

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**May 7, 2021**  
**Minutes of the Board Meeting**

**Attending the Meeting:**

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

**Also attending:**

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 Workforce Strategy; Mike Thibieau, Vice President, HCEDC Workforce Strategy; Christine Altman, Legal Counsel; and Ken Alexander, Hamilton County Council representative.

**Not attending:**

Brenda Myers, President/CEO.

**I. Welcome**

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

**II. March 2021 Minutes for Review**

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

**III. 2021 Financials & Metrics**

- a) **Occupancy Report** -- K. Radcliff presented a decidedly different hotel occupancy report through early May than the same time in 2020, when the county was in lockdown. Occupancy through April is running at 50% and for May is running 60% compared to about 16% in 2020. Weekends are very strong due to youth sports, especially Grand Park business. She noted this growth gives confidence to the 2022 forecast later on the agenda.
- b) **Tax Collection Reports** -- Tax collections lag two months. With the May deposit (March business), growth has begun to occur. Through the May 2021 deposit, gross receipts totaled \$1.08 million, or about \$69,000 over budget.
- c) **2021 Budget Report** -- The HCT budget continues to track as projected for spending. Total expenses of \$1,048,813 are net -\$149,175 of income but many expenses such as travel guide publications and marketing as well as destination development occur in the first quarter when revenue is weakest. B. Ekelof reviewed the profit and loss statement and balance sheets and noted that she had made comments Boardable. She also noted the PPP funds are found in 2010-Notes Payable until such time as we know how much of the loan will be forgiven. She also noted the current 2021 Budget is live and now reporting through Martus budgeting software in Sage Intacct allowing real-time budget to actual expense comparisons. The financial audit will begin 5/17-5/21.

J. Brown moved that the financials be accepted as presented. C. Stice seconded. Motion passed.

**IV. Old Business**

- A. **HCEDC Workforce Strategy Search** -- C. Sergi introduced Mike Thibideau, the new Vice President of Workforce Strategy for Hamilton County Economic Development Corporation, with which HCT has an MOU management contract. The Board has been invited to a reception at Conner Prairie on May 19 to say farewell to Carol and to welcome Mike.

## **B. Update on Career Center Conversation**

K. Radcliff and B. DuBois provided an overview of the Hamilton County Career Center concept and presentation to the County Council earlier in the week. B. DuBois emphasized this is not about a building. Each school will specialize in different areas and share resources. It will eliminate the need for out-of-area contracts at institutions that provide this service. Total of \$425,000 seed money (which includes multiple years of salary/benefits/expenses) has been requested and it will run through the HCEDC financials and be an amendment to the current MOU. There is lots of opportunity to grow this program. What has been requested is funding for a likely 2.5-year temporary leadership position to laser-focus on this complicated program of work. K. Alexander and S. Nation are leading this initiative on the County Council. This position will report to a planning team of the Council and school superintendents and will report out to the HCEDC Board of Directors. B. DuBois noted this position will be handled similarly to how the county's special education programs are handled and encouraged everyone to focus on supporting need and opportunity. Updates will be provided.

## **V. New Business**

**A. Updates from Sales/Sports/Visitor Experience** -- L. Kelner and S. Billman presented updates from the areas of sales, sports and visitor experience. Activity is ramping up quickly, and staff is working hard to generate business. A white paper outlining work was provided. There is a re-focus on sports tourism, with HCT/HCSA supporting local clubs and incentivizing business. Sports sales is currently at 27,812 room nights generated. USA Football is one such event scheduled this summer which will eventually grow to 20,000 attendance. Grand Park should host about 50 tournaments this year. The Carmel Marathon also ran over Easter Weekend and provided room nights. Between 2020-2021, the county will have hosted four collegiate golf championships.

**B. Additional 2021 Budget Considerations** -- K. Radcliff presented a proposal by HCT to the Board for consideration of spending up to about \$300,000 on special work and projects as the organization emerges out of pandemic mode and awaits notification from the county about possible rescue funding. Currently, HCT has an estimated \$1.4 million operating reserves. It is expected that the additional spending, which could be decided over time, could come from a combination reserves, additional 2021 anticipated revenue and rescue funding. The Board decided to review and take a separate vote on each item now rather than wait until the June and July/August deposits.

