

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2020, 8:30 a.m.

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Conover 3 meeting room of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, August 10, 2020 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Bruce Eckard; Chair	
Donald Duncan	Patricia Hatch	Renee Keever
Lindsay Keisler	Leroy Lail	Phil Yount

A quorum was present.

Also present were Terry Taylor; Counsel, Mandy Hildebrand; CEO, Sarah Davis; Director of Sales and Marketing, and Amber Howard; Director of Events/TDA Clerk.

- I. Chair Eckard called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. All Board Members were present except Mark Seaman and Warren Wood.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of June 15, 2020.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Minutes of June 15, 2020 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue Report - Amber Howard

Ms. Howard discussed the event revenue chart. HCTDA finished the Fiscal Year at \$584,198.63 in event revenue, which is about \$4,000 over budget. Ms. Howard reviewed events from July 2019 vs. July 2020, which due to the pandemic, only 3 events were in July 2020. She also reviewed the calendar of events that have been canceled or rescheduled due to COVID-19 and a calendar of currently scheduled events, August

2020 - June 2021. She mentioned that she event organizers are continuing to book future events, which is encouraging.

B. Occupancy Tax Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the occupancy tax chart, which reports tax collected through June 2020. For Fiscal Year 2019-2020, \$1,603,689.59 was collected, about 78% of the budget. For July 2020, occupancy tax is predicted to be between \$90,000-\$100,000.

C. June 2020 Financial Report

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the June 2020 Financial Report. For the twelfth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenses should be at 100%. Overall, income came in at 85% of what was budgeted, and expenditures came in at 75% of what was budgeted. Fiscal Year 2019-2020 ended with \$303,808.10 in general fund.

Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. Yount, that the Financial Report for June 2020 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

D. July 2020 Financial Report

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the July 2020 Financial Report. For the first month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenditures should be at 8.4%. Overall, income is at .07% and expenditures is at 4.1%. With July Occupancy Tax projected to be between \$90,000 and \$100,000, it will cover expenditures in July.

Ms. Keisler moved, seconded by Chair Eckard, that the Financial Report for July 2020 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Capital Project Ordinance #1

Ms. Hildebrand gave update on project. Since February 2020, expenditures are at \$134,413.99. Mr. Mitchell and team have been at the convention center a lot over the summer and doing an excellent job keeping on task, with the goal of this phase to be complete by December 2020.

V. New Business - None to Report

VIII. Old Business – Ms. Hildebrand

A. Restroom Renovation Update

Ms. Hildebrand gave an update on Hickory and Conover hallways restroom renovations Capital Project Ordinance #2, which is \$275,000. Looper was the low bidder of the three companies that submitted bids. It takes 6 to 8 weeks for items to be made so renovations could begin the end of September. The cost is \$212,000 for Looper and Mitchell and team costs will be about \$10,000. Mr. Lail voiced his opinion that he is against the Sloan system where hand soap, water, and dryer are in one sink as he thinks when big meetings are taking place and attendees are on a break at the same time, it will slow down the time it takes for people to wash and dry hands. Chair Eckard said he has signed the contract and we are moving forward. Ms. Hildebrand noted that meeting planners have said that touchless restrooms will be a necessity in the future.

B. Building Renovation and Addition

Mr. Mitchell and team continue working on the plans for the renovations and additions and as of now the team is on schedule to have this phase done by December 2020. The plan is for Mitchell and team to make a presentation at the December 14, 2020 HCTDA meeting. Mr. Lail is working with Mr. Mitchell on the “Furniture Hall of Fame” area.

IX. Marketing Plan – Sarah Davis

Reviewed the Marketing Plan for 2020-2021. Davis reviewed plans for Digital Marketing & Advertising, Social Media, and Print Marketing & Advertising.

Ms. David spoke about future of meeting and events. She discussed what meeting planners are expecting upon their return and staff is encouraged by calls that are coming in for future meetings. Ms. Keisler suggested that HCTDA should charge Mr. Mitchell to make updates that will work for how COVID-19 is changing the future of meetings and perhaps the meeting rooms currently planned may be too small. Chair Eckard also said that he feels that meetings will be smaller, and we have to remember that. We need to tailor marketing to accommodate those things and perhaps when meetings are here that are live streaming, we send out an ad on their live stream telling them to come to Catawba County/Hickory Metro.

Discussion ensued about visitors to Hickory and how to target those visitors. With school starting back and some going totally virtual, families will be taking vacations during times that they normally would not be. They are traveling via car, going domestic rather than international and also focusing more on outdoor activities. Ms. Davis also discussed information she has gathered from real estate folks regarding the change in how people want to buy houses perhaps further out from the cities, since they are working from home a portion of the week and only driving to the office a couple days per week.

X. CEO Report - Mandy Hildebrand

Gave update on current staff. Monitoring staff temperatures each morning, staff wearing mask when interacting with others, etc. Terri von Drehle, who was furloughed in May, took another job and is not returning. Ms. Hildebrand does not plan to bring that position of Visitors Center Coordinator back full time immediately. The goal is to bring one of the furloughed staff, Caroline Coley, back mid-September, for 32 hours a week at first. Her title and job description will be altered to encompass several new and different responsibilities.

Most Visitors Centers have not reopened but like us, have brochures outside the door. The current plan is to re-open in September and reduce the hours open so there is time to clean well before and after it is open.

Audit is currently underway with Deb Wentz.


Staff continue to connect meeting planners that they have strong and positive relationships with as well as connecting with new meeting planners. All have said they are ready to go as soon as things are back to normal and all have said that updating the current restrooms in the two mail hallways to a touchless experience will be a huge asset for Hickory.

An audio-visual cart has been purchased which comes with a camera and screen that will allow the convention center to promote its ability to have large Zoom meetings and more.


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

XII. 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