

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2020, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) Board of Directors was held in the Catawba 2 room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, May 11, 2020 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Bruce Eckard; Chair	
Donald Duncan		Patricia Hatch
Renee Keever		Warren Wood
Phil Yount		

A quorum was present.

Present via video/teleconference were HCTDA members Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, Mark Seaman, and Sarah Davis; Director of Sales and Marketing.

Also present were Terry Taylor; Counsel, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/HCTDA Clerk.

- I. Chair Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.
- II. Chair Eckard made a motion to amend the agenda to move New Business A to the first item on the agenda, seconded by Mr. Yount. The motion carried unanimously from the HCTDA Board members at the convention center.
- III. New Business

A. Remote Participation Policy - Chair Eckard

This policy allows board members to video conference and/or teleconference for HCTDA Board Meetings in limited circumstances.

Mr. Duncan reminded Chair Eckard that any motions made at today's meeting requires Chair to individually call on each board member participating remotely for their vote.

Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Remote Participation Policy be approved. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)

V. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of March 9, 2020

Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Minutes of March 9, 2020 be approved. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Approval of Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue - Ms. Howard

Reviewed event revenue and how that pertains to events affected by COVID-19 for both the current fiscal year and next fiscal year.

B. Occupancy Tax Report - Ms. Hildebrand.

Summarized the occupancy tax chart which shows revenues collected through March 2020. Tax collected is at 67% of what was budgeted for the year, slightly lower than the anticipated 75%.

Mr. Lail noted that the HCTDA should expect a low amount of occupancy tax for the next several months to a year.

C. March 2020 Financial Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Reviewed financial report for March 2020. For the ninth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenses should be at 75% of the budget. Income is at 68% and expenditures are at 58%.

Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Financial Report for March 2020 be approved. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

D. April 2020 Financial Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Reviewed Financial Report for April 2020. For the tenth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenses should be at 83% of the budget. Income is at 74% and expenditures are at 63%. On the income side the additional \$5,000 from Catawba County and from City of Hickory will not be received this FY due to a luncheon for Visit NC not occurring in March 2020, and Liazzos will not pay \$5,000 rent in April as ok'd by the CEO. Liazzos has applied for SBA loans and has been approved and Liazzos plans to pay May and June rent this year.

Also noted that even before COVID-19, staff was being very prudent with budget and not overspending on items that were not essential.

Mr. Wood moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Financial Report for April 2020 be approved. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Draft Budget - Ms. Hildebrand

Reviewed the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. Also included are the numbers staff anticipate at year end (June 30).

Final proposed budget will be emailed to HCTDA Board by May 28 and the Budget Hearing properly advertised so that it can be reviewed several weeks before the June 15 Board Meeting.

Chair Eckard commented that staff has made all necessary cuts in draft budget but there may be more that will need to be made if business does not resume soon. Ms. Keever suggested talking with the landscaper about ways to cut cost. Mr. Lail said the only place you can still cut is personnel. Mr. Wood added that there needs to be a plan in place in case we continue to see a decline in event revenue. Ms. Keever also mentioned that it seems that the meeting planners want to rebook, but they also want to know what we are doing to comply with social distancing and making sure the facility is safe. Ms. Hildebrand replied that we are working on collateral for the website and to send to meeting planners regarding updates on what we are doing long term regarding COVID-19.

Chair Eckard asked that all board members review the FY 2020-21 budget line by line and if there are suggestions and/or questions, call Ms. Hildebrand or himself. The FY 2020-21 Budget Public Hearing is set for June 15.

Chair Eckard also thanked Ms. Hildebrand for her work on the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 draft budget.

VIII. New Business

A. Agreement with Custom Design Group - Ms. Hildebrand

This agreement is similar to an agreement Custom Design Group has with the City of Hickory regarding the sale of merchandise. If visitors want to purchase shirts or other items that have the Visit Hickory designs and logos, the Convention Center and Visitors Bureau would receive 10% of items sold. This money would go towards marketing reimbursements.

Mr. Wood moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the agreement between HCTDA and Custom Design Group be approved. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. Old Business

A. Building Committee Update - Chair Eckard

Committee met on May 8 and after discussion asked that Mr. Mitchell continue with the construction plans for the addition and renovation of the Hickory Metro Convention Center. If construction documents are complete by December 2020, the City of Hickory can put out for bid after the first of the year. Construction could begin as early as 2021.

