

**HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**37 E. Main Street, Carmel, Indiana**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**ZOOM Meeting**  
**Friday, October 2, 2020**

**Attending:** Jeffrey Brown, Bob DuBois, Mark Truett, Jackie Dikos, Jimia Smith, Andrew Newport, Norman Burns, Scott Spilman, Angie Frazier, Gary Miller.

**Not Attending:** Jeremy Geisendorff, Andrew Newport and Chris Stice.

**Also attending:**

Brenda Myers, President/CEO; Karen Radcliff, Vice President/CSO; Betsy Ekelof, Operations Director; Tina Rodgers, Director of Resources; Laura Kelner, Director of Sales; Sarah Billman, Assistant Director Visitor Services; Ashley Ledford, Director of Marketing & Promotions; Carol Sergi, Director of Workforce Strategy; Christine Altman, Counsel; and, Perry Williams, President, Hamilton County Visitor and Convention Commission.

**I. Welcome**

President Bob DuBois opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

**II. October Regular Meeting Minutes**

The August regular meeting minutes were presented for review. G. Miller moved both minutes be approved. J. Brown seconded. Motion passed.

**III. Financials & Metrics**

- a) **Occupancy Reports** – B. Myers reported that the August hotel occupancy report showed a significant slow-down in sales as it always does with school starts and Grand Park events tapering off, but the decline was even steeper this year. Hamilton County occupancy was 38%, down from 70.2% in 2019 with 11.9% more rooms available in the county. This compares to Indiana’s occupancy rate of 47.6% with only 1.9% more rooms in the state; Hendricks County with 47.4% with 9.4% more rooms available; and, Marion County with 40.3% and -.2% fewer rooms in the market.  
The September 1-26 unadjusted occupancy rate was 43.2%.
  - b) **Tax Collections Reports** – Annual tax collections for sales in November 2019-August 2020 totaled gross \$2,841,710.24 as of the October deposit, or 91% to goal with two more months of deposits that need to meet about \$270,000 to achieve the reduced revenue goal of \$3,111,825.03 gross receipts or \$2,850,102.03 net after debt service. The trends show that this is very attainable without a lockdown.
  - c) **Budget Reports** – Work continues on catching up the budgets to the revised/downsized budget but a profit and loss statement and balance sheet were presented for review. Revenue lines have been updated to reflect the new, reduced budget. Cash on hand totals \$1,336,062 which includes some restricted grant funds related to the White River project. Income totals \$2,816,268 through September 30 against expenses of \$2,601,330. Every effort is being made to curtail spending even beyond the adopted and reduced budget from May 2020.  
G. Miller moved that the financial report be accepted as presented. J. Brown seconded. Motion passed.
- 3) **Grand Park 2020 Grant** – B. Myers noted that the re-opening of Grand Park has made a significant difference in income generation for not only the lodging tax but also other taxes. HCT has budgeted a \$100,000 grant in the reduced budget with this support in mind. N. Burns moved for support of the grant and J. Brown seconded the motion.

Discussion of past communications concerns over previous funding of Grand Park was made (referencing the Grand Park Events Center lockers), and G. Miller noted that this grant – while he agrees with it – opens HCT up for many other grants for entities that do not make nearly the impact on the county that Grand Park does. J. Brown suggested it be measured on the taxes generated by guests in Hamilton County and the event must be based in Hamilton County. In general, everyone agreed that development of a policy is important. C. Altman recommended the policy include restricting funding to proven generators of a set percent of the county’s overall lodging tax intake to help clarify the HCT’s position. The Board also agreed it would like a report for how the grant funds are used, not only for the record but to better understand Grand Park’s ongoing capital needs. N. Burns amended his endorsement of the grant to require the funds be used for capital improvements, still reporting their use to HCT for the record. In the end, the motion to provide \$100,000 to Grand Park for capital improvements passed unanimously, with Angie Frazier, City of Westfield, recusing. HCT will present a policy to the Board for review at the November meeting. The motion was brought forward to the floor again with the capital expenditure requirement and there being no further discussion passed.

#### **IV. 2021 Recovery & Planning**

##### **a) 2021 Recovery Planning Update**

- **Preliminary Budget** – B. Myers uploaded the 2021 preliminary budget which is almost the same as the draft budget presented to the County Council with a few exceptions. It includes Pulliam Grant funds for the White River branding project and reallocates some additional money to wages to cover the retained employees. A final budget will be presented in November, sent in time for the Board to review detail.

- **Year Ahead Overview & 2021 Recovery Planning**

B. Myers began by acknowledging the four phases of the recovery plan, which included “survive” from March-June 2020; “stabilize” from July-December 2020; “recover” from 2021-2022; and “thrive” beginning in 2023 when US Travel anticipates market recovery.

She reminded the Board of the original Vision 2025 Plan goal:

Hamilton County will be nationally known as an innovative, diverse, vibrant and attractive tourism destination.

And noted the new vision for recovery by 2023:

Hamilton County Tourism will create pathways to recovery to reclaim a thriving tourism economy.

And called out the three key goals for recovery:

1. Increase confidence and resiliency among consumers and industry partners
2. Increase visitation to Hamilton County
3. Revitalize HCT operations and culture

K. Radcliff then reminded the Board of the methodology used to inform the recovery strategy:

Recovery committees and input panels included tourism partners, key community leaders including mayors and county elected officials, a recovery board committee and industry panel. R=

Research and focus group work included:

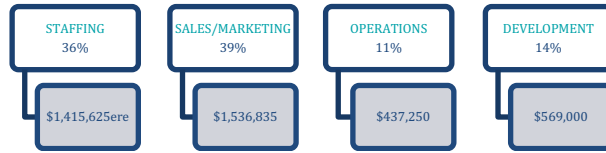
- Surveying and interviewing partner and stakeholder groups to understand crisis impact, recovery need, and strategic focus.
- Identifying goal alignments across industry groups and governing bodies.
- Preparing for low travel and high travel periods—times when consumers are not traveling due to pandemic restrictions and times when consumers are traveling.
- Using data to develop forecast scenarios to better understand the timeline to recovery and inform decisions.

Key focus areas presented included:

1. Sport Tourism

2. Leisure Travel
3. Intelligence & Education
4. Efficient Operations
5. Social & Environmental Progress

B. Myers noted the 2021 budget of \$3,954,585 includes the following program spending:



Each department director then presented her key goals for the coming year  
There were no questions by the Board.

## V. New Business

- a) **Fall Ad Campaign Results to Date** – A. Ledford presented the fall advertising campaign results to date. This social media only campaign has outperformed previous smaller campaigns and is drawing much engagement. A chart of results was presented.

As the end of the Board meeting's allotted time had already been passed, the following items were tabled until the November meeting:

- Holidays & PTO Discussion
- Assets Update

There being no further business. G. Miller moved that the meeting be adjourned and M. Truett seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.