### **Priority Area 1: May 2021 Tax Deposit Review**

- **Wages** -- The Board decided that the \$42,000 for the CEO salary restoration, staff COLA increase, retention bonus was most important and approved that first. Motion to approve was made by J. Brown and seconded by G. Miller. Motion passed.
- **Contract Support** -- K. Radcliff discussed the recovery strategy to use contract staff vs. hiring permanent staff for the foreseeable future and outlined the current need for 3 contract roles: content, CRM and partnership management. J. Brown made a motion to approve the request for \$65,000. N. Burns seconded. Motion passed.
- **Hospitality Workers Campaign** -- Jeffrey Brown expressed that \$10,000 was not enough for the hotel employment campaign. There was discussion about influencing legislators to add the job search requirement back to unemployment benefits. Norman Burns said it is not just hotels that are experiencing this difficulty, so wanted to expand it to a "hospitality" employment campaign. G. Miller made a motion to approve the \$10,000 hospitality employment campaign. M. Truett seconded the motion. Motion passed.  
It was agreed that the board would revisit in June and consider expanding this funding/campaign if deemed necessary. K. Radcliff said an update on the campaign will be sent to the Board when it is launched.
- **TE Sports Economic Impact Study** -- J. Brown expressed concern over the cost. He thought it was too much and asked if we could do it in phases. G. Miller agreed. Karen explained the need for this data now to support important upcoming efforts related to sports. S. Spillman indicated that it

would provide information relevant to other sports facilities in Hamilton County, not just Grand Park. K. Radcliff said it might help for the group to see the full Scope of Work for the study. It will be sent to a small committee—J. Brown, A. Newport and B. DuBois for review. This group will review and send a recommendation to the executive committee. S. Spillman made a motion to approve the TE Sports Economic Impact Study expenditure when/if it receives executive committee approval. M. Truett seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**Priority 2: Decide with June 2021 Tax Deposit**

- Re-introduce cleaning service, include window washing in the amount of \$6,500—J. Brown made a motion to move this up and make it a priority now vs. waiting until June. M. Truett seconded the motion. Motion passed.
- Other priorities were quickly reviewed, but the Board will discuss/vote on those in June in more detail.

**C. 2021 American Rescue Plan Considerations**

C. Altman said to be sure to keep the Commission and HCT lost revenues from the pandemic that might be eligible for the American Rescue Plan funds separate. She said the slide in the presentation represented Commission losses (innkeepers' tax) and not HCT losses (contract revenue vs. received revenue). The Commission lost tax revenue. HCT lost revenue as part of our contract situation. Make a direct ask from the Council & Commissioners Direct. Alternative to full funding.

We could submit a supplemental request to help the industry recover. Come up with a solution as they can't pass money from a nonprofit to for-profits. K. Radcliff said HCT would do some research/data gathering on this. Altman recommended a recovery sub-committee. N. Burns volunteered to serve as a representative on the attractions side. Toby Miles volunteered to represent restaurants. A. Frazier volunteered for sport. B. Dubois volunteered. K. Radcliff and B. Myers will also serve and look for a hotel representative.

**D. 2022 Preliminary Budget to Tourism Commission & County Council**

K. Radcliff reviewed the proposed budget and notes on various line items. She noted that there was joint participation in reviewing the preliminary 2022 budget. J. Brown and A. Newport served along with Tourism Commissioners. N. Burns said it was a prudent budget and proposed acceptance of the budget to submit to the Tourism Commission for review. C. Stice made the motion to accept and B. DuBois seconded. Motion passed.

**E. Laptop Retirement**

B. Ekelof shared a report about two laptop retirements and one laptop sale. J. Brown made a motion to approve. M. Truett seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**F. Board Member Resignation**

DuBois announced that Robin Turner resigned from the Board. S. Spillman made a motion to accept her resignation with regret. A. Frazier seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- VI. Adjournment --** C. Stice moved that the meeting be adjourned at 10:42 a.m. and also seconded the motion. There was no opposition given the late hour and the meeting was ended.