

**Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**March 14, 2022, 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 14, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

Bruce Eckard; Chair

Patricia Hatch  
Renee Keever  
Leroy Lail  
Warren Wood

Tom Hart  
Lindsay Keisler  
Mark Seaman  
Phil Yount

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.

Chair Eckard introduced Tom Hart, the new Conover City Manager.

- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes

- A. Regular Meeting of February 14, 2022.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Minutes of February 14, 2022 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

- IV. Financial Reports

- A. January 2022 - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the January 2022 financial report and mentioned that Western Piedmont Council of Government is putting the report together with it's specific government software, so the format of the financial report look a bit different.

Month seven numbers should be at 58% of the budget. Income is at 62.4% and expenses are at 41.8%.

B. February 2022 – Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the financial report for February 2022. Month eight numbers should be at 66% of the budget. Income is at 71.1% without February Occupancy Tax and expenses are at 56%.

C. Capital Project Update - Ms. Hildebrand

WPCOG is working on the Capital side of the budget. The WPCOG government financial program allows several projects to be within the fund. In the past it was all together through QuickBooks, and a challenge to break out projects on its own. We are working together to get it organized better.

An update on the "Building Addition/Renovation Plans and Project" approved by the HCTDA in May 2021 was for \$888,250. This was the predicted amount to pay for architectural team fees, construction documenters and project management when the construction was underway. At the end of February 2022 \$594,303.60 has been spent and \$240,632.72 is left.

D. Approval of January 2022 and February 2022 Financial Reports

Wentz has been the HCTDA auditor for five years and Ms. Hildebrand recommends continuing with Wentz for the FY 2021-22 Audit.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Financial Reports for January 2022 and February 2022 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. New Business

A. Approval of 2022 Audit Agreement with Deb Wentz - Chair Eckard

HCTDA has used Wentz for many years, and she is familiar with WPCOG accounting. Recommendation is to continue with Wentz for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Audit.

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the 2022 Audit Agreement with Deb Wentz be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

## VI. Old Business

### A. Update on Renovation/Addition - Chair Eckard

The HCTDA did not receive the \$2 million EDA Grant.

The building committee met on March 7. Mr. Mitchell and team are finetuning some recommendations from the committee which include different flooring in the 35,000 square foot addition. This flooring, wood or wood-like would be more economical in the long run because of the cost to buy a temporary floor, and there is nowhere to store it and there will not be enough staff to put the floor down and then pick it up on a regular basis between events. Mr. Lail suggested we keep the 35,000 square foot space with a concrete floor, just like the original space (Rooms Hickory 1 -4). There are additions to his scope of work which are about \$34,300 and it comes out of the designated project in the capital fund. Ms. Hildebrand added that having adequate parking is essential. With the new plan there is a loss of 80 parking spots - we will have more space but having less parking and that is not good.

The final renderings of the renovation/addition are about 95 percent complete. Mr. Mitchell should be ready to present final renderings at the April 2022 meeting.

## VII. Sales & Marketing and CEO Reports

### A. Sales & Marketing Report - Ms. Jones

She and Ms. Howard attended the Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) meeting in Chapel Hill on March 10-11. This is the first time AENC has met in person since the pandemic started. They reconnected with meeting planners and at least one new contact with the NC Association of Surveyors, which were interested in bringing the group to Hickory.

She and Mr. Seaman met with Coaches for the Youth NC/SC Shrine Bowl (the best 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade football players in NC and SC). The Hickory Metro Sports Commission, LRU, local high schools, hotels and other tourism partners are needed to assist to bring this to Hickory. In the past it has been held in Greenville, SC and Durham, NC. In short, about \$40,000 in sponsorship and/or in-kind is needed to host the event. It would be in December, which is a good time for the hotels. Jones and Seaman continue to meet and working on submitting a bid.

Great Smokey Shootout Tournament Director had a tournament out of Greensboro that needed to relocate March 26-27. The tournament will bring a good number of overnight rooms in on that weekend, which is the same weekend as the Pottery Festival and Gem and Mineral Show.

Ms. Davis will be traveling to Durham on March 20 - March 22 to the VisitNC365 with Ms. Hildebrand and Ms. Clark. VisitNC365 is a conference that brings together tourism leaders from across the state and provides opportunities to gain expert insights on the latest trends and issues.

Chrystal Dieter, Visitors Center Coordinator, has been tracking visitor information request through the VisitHickoryMetro.com website and has created a report to show the data collected. For February 2022, there were 76 requests for information. This data will help Ms. Davis analyze what's working regarding advertising and where the marketing dollars will be best spent. Mr. Wood requested that a report be included in the monthly HCTDA packet that shows this information.

Working on edits for the third edition of the Visitors Guide.

Mr. Lail commented that the website looks fantastic.

The Art of Compassion event that will take place at LRU March 30 - April 1. This will be a hospitality focused event with guest speakers and a performance by Martina McBride on April 1.

#### B. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Staffing updates - A job offer has been made to a person for the Sales Assistant position and should be starting on March 28. Facilities Manager Bob O'Keefe is retiring in July and he will be missed. As soon as the job description is together, she will send it to the board and ask them to share it with their networks. In the new year there is a need for additional part time and/or another Operations Team staff member.

Working on Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget. Plan is to have final draft in May and then ready for approval in June.

Hospitality is the fifth largest industry in our region; has a major economic impact and it's important to market that fact to peers as well as to the community. Ms. Hildebrand has been asked by Ms. Keisler to speak a few minutes and welcome all attendees at the Chamber of Catawba County's April 13 Future of Catawba County Summit at the Hickory Metro Convention center. Ms. Keisler said that the summit will also include presentations

about work force, housing, quality of life, bond update, etc. and tickets are available for in-person or live stream.

Ms. Keever announced that the contract for the Crowne Plaza has been extended to January 2025.

Ms. Keever also said that Fairfield renovation should be complete by October 2022; but due to supply chain issues, it could be early 2023.

Mr. Seaman mentioned that there were around 200 gymnasts in town this past weekend, which should reflect in overnight room numbers. This meet was held at the Highland Recreation Center at Stanford Park.

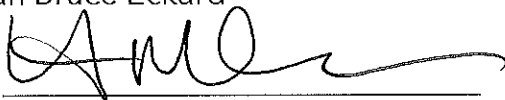
Mr. Wood added that the financial numbers like sales tax, is the best he has ever seen as far as economic development goes. Discussion Ensued.

VIII. The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on April 11 at 8:30 a.m. at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

IX. 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:   
Chairman Bruce Eckard

Attest:   
Clerk to the Board