Mr. Wood added that it is important that the HCTDA moves forward with renovation and addition plans. Mr. Yount asked Mr. Wood if he is confident that the Hickory City Council will borrow money on behalf of the HCTDA to pay for the renovation and addition. Mr. Wood said that he feels as long as revenues bounce back there should be no problem moving forward with the renovation and addition.

Chair Eckard mentioned that perhaps because of COVID-19 there will be some additional government funds the HCTDA could qualify for. Either way, HCTDA has the money to pay Mr. Mitchell (Architect) and team for their time and then it comes down to occupancy tax going back up to assist in paying the debt.

Ms. Hildebrand added that it was discussed at the Building Committee meeting that the HCTDA move forward with upgrading the Hickory and Conover restrooms with money in the Capital Fund Balance. Mr. Mitchell thinks we could get restrooms done for around \$200,000. Upgrading those restrooms would also help with groups who want to make sure the convention center is up to date with health regulations from COVID-19. Mr. Duncan thinks that the HCTDA may need to do it just to be more compliant and give clients a better feeling holding meetings at the convention center. Chair Eckard added that this upgrade will include new technology with an integrated sink station that includes touchless spouts for water, soap, and drying of hands. The Board approved authorizing Mr. Mitchell to move forward with this part of the project design on an earlier timeframe. Mr. Mitchell will have an estimate by June 15 meeting.

B. Personnel Policy Amendment/Furlough - Ms. Taylor

Recommendation was made to amend the current personnel policy to give the CEO authority to make furlough decisions when necessary. This allows the CEO to furlough when necessary as well as bring back furloughed employees when needed.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Ms. Keisler that the personal policy be amended to allow CEO authority to make decisions regarding furlough and return to work after furlough when necessary. The following were individually called on and all were in favor: Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman. The motion carried unanimously.

X. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand

A. National Tourism Week

Wrote a story for Hickory Daily Record about tourism in the Hickory Metro; it was in the May 3 paper.

Interviewed by Hal Rowe on WHKY First Talk, which aired on May 4.

Released video on Hickory Metro that was to be used at the 2020 VisitNC Luncheon to invite tourism partners across the state to Hickory for the 2021 Conference. The 2020 conference, scheduled in Asheville, was cancelled.

B. Marketing during COVID-19

Created "Hickory Metro Strong", a landing page on the VisitHickory website.

Marketing team has created collateral to explain what the convention center is doing and will do in the future even after groups are allowed to meet in larger numbers. The convention center already thoroughly clean facility before, during, and after events, but will be taking extra steps to ensure safety of employees and attendees.

Ms. Keisler mentioned campaign the Chamber of Catawba County is launching. The campaign will be a playbook that outlines protocol to ensure safety of both employees and customers and will be tailored to a variety of businesses. There will also be a commitment that the business will sign, putting in writing that they plan to actually commit to putting these practices in place. Keisler feels the playbook will be widely adopted through Catawba County and team is also working with surrounding counties to adopt playbook as well. So far there has been a great response and businesses want to put out a consistent message that they are going above and beyond. Ms. Keisler added that the signature page for each participating business will tie to the website so that patrons can actually see the commitments that have been made by the different businesses.

Ms. Hildebrand added that Visit NC is releasing a campaign as well and also the Restaurant and Lodging Association is releasing a "Count on Me" campaign.

Ms. Hildebrand mentioned that on May 22, SARSTEDT will be using the convention center to stream their National Sales Meeting - staff will use pictures of that event in some of our marketing pieces.

Ms. Keisler also recommended a social media campaign of how the convention center is adopting new policies to keep attendees safe, even using pictures of us actually completing those tasks.

Ms. Hildebrand said we will also use pictures of the MDI Training that is taking place at the convention center.

XI. The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in the Catawba 2 room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

XII. There being no further business, motion was made at 9:29 a.m. to adjourn by Chair Eckard, seconded by Mr. Yount. The motion carried unanimously.

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 
Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest: 
Clerk to the Board Amber Howard