

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**June 4, 2021**  
**Minutes of the Board Meeting**  
**Via Zoom**

**Attending the Meeting:**

Bob DuBois, Andrew Newport, Mark Truett, Jackie Dikos, Toby Miles, Chris Stice, Gary Miller, Norman Burns, Jeffrey Brown.

**Also attending:**

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:**

Jimia Smith, Scott Spillman.

**I. Welcome**

B. DuBois then welcomed everyone to the regular meeting of the Board of Directors at 8:32 a.m.

**II. May 2021 Minutes for Review**

B. DuBois asked if there were any additions or corrections to the May 2021 HCT Board minutes. C. Stice moved that the minutes be approved as presented. J. Brown seconded. Motion passed.

**III. 2021 Financials & Metrics**

- a) **Occupancy Report** -- Through April 2021, hotel occupancy stands at 42.1% versus 35.5% in 2020. Hamilton County still lags in its competitive set and is in last place for the year. Carmel, due to business occupancy declines, lags the most in weekday corporate inventory.
- b) **Tax Collection Reports** -- Tax collections from hotel stays are up, however, 11 percent over budget for a total of \$146,501.24.
- c) **2021 Budget Report** -- As of the end of May, revenue net of expenses totaled (\$124,596) primarily due to cash flow reasons. Spending is where it should be, and revenue appears to be on or exceeding pace.

M. Truett moved that the financials be accepted as presented. G. Miller seconded. Motion passed.

**IV. Old Business**

- A. **ARPA Rescue Funds Task Force Report** -- B. Myers reported that no word has come from the county's ARPA task force as of yet. HCT has shared ideas and revenue losses with the county's auditor's office. She presented minutes of a meeting from May 26 when a team met to discuss prioritizing activities should funds become available. It is anticipated that HCT lost \$1.5 million in 2020 after other grants and recovery funds and could lose around \$1 million in 2021. Nothing can be done until the county decides when or if they are distributing funds because they are waiting on national guidelines.
- B. **Sports & Entertainment Task Force Report/HCSA Planning** -- K. Radcliff presented a PowerPoint presentation that provided a background of the sports marketing situation in Hamilton County. 2020 proved to be the year that sports really took center stage as it showed the most resilience of all markets. She reminded everyone of the current Tourism Economics sports impact study and provided a look at the national competitive scene in the coming years. Next steps will include socializing the developing ideas with key legislators and community leaders, creating an attractions asset inventory, studying the results of the TE study, surveying parents, explore models and more.
- C. **2021 June Additional Funding Request** -- B. Myers brought up the chart from the May 2021 Board meeting with proposed additional expenditures by the HCT staff in light of anticipated revenue. The goal would be to

accomplish some big projects. Total expenditures previously approved include \$195,000 in fees and services. An additional \$117,500 in spending was requested including expanding the existing hospitality campaign, hiring firms to complete an organizational study, hiring legislative counsel and else.

B. Myers updated the Board on the hospitality campaign, noting that an additional \$10,000 in advertising would be spent but that \$5,000 would be set aside for innovation. T. Miles reiterated that the industry is going to have to be innovative given how many have left the work force and has agreed to be part of an innovation lab idea. In looking at other items on the list, J. Brown asked for clarification on the organizational study and on the Superlative Group contract extension. It was noted that the next agenda item would include the organizational study, but K. Radcliff explained that HCT wishes to keep the Superlative Group contract in that it is very close to a naming rights deal for Grand Park and has just wrapped up a sponsorship opportunity for Mudsock Youth Athletics. He asked for clarification on its sustainability, and K. Radcliff noted that after this contract is complete, it is not in current plans to continue funding unless it is perceived as the right thing to do.

**Organizational Assessment Focused Discussion** -- B. Myers asked to spend more time on one of the line items proposed as part of an overall assessment of HCT in helping it go from good to great. As this will not only involve a cash investment but time from the staff and Board, she wanted to pay special attention to it and ask for approval. CFO by Design and FiredUp! Culture have proposed a \$27,500 assessment consultancy that will do a deep dive into the existing organizational structure and provide insights on how we might improve as we recover and grow. Added to that will be travel and related expenses for a total of about \$30,000. She noted the full scope of services for the Board. B. DuBois said it makes sense at this time, prior to adding additional staff back onto the payroll, to examine the structure. Other studies as part of this initiative will be wages and benefits, and accounting efficiencies.

There were no concerns expressed, and G. Miller moved additional expenditures be made, and M. Truett seconded. Motion passed.

**D. White River Vision Plan Brand Update** -- B. Myers made a brief progress report, telling the Board that the Pulliam Grant of \$275,000 has been spent, letting them know the new web site and brand should be out in late summer.

**E. Career Center Update** -- M. Thibideau presented updates on the new Career Center, pointing to the earlier County Council agreement to support the project with \$425,000 in additional support to hire a full-time professional to carry out the program. He noted this is a collaborative and not a single site and should make a difference in helping shape our local workforce outlook in the future.

## **V. New Business**

**A. DEIA Statement & Scope of Work** -- On behalf of the DEIA Committee, K. Radcliff introduced a draft of a proposed DEIA statement for review. N. Burns asked if HCT had gone into its community for feedback, and K. Radcliff noted this was the first step. He recommended doing that to help inform the statement's evolution before the Board passes. She agreed to bring it back to the Board after more community input.

There being no further business, M. Truett moved that the meeting be adjourned at 10:09 a.m. G. Miller seconded. Motion passed.