

**Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**September 9, 2024, 8:30 a.m.**

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the MPSV meeting room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

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

A quorum was present.

Also present were Rick Beasley; Assistant Hickory City Manager, Terry Taylor; Counsel, Elizabeth Clark; Marketing Coordinator, Chrystal Dieter; Office Manager, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Sarah Jones; Director of Sales and Marketing, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/HCTDA Clerk.

I. Chair Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. All Board Members were present.

II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of August 12, 2024.

Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, that the Minutes of August 12, 2024, be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Financial Report

A. Event Revenue - Ms. Howard

Ms. Howard presented the Event Revenue report for August 2024. There were 20 events in August with three of those events being new. Revenue is at \$54,944 for the month, bringing the year-to-date total to \$95,588, which is 11.25% of the budget, which is normal for this point in the fiscal year.

Ms. Howard mentioned the next three months will be busy and the first sporting event will be held in October in the multi-purpose gym, which will be a local pickleball tournament. She also mentioned that MDI Tradeshow will be returning in April & August 2025.

B. Occupancy Tax - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the Occupancy Tax report for July 2024. Numbers came in to be the best in July history due to some sporting events in the area and the NCACDSS event overlapping into July this year.

C. Finance Report - Ms. Hildebrand

For the second month of the Fiscal Year, income and expense should be at 16%. Overall, income is at 10% of what was budgeted without August occupancy tax, and expense is at 21% of what was budgeted.

Expenses are a bit high which is not unusual for the beginning of the Fiscal Year as a lot of annual fees are due in July & August.

Mr. Wood asked if we have noticed an increase in electricity with the new spaces. Ms. Hildebrand said that there has been an increase as it's been higher temperatures and a/c has had to run more often with all the work finishing up, but she does not feel this will be the new normal, but obviously with more space, the charges will be a bit higher. Mr. Beasley also reminded that Duke Energy rates went up.

Mr. Seaman moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Finance Report for August 2024 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Old Business

a. Construction Update - Mr. Beasley & Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand reported that the last stages of the construction project are underway, with about 5% of the work left to be done. Covered walkway is almost complete. Glass panels were custom ordered for covered entrance and should be installed by December.

Baker AV is installing the large screen in the Pre-Function Foyer the week of September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The July 25<sup>th</sup> incident involving the baseballs will be covered by Hickory Construction Company insurance. There were eleven dents left in the stucco wall from the baseballs and Hickory Construction will repair the wall to look brand new again.

Roof replacement quotes for the Catawba section of the building are coming in and staff will compare quotes and decide on which company to go with. After doing some research and having a few meetings about possibly installing solar panels on that side of building, Hildebrand is not sure that is the best route for HCTDA.

Mr. Beasley reported that Appalachian State team will meet on September 27 with himself, Ms. Hildebrand, and the Lail family to discuss the Pre-Function Foyer.

Mr. Beasley also mentioned that someone from Appalachian State University contacted him about the possibility of holding Sports Camp in HMCC Multi-Purpose Gym over the summer. Mr. Beasley will put send him staff contact info for availability and pricing.

b. Capital Project Fund Update - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand reported that as of August 31, there is about \$1 million left in the Capital Project Fund. Pickleball nets and equipment has recently been purchased and staff is still researching bleachers. Chair Eckard asked if the bleachers would be permanent? Hildebrand said that bleachers will be portable and are a tilt and roll system for easy storage.

Also mentioned that \$500,000 was moved from NC Management Trust Account to cover some of the Capital Fund expenses but there is still around \$3.2 million in the trust account.

VI. New Business - None to Report

VII. Sales & Marketing Report - Ms. Jones

Sports Tradeshow season is here so will be traveling to several sports conferences in the next few months.

Along with Ms. Hildebrand and Ms. Clark, will be attending Southeast Tourism Society Conference this week in Auburn, Alabama. Ms. Clark will be graduating from STS Marketing College at this event, which has been a great way to invest in our staff as Ms. Jones graduated from the program several years ago.

Hopes to give an update on branding project by October 2024 Board Meeting. The committee, which consist of Ms. Keisler & Mr. Seaman, along with a few others from the community are very excited about the outcome of this project.

Destination Guide is progressing with Accent Creative who is managing the ad sales, content creation, etc.

Also working with Accent Creative on a marketing piece for the Convention Center that will include layouts and photos of the new space.

Brandon Pope and Garrick Lane recently took drone footage of the inside of HMCC and will make two new videos showing off the space transformation and addition.

Seven invitations have gone out inviting meetings planners to a Fam Tour in October 2024.

Had site visit with Visit NC Tourism Conference, coming in April 2024. Toured the convention center and then took them downtown to show them possible location for the Opening Night Party.

Will attend NC Media Mission soon to speak with travel writers and pitch them ideas on content for our area. In the past, this has led to some our best marketing pieces.

Pickup for Flag Football event is to be determined but it was a great event with 65-70 teams. They have already requested to come back next year, and Mr. Seaman read an email from the director about how great it was to work with Ms. Jones on this event.

#### VIII. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Reported that Ms. Howard will soon transition out of the HCTDA Clerk Position and Ms. Dieter, Office Manager, will assume the role as Ms. Howard has been the HCTDA Clerk for almost 17 years and it's time to free up her time to work on other projects. Ms. Dieter is a notary and has experience with HPD and SBI taking minutes, so this is a perfect fit for her. She will be sworn in at the October 2024 meeting.

Gave a summary of the Annual Report with a copy given to all Board Members. This year in review is just another effort the get information out into the community to let them know who we are and what we do.

Hickory Daily Record story came out about the renovated space and NCACDSS being the first event to use the new space.

Read a note from employee David Haas who thanked the Board for the donation made in his late mother's honor to Helping Hands.

Audit work for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 is finishing up and presentation will be given by Audit Team in October or November. Hildebrand reminding board members to turn in audit related paperwork if they have not already done so.

Strategic Planning is moving forward, and the community and visitors are part of it. Visitors are becoming a real focus, and other organizations are partnering and share our vision.

The Custodian position has been filled by Oliva Lemus. She starts today and we are excited to have her on the team. Another position has also been offered for a Maintenance/AV Tech and we are hoping to here back about that offer by end of the week. There are still two full time positions to be filled, a full-time Receptionist and a full-time Sales Manager. Additional part-time staff will also be added to the mix.

IX. Executive Closed Session

Mr. Seaman moved, second by Mr. Wood, to go into closes session. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Evaluation of CEO, Mandy Hildebrand.

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Seaman, to come out of closed session. The motion carried unanimously.

X. Other

a. CEO Evaluation

Mr. Wood moved, seconded by Ms. Keisler, that the CEO receive a one-time \$2,500 bonus for managing the Capital Project and a 5% merit increase. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Creation of Sub Committee to Measure Performance Standards

Discussion ensued and a sub-committee was formed to look at performance standards and goals for staff. Ms. Keisler will chair the sub-committee. Ms. George will be on the sub-committee and Mr. Wood will appoint a City of Hickory HR representative to be a part of the sub-committee. The sub-committee will report back at the January 2025 Board Meeting.

XI. Adjournment


The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on October 14, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

There being no further business, Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 

Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest: 

Clerk to the Board