

HAMILTON COUNTY VISITOR AND CONVENTION COMMISSION
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana
Minutes of the Meeting
May 14, 2020

Attending:

Robyn Pauker, Todd Burtron, Perry Williams, Brenda Tolson, Bill Smythe, Monique Wise, Kelly Tabeling, Tiffany Pascoe, Christian Renner, Andrea Huisden, Lisa Hanni, Connor Sullivan, Howard Stevenson and Jamie Hopwood.

Not Attending:

David Lingafelter

Also Attending:

Hamilton County Tourism – Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Betsy Ekelof, Operations Director; Tina Rodgers, Director of Resources; and, Kristopher Kazmierczak, Tourism Commission Legal Counsel.

Attending from the public was John Becker, Church, Church, Hittle & Atrim.

I. Welcome

P. Williams called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. He introduced two new appointments to the Tourism Commission, both industry representatives. Monique Wise is the final appointment by Carmel Mayor James Brainard and works as the Senior Sales Manager for the Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis. Kelly Tabeling is an appointment by Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness and replaces Ashley Dora. Kelly is Regional Manager for Dora Brothers Hospitality.

II. Review of the Minutes of the February 2020 Meeting

P. Williams asked for a review of the February 2020 minutes. C. Renner moved that the minutes be approved as presented. J. Hopwood seconded. Motion passed with M. Wise and K. Tabeling abstaining.

III. Financial Information

a. Commission Budget Expenses – B. Ekelof presented the Commission’s budget, which included \$1,745 in professional fees and \$120 in miscellaneous reimbursements for the first five months of the year in addition to the contracted drawdowns.

b. Lodging Tax Revenues – The pandemic has dramatically slowed lodging tax revenues as expected, but while bleak, revenues aren’t quite as bad as they might be given the situation. Revenues through the May deposit total \$1,652,847.27, which is \$172,152.73 under what had been forecast without the pandemic, The May deposit is a result of March collections and the shut-down occurred mid-month, which means the first half of the month was more positive than the second. April and May’s tax receipts will be down significantly and beyond that date is hard to predict.

B. Myers presented a new forecast report for the year approved by the HCT Board based on national forecast reports and trends. Gross receipts for the year originally were forecast at \$5,652,243.15 but will likely be more like \$3,111,825.00. As a result, Hamilton County Tourism anticipates using at least half of its estimated \$1 million in reserves despite dramatic cuts to the budget.

c. 2020 Contract – R. Pauker reported that there are ongoing discussions regarding the 2020 contract that hope to be resolved by the August meeting.

IV. COVID-19 Emergency Business Planning Updates

a. Updates on 90-Day Emergency Plan Activities – B. Myers and K. Radcliff updated the Commission on its 90-day pandemic emergency plan adopted by the HCT Board in April and reaffirmed at its May meeting. The 90-day plan focuses on April-June 2020, with the hope of some clarity at the end of the period. The 12 staff who are still working at

at least 75% of wages and reduced benefits but have been focused and dedicated and working hard to support not only the tourism community but the county as well.

b. Review 2020 Revised Emergency Budget – B. Myers presented the revised adopted budget by the HCT Board which assumes the anticipated significant reduction in lodging tax revenues for the year given the pandemic.

Old Budget: \$5,892,000 with \$5,467,000 in revenue from lodging taxes

New Budget: \$3,424,642.63 with \$2,840,102 in revenue from lodging taxes and about \$580,000 from reserves plus other revenue

To accommodate the new constrained budget, HCT has done the following:

- Reviewed and adjusted every contract possible
- Halted all spending unless under contract
- Terminated 5 positions
- Placed 7 employees on furlough with a plan based on revenues after 90 days
- Reduced wages and benefits as noted in the 90-day plan above
- Halted all grant programs except those under contract

The plan is to review monthly revenue vs. expenses and bring staff on or terminate additional staff as able.

Clear communications to all furloughed and remaining staff is critical. HCT is keeping the furloughed staff on the agency's health care plan and paying a severance package to cover some COBRA expenses for those terminated. Access to half of PTO in cash also was factored into the budget to provide support.

T. Burtron encouraged HCT to put everything on the table and look at a probable new paradigm shift with Plans A-D to allow for adaptation.

V. 2021 Appropriations Request – Given the pandemic's impact will be felt long into 2021, B. Myers presented a much more subdued appropriations request for review by the Tourism Commission to present to the Hamilton County Council by the June deadline.

\$3,831,272.00 gross receipts, or 20% more than forecast in 2020

\$3,569,549.00 net receipts after debt

\$3,559,549.00 net receipts after retaining \$10,000 for Commission operations and reserve

She presented annual forecasts by STR, CBRE and HVS for comparison, indicating that HCT's forecast numbers are slightly more conservative than national forecasts. A severity budget will be developed should receipts not meet expectations depending on the duration and impact of the ongoing pandemic.

J. Hopwood noted that for the near future, regional travel will be the only impact possible for hotel stays.

T. Burtron moved that the appropriations amount be established as presented with caveats that adjustments may need to be made. A. Huisden seconded. Motion passed on a unanimous roll call vote.

P. Williams asked for a motion to adjourn. A. Huisden moved for adjournment and R. Pauker seconded.

Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.