

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2023, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Conover 1 meeting room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, March 13, 2023, at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Renee Kever (Acting Chair)		
Tom Hart	Patricia Hatch		Lindsay Keisler
Leroy Lail	Mark Seaman		Warren Wood
Bruce Eckard (arrived at 9:05 a.m.)			

A quorum was present.

Also present were Madelyn Matlock and Berkley Young; Young Strategies, Rick Beasley; City of Hickory Assistant City Manager, Terry Taylor; Counsel, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Sarah Jones; Director of Sales and Marketing, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

- I. Ms. Kever called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. All Board Members were present except for Phil Yount.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of February 13, 2023.

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, that the Minutes of February 13, 2023, be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue - Ms. Howard

Ms. Howard presented the Event Revenue Report for February 2023. There were 15 events for a total of \$59,606 in event revenue and year-to-date the estimated event revenue budgeted has already been exceeded.

B. Occupancy Tax – Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the Occupancy Tax Report, which was another record month.

C. Finance Report – Ms. Hildebrand

For the eighth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expense should be at 66%. Overall, income is at 75% of what was budgeted without February occupancy tax, and expense is at 46% of what was budgeted.

Mr. Wood moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, that the Finance Report for February 2023 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Old Business

A. Approval of Resolution for the Amended Lease Agreement – Ms. Taylor

Ms. Taylor explained the Resolution approves the Lease Amendment with the City of Hickory and Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority. The Amendment changes lease term and repayment options.

Mr. Seaman moved, seconded by Ms. Keisler, that the Resolution approving the Amended Lease Agreement be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Update on Renovation/Addition – Ms. Hildebrand

Next pre-construction meeting will be on March 15. The plan is to break ground on May 1. Staff is working with Accent Marketing Firm on messaging/signage during construction.

Ms. Keever asked about customers reactions to the upcoming construction/renovation. Ms. Hildebrand said that customers are mostly concerned about parking and noise, so concentrating on those areas, and others.

Mr. Beasley predicts that one side of the building shouldn't be closed for more than eight months at a time.

VI. New Business – None to Report

VII. Presentation from Young Strategies

Berkley Young introduced himself and gave a brief history of his experience and how Young Strategies got started. His company has been focused on a “heads in beds” strategy. Mr. Young is the President of Young Strategies and Ms. Matlock is the Vice President.

Mr. Young said that one source he relies on is Destinations International (International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureau) and he talked about some points he and his team will concentrate on for HCTDA. Destinations International conducted a study, which focused on the following:

- 15 Top Trends
- 15 Top Strategies
- Three Transformational Opportunities
 1. Destination Alignment
 2. Sustainable Development
 3. Values Based Marketing

Mr. Young explained the how the project will be approached.

Phase 1 – Lodging and Market Analysis to Guide Marketing

- A. Market Analysis and DMO Evaluation/Review
- B. Lodging Market Analysis – Lodging Survey, STR Analysis & Hotelier Interviews

Phase 2 – DNEXT & Strategic Planning

- A. DestinationNext – Survey/SWOT Analysis/Gap Analysis
- B. Strategic Planning Workshop
- C. Strategic Plan

Mr. Young and Ms. Matlock will be spending the day in Hickory looking at the destination and all that it has to offer. They will be spending more time in the community over the next couple of months as the study is underway.

Mr. Wood said that one of the things the City of Hickory does is try to claim all the good things in the region rather than just focus on Hickory because travelers do not look at jurisdictional lines.

VIII. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand, Ms. Jones and Elizabeth Clark attended the North Carolina Tourism Conference in Asheville, NC March 5 - 8, 2023. Others in the community that attended were two from the Hickory Furniture Mart (an attraction) and for the first time the Newton Main Street Coordinator.

There is a strong possibility that the 2025 conference will be in Hickory in March 2025, a Sunday to Tuesday conference. The NC Tourism Conference will be held in Greenville, NC March 17 - 19, 2024.

Workforce Development - Charlotte has a program that gets into the high schools to educate students on jobs in the hospitality industry. Hospitality Academy at CVCC has been a huge success. When time allows, the goal is to get into high school classrooms and speak about how great this industry is. Ms. Jones added that at NCTIA, they have done extensive job fairs and if we pair that with what we currently do with CVCC Hospitality Academy, we should really be able to build that pipeline.

Booking.com is not paying Occupancy Tax. State of North Carolina is working with the NC Department of Revenue to make sure this tax is gets collected.

Explained Hotel Safety Bill.

Reviewed legislation about school calendar and how the state of NC wants a set school calendar. The biggest reason is because of the tourism industry. The longer the state can extend summer, the more revenue that comes into NC, which is the 5th most visited state in the US. This goes against what the NC Chambers, schools and a few other industries are working toward as these organizations prefer school calendar flexibly due to workforce as well as the community colleges and high schools having a similar calendar.

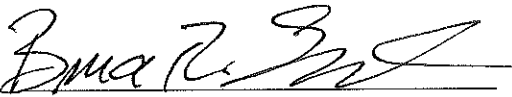
Steve Pearson who has been on staff for almost 17 years is retiring on April 1. Staff will be interviewing to fill a full time Operations Crew Member position and a Custodial Staff position. A retirement luncheon for Pearson will be held sometime in the future and will inform the board when that date is set.

IX. Adjournment

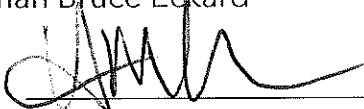
The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on April 10, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

There being no further business, Mr. Hart moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 

Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest: 

Clerk to the Board