 2021 Financials & Metrics

- a) **Occupancy Report** -- B. Myers reported that the January daily (unadjusted) occupancy reports shows a 31.8% occupancy rate with an ADR of \$86.17. Supply is up 6.6%. Overall demand is down 27.3%. A fairly gloomy January and February were predicted, but there is no doubt the weekday business market is hurting. Weekends are actually fairly strong given some regional and Grand Park room demand.

- b) **Tax Collection Reports** -- B. Myers reported that the January and February deposits total \$383,955.13 gross, or 9% under budget. This totals \$36,044. December revenue declines led the deficit. March's deposit, based on January collections, appears to be slightly off as well but not as much.
- c) **Budget Reports** -- B. Myers noted it was too early in the year to provide a budget report, but the staff is conservatively spending and only one-quarter ahead for larger contracts when available given the uncertainty of the environment. She provided a copy of the final budget for review.
- d) **CARE/PPP Support Updates** -- T. Rodgers announced that with approval from the executive committee, HCT has signed a \$352,695 Payroll Protection Program loan, with anticipated forgiveness of 62%, or \$218,671. A decision will need to be made in mid-March about keeping all or just the recoverable amount of the loan, but the Board indicated a desire to keep it all. The 1% interest rate made borrowing of the full amount (based on the reference period) desirable. If not needed, it can be paid back, but it gives a significant cushion until 2021 is well under way.

IV. Recovery 2023 Scorecard

K. Radcliff presented the draft of a key performance indicators (KPI) scorecard the staff is developing to measure post-pandemic recovery in the future. The KPIs address the three recovery focus areas: confidence and resiliency, economic recovery and staff retention. She asked for input. A. Newport asked about specifics regarding the web site performance, and K. Radcliff noted that this area of study is changing and moving toward "qualified" sessions and monitoring the viewers' journeys. He also asked about measuring the organization's culture, noting that many organizations are struggling with this right now. T. Rodgers had completed a baseline study of core values earlier and pivoted to a cultural assessment tool given to staff previously again in the fall. There was some slipping -- mostly in confidence about employment, not a surprise given the past year. But that survey will continue twice annually to measure staff sentiment.

V. The Great Dine Out & Upcoming February Promotions

A. Ledford presented early results on the January-early February Great Dineout promotion, noting that 45 restaurant partners signed on to participate at its peak, one of the most successful programs HCT has ever sponsored. More than 2000 devices signed up for the promotion, and more than 400 have checked in or redeemed an offer. Once the county went into the "red" zone with the pandemic, all marketing pivoted to promote take-out. In February, HCT is promoting Valentine's and President's Day activities available throughout the county, including hotel offers for that mid-month long weekend. Primarily a social media campaign, it will focus on Indiana as a way to encourage weary Hoosiers to consider a short trip safely

VI. Major Gifts Task Force Report

G. Miller and A. Newport participated in the major gifts task force along with J. Hopwood and C. Renner from the Tourism Commission. The idea is to provide more formal structure and to launch a rolling grants program that pre-screens organizations wishing to seek funds and puts them in a pipeline should they meet the criteria. That pipeline can include market research on the feasibility of ideas. HCT will not launch ideas as it has done in the past but instead will support development of ideas in some way. This pipeline concept will be put on hold until we know what funds might be available in 2022 for distribution. B. Myers asked the Board to send to her any other suggestions about the document but noted it's an evolutionary tool. G. Miller noted that while efforts should be tied to hotel occupancy ROI, it's understood that some things contribute to the "whole" of a community but those are the most difficult projects to measure potential.

VII. New Business

No one had any new business to discuss.

B. DuBois thanked everyone for participating in a longer than usual meeting and for remaining engaged.

VIII. Adjourn

J. Brown moved that the meeting be adjourned at 10:15 a.m. A. Newport seconded. Motion passed.

