

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2023, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Catawba River Board Room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Bruce Eckard; Chair	
Kimberly George	Renee Keever	Warren Wood

There was not a quorum present.

Also present were Rick Beasley; Assistant Hickory City Manager, Terry Taylor; Counsel, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Sarah Jones; Director of Sales and Marketing, Ed Gudat; Facilities Manager, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

Present via Zoom was Alan Thompson, Managing Partner for Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., P.A.

- I. Chair Eckard started the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. There was not a quorum present and the following Board Members were not present: Tom Hart, Lindsay Keisler, Leroy Lail, and Mark Seaman.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023.

There was no quorum to approve minutes.
- IV. Audit Report
 - A. Fiscal Year 2022-2023 - Mr. Thompson

Mr. Thompson presented the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Audit Report. It was a clean report with all looking good. Internal controls were maintained and there was no mismanagement, findings, or issues.

Total fund balance increased, and long-term liabilities decreased. Cash versus fund balance are both positive.

There was no quorum to accept report.

V. Approval of Financial Report

A. Event Revenue – Ms. Howard

Ms. Howard presented the Event Revenue Chart for November 2023. There was a total of 20 events in the month of November with five of those events being new. Event revenue is at 52% of budget earned.

B. Occupancy Tax – Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the Occupancy Tax Chart.

Ms. Keever commented that October was a busy month, but that November was down a bit from 2022. She also reported that the construction on a new hotel, the Home 2 Suites, should begin soon.

C. Finance Report – Ms. Hildebrand

For the fifth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expense should be at 41.6%. Overall, income is at 41% of what was budgeted without November occupancy tax, and expense is at 35% of what was budgeted.

There was no quorum to approve report.

VI. Old Business

A. Construction Update – Mr. Beasley/Ms. Hildebrand

Renovation of the Catawba rooms are moving along nicely.

The Interior Designer has suggested that all doors in the Conover/Hickory areas be replaced to match the doors in Catawba rooms as well as some of the carpet, so the building doesn't look like an "old" side and a "new" side.

Staff has discussed the need to build a drive thru on the East side of the building to help with show move in. This was previously discussed before COVID and Mr. Beasley will revisit this idea with Steve Miller (City of Hickory). Work should begin soon on the additional parking spaces along 13th Avenue that have previously been planned for.

Ms. Hildebrand added that the cost for revamping the visitors center office space should be in by the next meeting.

Staff continues to work on capital list for items needed for the renovation/addition. Some of those items include audio visual for the entire building, furniture for new meeting rooms, tables, floor cover for the sports court, and bleachers.

Chair Eckard asked when the expected project completion date is. Mr. Beasley said that the contractor would like to be finished in June.

VII. New Business

A. 2024 Meeting Schedule - Chair Eckard

There was no quorum to approve the 2024 meeting schedule.

VIII. Sales & Marketing Updates - Ms. Jones

Branding RFP was sent out and decision has been made to use Destination by Design out of Boone, NC. The project will kick off in January 2024 and use data from the study conducted by Berkley Young. The goal is to have a new brand in place and ready to roll out around the same time as the construction project is complete.

The Destination Guide project has been awarded to Accent Creative. This project has been done internally for three issues but using an outside source will allow staff to focus on other efforts.

Our State Magazine is a tried-and-true staple in tourism marketing and staff feels that it is one of our best sources, which is why we choose to partner with them on a regular basis. A newsletter was sent out on 11/1 about the culinary scene and we partnered with them. Statistics from the newsletter show that the piece went out to 31,000 people and was

opened by 19,000. The click thru rate was 26% which is significantly more than the national standard.

Our State is also starting a column on historic homes and staff has pitched the Harper House.

Working on contract for the first event booked for the expansion, a cheer team. Received request to host Division 1 and 2 NCHSAA Golf Championship. Reached out to Rock Barn first but they passed, so will not reach out to the other golf courses in the area.

Several sports newsletters are in the works as well as a Sports Planning Guide.

Have three bids out for NCJCAA events. Won the bid for Division 2 Men's Basketball Championship in 2024.

IX. Event Updates – Ms. Howard

Shared a testimonial from an attendee at the Women's Leadership Conference about how great the staff is and how clean the facilities always are.

Discussed Christmas Show parking issues and discussed solutions for future shows.

Reviewed room rental pricing matrix and discussed how events are priced and what discounts are given based on hotel room pickup and food/beverage.

X. CEO Updates – Ms. Hildebrand

Invited board to the Tourism Partner Christmas Drop-In on December 19 between 3-5 p.m. at the convention center.

Discussed Marketing Strategic Plan which will kick off in the new year and plan to focus on a goal at each meeting to discuss and/or update the board on any action needed.

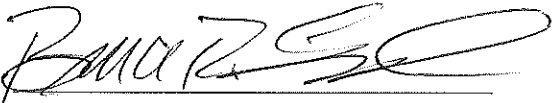
Job for the Visitor Services & Receptionist is posted, and more than 150 resumes have been received. Interviews will be conducted after the first of the year.

XI. Adjournment

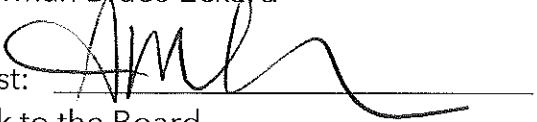
The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on January 8, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

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

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 

Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest: 

Clerk to the Board