

HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. Offices
37 E. Main Street
Carmel, IN 46032

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
October 4, 2019

Attending the meeting were Mark Truett, Jimia Smith, Scott Spillman, Gary Miller, Jeffrey Brown, Bob DuBois, John Hughey, Andrew Newport, Angie Smitherman, Jeremy Geisendorff, Judi Johnson and Norman Burns.

Also attending were Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Ashley Ledford, Director of Marketing and Promotions, Carol Sergi, Director of Marketing, Economic Development; Betsy Ekelof, Director of Operations; Sarah Billman, Assistant Director of Visitor Experience; and, Sarah Buckner, Destination Development Manager. Also attending, Christine Altman, Legal Counsel.

I. Welcome

The October meeting of the Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. Board of Directors convened at 8:31 a.m. with Chair B. DuBois welcoming everyone.

II. Review of the August 2019 Minutes

B. Dubois asked whether there were any changes to the minutes of the August 2019 meeting. No corrections were noted, and JN. Burns moved that the minutes be approved as presented; M. Truett seconded. Motion passed.

III. Financials & Metrics

A. 2019 YTD Budget Report – B. Myers presented a profit and loss historical trends and profit and loss vs. budget report as of October 2, 2019 with most expenses posted. Total expenses for the year are \$4,289,331 out of \$5,732,783 budget or 75% at three-quarters of the way through the year. All lines of expenses and revenue are on pace for the year.

- During the budget review, B. Myers and B. Ekelof pointed out that a budget adjustment has been made adding 5300 – Depreciation per the auditor’s request. Total forecast for depreciation in 2019 is \$40,284. Discussion took place as to whether this should be categorized as “Depreciation” or whether the 5850 – Replacement Set-Aside line should be used. That line already has funded in it \$20,327. Because the purpose of “funding” depreciation is to ensure reserves to adequately meet capital replacement needs, it was decided that the \$40,284 should be instead placed into the 5850 – Replacement Set-Aside line.

B. 2019 Occupancy Report – In addition to the monthly STR report through August 2019, B. Myers presented a day of week report. Occupancy is 65.8% through August, slightly ahead of a 65.2% reported occupancy same period 2018. Room demand is up 5.5% against 4.5% more rooms available. RevPAR also is up although ADR remains slightly down. Weekends still outpace weekdays, where inventory growth absorption is most challenged. Weekend occupancy through August is 61.8% while weekend occupancy is 75.7%.

C. 2019 Tax Collections Report – One hotel set continues to struggle with catching up on remitting the lodging tax. In addition, B. Myers reminded the Board that there has been no pass-through payment from the Indiana Department of Revenue for either vacation rentals by owners (now required to collect and remit) or pre-purchased rooms through online travel agencies (now collecting and remitting through the state). Year-to-date tax collections, despite these challenges, is up 3% over the budget and 2% year-over-year at \$4,453,165 -- \$75,920 over budget.

G. Miller moved that the financial report be accepted and J. Johnson seconded. Motion passed.

IV. Old Business

A. HCT Office Updates – K. Radcliff reported there are still no updates.

B. Tax Funding Support Task Force Updates – B. Myers along with K. Radcliff, J. Brown, G. Miller and J. Geisendorff updated the Board on conversations regarding the request by communities for additional development support and its ongoing relationship with how Grand Park rooms are selling. B. Myers noted that Uber Media mobile tracking has indicated that while Hamilton County retains about half of the “in the block” rooms picked up at Grand Park, overall about 39% of all hotel rooms driven by Grand Park appear to remain in county while the balance of rooms are sold outside the county. More analysis is being done to determine why this is happening. She also updated the Board on recent conversations with the city mayors and county commissioners on the process used by the Tourism Commission and Hamilton County Tourism to determine budget allocations as well as what impacts hotel room sales in each community. She noted that follow-up conversations are being scheduled to help local leadership understand both of these issues. Updates will be given at upcoming HCT Board meetings and all data analysis will be shared with the Board.

C. **White River Vision Plan “District” Study** – B. Myers re-presented a request from the August meeting when a quorum was not present (with Conner Prairie’s recusal). She wishes to contract out a study with MKSK – which has done Conner Prairie’s site master planning -- for a study of White River access points between 106th and 146th Streets. Her rationale for not bidding out the plan is MKSK knows the area well having done the Conner Prairie planning, has a solid reputation in the market and can move the process more efficiently and affordably. In addition, EX2 Partners will be brought on to assist with the brand identity process. N. Burns recused himself from the vote. J. Hughey moved that the contract move forward without an RFP; J. Johnson seconded. Motion passed.

V. New Business

A. 2020 Preview

B. Myers and the leadership team presented big goals for 2020 in a PowerPoint presentation. These big goals will drive the budget brought to the HCT Board of Directors in November. Key initiatives for the year include:

Administration will focus on advocacy through a comprehensive and layered program.

Operations will implement new department-level software that allows for more precise budgeting as well as new asset inventory management software that will bring this function in-house.

Resources will use the organization’s business intelligence to help support partner non-profits in various initiatives and also support the organization’s efforts to work with communities on diversity and inclusion.

Sales/Sports will launch its “Rest Easy” campaign and begin implementation of the HC Sports Authority’s new strategic plan.

Visitor Experience will continue to maximize efficiency but maintain quality in welcoming more than 100 groups or events each year.

Marketing & Promotions will test new markets in 2020 and explore “sentiment” indices/research opportunities, in addition to producing four new videos for promotions.

Destination Development will conduct the deeper “district” study of the White River between 106th & 146th Streets and work with Marion County on the governance start-up for the plan in addition to expanding its “Creative Economies” initiative.

Economic Development will implement the 21st Century Talent Region Plan, create a work plan for secondary and higher education alumni recruitment and develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the year.

VI. Adjourn

There being no further business, A. Smitherman moved that the meeting adjourn, and A. Newport seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m. The next meeting is November 1, 2019.