

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 8, 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, November 8, 2021 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Chair Bruce Eckard	
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, Sarah Davis; Director of Sales & Marketing, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

- I. Mr. Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. Patricia Hatch was not in attendance. Also not in attendance was the City Manager of Conover, as that position is currently unfilled.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of October 11, 2021

Mr. Lail moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Minutes of October 11, 2021 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue

Ms. Howard reviewed the event comparison chart and the event revenue chart with numbers for October 2021. October 2021 was a good month with 16 events. Event revenue is at 45.8% 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.

Ms. Keever added that the hotels have also been full, and October 2021 should be a record month for the hotels and occupancy tax.

B. Occupancy Tax

Ms. Hildebrand discussed the occupancy tax chart which shows monies collected through September 2021. The total amount for the fiscal year thus far is 36% of the anticipated budget, which is much higher than predicted.

C. October 2021 Financial Report

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the October 2021 Financial Report. Month four is 33% of the budget and income is at 34.2% and expenses are at 24%.

Mr. Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Financial Report for October 2021 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. New Business

A. Catering Agreement

Ms. Hildebrand reported that the Catering Committee agreed to extend the Catering Agreement with Liazzo's to December 31, 2023, due to the pandemic and the unknowns with the renovation/addition, both which have and/or will affect catering. The agreement also revised the payment terms for Liazzo's kitchen lease fee. Ms. Taylor commented that the extended agreement also gives HCTDA the option to extend the contract through 2027 without having to go out for re-bid.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Wood, that the Catering Agreement (attached) with Liazzo's Catering be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Old Business

A. Convention Center Renovation/Addition

Chair Eckard explained details from a meeting with Scott Mitchell (Architect) to discuss flooring for the new addition. Cost to purchase vs. rent flooring was discussed.

Chair Eckard also reported that Mr. Mitchell is 95% done with design and his subcontractors are around 80% done. Mr. Mitchell recommends holding off on putting the project out to bid as there are three large projects in the community that are about to go out for bid. He suggests waiting until these projects are bid out to see where cost for those projects come in and which contractors win the bids for those projects. Mr. Mitchell plans to come to the January 2022 HCTDA Board Meeting to discuss how to proceed.

VII. Marketing and Sales Report

Ms. Davis discussed groups that she is currently working with.

Ms. Davis reported hotel pickup for groups in September and October 2021.

Ms. Davis discussed sports conferences that she has currently attended, including Sports ETA in Birmingham, Alabama, and Sports Relationship Conference in Colorado. Mr. Wood asked what the difference is in the sports conferences. Ms. Davis explained those differences and how the conferences work, some are tradeshow, and some include education, but all allow her to connect with possible clients. Ms. Keisler feels that the intel that is being collected from these conferences is the most valuable thing that Ms. Davis is getting from attending. Ms. Davis added that many groups want to come to Hickory but cannot because there are not enough courts and/or fields available for events such as soccer, basketball, etc. Discussion ensued about sports marketing and sporting events that Hickory currently host.

Ms. Davis said that the Bloggers/Influencers from NC Tripping (a social media account) have been in Hickory and have been posting about their adventures from Hart Square, restaurants, etc. She also reported that Our State Magazine will have a four-page article about Hickory in their January issue. The article will focus on Downtown and the City Walk.

VIII. CEO Report

Ms. Hildebrand mentioned that she and Ms. Howard will travel to Raleigh for the AENC Annual Tradeshow in December. This meeting is a great chance for staff to maintain relationships with meeting planners and meet and recruit new business for Hickory.

Ms. Hildebrand said that the economic impact numbers for 2020 were released in October. More than \$220 million was spent in Catawba County by visitors, which was a decrease from 2019 (\$302 million), but not bad considering the pandemic. The news release was sent out and the information is also on the website, social media, as well as was sent to Tourism

Partners via e-newsletter. The Hickory Daily Record printed the full release in the Sunday, October 7 paper.

Ms. Hildebrand reported that staff is still reviewing applications that were received for the Visitors Center/Administrative Assistant position. The plan is to have the position filled by January 2022. The Sales Assistant position job description will be advertised soon and plan to fill it by February.

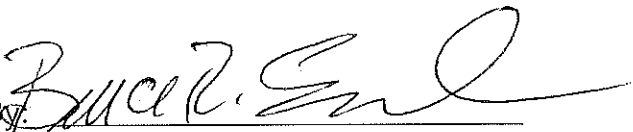
Ms. Hildebrand has been working with WPCOG and the EDA on the grant that would provide funds towards the convention center renovation/addition.

Ms. Hildebrand has also been working on the transition for WPCOG to take over financial services for the HCTDA, beginning January 2022.

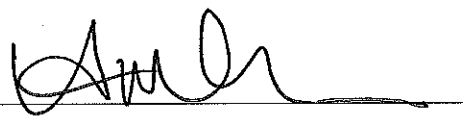
Ms. Hildebrand said that the audit will be finished soon, and Ms. Wentz (Auditor) will give a report at the December 2021 or January 2022 HCTDA meeting.

- IX. The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on December 13 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