

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2024, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Catawba River Boardroom meeting room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, January 8, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Bruce Eckard; Chair	
Kimberly George	Tom Hart	Renee Keever
Lindsay Keisler	Mark Seaman	Warren Wood

A quorum was present.

Also present were Terry Taylor; Counsel, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Sarah Jones; Director of Sales and Marketing, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

I. Chair Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. All Board Members were present except for Leroy Lail.

II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023

Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, that the Minutes of November 13, 2023, be approved. The motion unanimously carried.

B. Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023.

Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Minutes of December 11, 2023, be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Audit Report

A. Fiscal Year 2022-2023 – Chair Eckard

Chair Eckard summarized the Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 that was reported in more detail at the December 2023 meeting.

Mr. Wood moved, seconded by Ms. George, that the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Audit Report be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Approval of Financial Report

A. November 2023

Ms. Hildebrand summarized the November 2023 financials that was reported at the December 2023 meeting.

Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Finance Report for November 2023 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

B. December 2023

1. Event Revenue - Ms. Howard

There were 13 events in December 2023, three of those being new events. Year-to-date, Event Revenue is at 63% of the budget.

2. Occupancy Tax - Ms. Hildebrand

November 2023 was down a bit from 2022. There is no chart to view this month.

3. Financial Report - Ms. Hildebrand

For the sixth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expense should be at 50%. Overall, income is at 50.03% of what was budgeted without December occupancy tax, and expense is at 42.06% of what was budgeted.

Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Ms. George, that the Finance Report for December 2023 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Old Business

A. Construction Update - Ms. Hildebrand

Goal is to be completed with entire project by end of June 2024.

Staff had hoped to have the Catawba section open by end of February, however, with construction delays, that space will not be booked until the summer.

The entrances on the new hallway between the addition and existing building should be installed within a month.

Ms. Hildebrand and Mr. Beasley have discussed with Ms. Keever to meet to discuss the Furniture Hall of Fame/Pre-Function area.

The biggest complaint during construction has been parking. The additional 60 parking spots should be completed by end of March, which is a project in addition to the renovation and expansion.

Need to discuss additional parking opportunities in the lot behind the Verizon Store which is owned by PCA Development.

B. Capital Project Fund Items - Ms. Hildebrand

In addition to the \$14 million, there are other needs that will come from HCTDA Fund Balance. Most of the estimate will be on the February 12 HCTDA Agenda.

VII. New Business

A. 2024 HCTDA Meeting Dates - Chair Eckard

Mr. Seaman moved, seconded by Mr. Wood that the meeting dates for 2024 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Sales & Marketing Report - Ms. Jones

Started branded merchandise sales this year (t-shirts, stickers, etc), it was launched the last week of November. Thus far, 10 orders with a total of more than \$200 in revenue.

Website Traffic - in July, Google Analytics switched to GA4 which is an updated platform and tracks real time analytics. From July 1-December 2023, there were 69,000 visitors to the website. December alone was over 9,000 visitors. The website is a digital visitors center, and that is the need to keep the website current and fresh. Most of the traffic is coming from Visit Hickory social media platforms.

"Our State" magazine did a photo shoot in December at the Harper House. The photos will be featured in the December 2024 issue.

Will soon begin working on photo shoots for a culinary campaign rolling out in 2024.

Visit NC Visitor Guide - the new state guide is out and features a story that fills an entire page (Visit Hickory did not have to pay for this story). Each year an ad is purchased in the guide by Visit Hickory and this year the ad is beside the Visit NC information, so it's great placement.

Adult Flag Football Tournament - second piece of business from Sports Relationship Conference (1st was Cheer Competition for 2025). Looking at using Henry Fork in September 2024. The Tournament will bring in 50-75 teams.

Branding project with Destination by Design will begin soon with a kickoff meeting.

Visit NC Tourism Conference - will host in 2025. Staff will attend in March 2024 in Greenville, NC and will host the closing luncheon. Idea is to do a culinary tour of Hickory for the luncheon.

King Kat Fishing - just resigned to come back in October 2024.

IX. Event Report - Ms. Howard

Reviewed list of upcoming events January through June 2024.

New Bookings/Proposals - Knights of Columbus (2025), Voice of Evangelism (2024), Ingles Corporate Event (2024), WNC Camper Show (2024).

X. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand

In process of reviewing resumes for the current open position for Visitor Services & Receptionist. Over 200 resumes were received. Goal is to have someone hired by March 2024.

External Marketing Request due soon to Hickory, Conover, & Catawba County. Mentioned that although HCTDA has a large fund balance, this money is used for debt and operations of convention center. Marketing funds from local governments and partners assist with marketing materials, including digital and print advertising, sponsorships and more. Will be reaching out to other partners soon to ask for more marketing dollars.

Matthews Construction announced on social media about breaking ground on Home 2 Suites by Hilton. Should take around 18 months to complete.

Ms. Keever said that the franchise for the Crowne Plaza ends January 6, 2025. The plan is to tear the hotel down and rebuild a different brand of hotel. Discussions are ongoing regarding the brand and type of hotel that will be built. Ms. Jones added that meeting planners still look for a full-service hotel.

TownPlace Suites by Marriott will also be breaking ground soon behind Bob Evans Restaurant. The hotel will have 108 rooms.

CVCC Hospitality Academy starting its third class this month. This is important as the hospitality industry always needs more qualified workers.

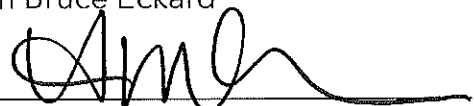
XI. Adjournment

The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on February 12, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

There being no further business, Chair Eckard adjourned the meeting.

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 
Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest: 
Clerk to the Board