

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2021, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Catawba 1 meeting room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, December 13, 2021 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Chair Bruce Eckard	
Patricia Hatch		Renee Keever
Lindsay Keisler		Leroy Lail
Mark Seaman		Phil Yount
Warren Wood		

A quorum was present.

Also present were Terry Taylor; Attorney, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Deb Wentz; Auditor, Andrea Roper (WPCOG), April Lail (WPCOG), and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

- I. Mr. Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The Interim Conover City Manager, Jimmy Clark, was not in attendance.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of November 8, 2021

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Minutes of November 8, 2021 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Fiscal Year 2021 Audit Report

Ms. Wentz reviewed handout of summarized Audit Report. Although Fiscal Year 2020-2021 was a challenging year due to the COVID19 Pandemic, HCTDA finished the year well. Ms. Wentz said that Ms. Hildebrand did a great job of managing the money. The audit numbers are required to be shown in both full accrual and modified accrual. Under full accrual, HCTDA ended the year at a net position of \$12,307,343. HCTDA ended the year with a total revenue amount of \$1,882,675. Under full accrual, revenues exceeded

expenditures by \$321,035. Ms. Wentz reviewed numbers under modified accrual as well. Starting Fiscal Year 2020-2021, cash and investments were at \$4,719,983 and HCTDA finished the year at \$4,543,994.

Mr. Wood commented that staff has done a wonderful job managing financials for HCTDA. Chair Eckard agreed.

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Audit Report be approved. The motion was carried unanimously.

Ms. Hildebrand introduced Andrea Roper & April Lail from the Western Piedmont Council of Government. Current Accountant Betsy Wilson is moving so that allowed HCTDA to move over to the WPCOG for all financials. Ms. Roper explained how the financial process will work once they take over in January.

Mr. Lail asked if Chair Eckard will still sign the checks, which he will.

Mr. Wood asked what the cost was for the WPCOG to run the financial process for HCTDA. Ms. Hildebrand said that the cost is \$1,300 per month for the first year. Ms. Wentz added that although Ms. Wilson did a beautiful job working with a software that wasn't made for governmental accounting, the system that the WPCOG has created will be closer to how the HCTDA financials should be ran.

Chair Eckard asked if the WPCOG representatives will need to attend board meetings? Ms. Taylor said that they will only need to be present at the meetings in June when HCTDA Budget is approved.

V. Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue

Ms. Howard reviewed the event comparison chart and the event revenue chart with numbers for November 2021. November 2021 was a good month with 13 events. Event revenue is at 53% of the budget. Looking forward to the remainder of 2021 and the first part of 2022, the convention center is booked with back-to-back events and there are not any weekend dates available (excluding Thanksgiving weekend and Easter weekend) until the last weekend in May.

B. Occupancy Tax

Ms. Hildebrand discussed the occupancy tax chart which shows monies collected through October 2021. The total amount for the fiscal year thus far is 50.4% of the anticipated budget.

Ms. Keever commented that their numbers have been great but they still have trouble with the average daily rate not increasing. Also, with the Fairfield being closed, the Courtyard has been pulling large numbers.

Mr. Wood asked Ms. Keever if there has been any change in the quality and numbers of the workforce. Ms. Keever said they are still struggling and having to pay a high hourly wage. She does think that as hard as it is, the Piedmont Group is doing better than most.

Mr. Lail reminded the HCTDA Board that Air BnB's are becoming more and more popular and staff needs to be diligent about collecting fees from those types of properties. Ms. Hatch agreed and said she has done her own research and there are several legal cases related to this. Mr. Lail suggested that Ms. Hildebrand make sure monies are being collected from those types of properties. Ms. Hatch added that legislation should be changed so that properties in Newton, Maiden, etc. also be reported and Occupancy Tax monies be collected by the HCTDA.

Discussion ensued regarding legislation and changes that will need to be made regarding Occupancy Tax in the future.

C. November 2021 Financial Report

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the November 2021 Financial Report. Month five is 41.6% of the budget and income is at 45.5% without November Occupancy Tax and expenses are at 31.4%.

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Financial Report for November 2021 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. New Business

A. 2022 HCTDA Meeting Dates

Proposed meeting dates for 2022 are January 10, February 14, March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 12.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the proposed HCTDA meeting dates for 2022 be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Appalachian State University - Hickory Campus

Mr. Wood spoke about the announcement that ASU will have a 250,000 square foot campus facility in Hickory. Discussion ensued.

VII. Old Business

A. Building Addition & Renovation

Mr. Lail asked for an update on the project. Chair Eckard said that Mr. Mitchell's suggestion was to see how a few other projects that are up for bid play out before HCTDA move forward in putting out the bid, but he is mostly finished with drawings.

Ms. Hildebrand added that Mr. Mitchell will be at the January 10, 2022, meeting to present the final construction drawings. She is working with WPCOG on a \$2 million EDA Grant that will help fund the project, which is estimated to be between \$12-\$15 million.

VIII. CEO Report

Ms. Hildebrand reported that staff positions that are open; a Visitors Center Coordinator/Admin Assistant (hope to have someone by January) and a Sales Assistant (hope to have someone by end of February/mid-March). Bob O'Keefe (Facilities Manager), will be retiring in July 2022 and the hope is to have someone to fill his place by May 2022.

Ms. Hildebrand said that staff attended the AENC Tradeshow. The last tradeshow was in 2019. It was a great opportunity to connect with meeting planners who staff already has relationships with and to meet new planners that have not yet brought events to Hickory.

Ms. Hildebrand reported she is now the Vice-Chair of the WPCOG CEDS Committee.

Ms. Keisler commented on how impressed she is by the resiliency of the way the community has handled the Pandemic. Chair Eckard also said that he feels that things are getting back to normal and are going well.


Mr. Seaman said that the City of Hickory is looking to hire a new Sports Tourism Coordinator.

Ms. Keisler added that they are trying to hire a Communications Assistant. Additionally, the Chamber is hosting a virtual meeting with Speaker of the House Tim Moore.

- IX. The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on January 10 at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.
- X. There being no further business, motion was made to adjourn by Chair Eckard, seconded by Mr. Yount. The motion carried unanimously.

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority

By: 
Bruce Eckard, Chairman

Attest: 
Amber Howard, Clerk to the Board