

Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2020, 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, October 12, 2020 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

Bruce Eckard; Chair
Donald Duncan Patricia Hatch Renee Keever
Lindsay Keisler Leroy Lail Mark Seaman
Warren Wood 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 8:35 a.m. All Board Members were present.
- II. Persons Wishing to Be Heard (None Appearing)
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Regular Meeting of September 14, 2020.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Minutes of September 14, 2020 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Reports

A. Event Revenue Report - Amber Howard

Reviewed events from September 2020 vs. September 2019.

Ms. Howard went over Event Revenue Chart, which shows event revenue collected through September 2020. The Event Revenue budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 is \$515,000, and as of September 30, 2020, \$28,258.73 has been earned, which is \$486,741.27 away from what is budgeted.

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed calendar of events remaining for the Fiscal Year. Mr. Wood asked that on the calendar can staff highlight those events that will bring in overnight hotel rooms. Staff will do that from here on out for the board.

Ms. Hildebrand added that with Phase 3 of NC Governor Cooper's plan, the convention center will be able to hold smaller events/meetings that are not considered retail, religious, or essential business.

B. Occupancy Tax Report - Ms. Hildebrand

Ms. Hildebrand presented the occupancy tax chart, which reports tax collected in August 2020, which was \$109,995.38. In total for the Fiscal Year is \$213,701.79 for two months which is 20% of occupancy tax revenue for the year.

Mr. Lail commented that September will be a good month because the hotels are busier than previous months.

C. September 2020 Financial Report

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the September 2020 Financial Report. For the third month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenses should be at 25%. Overall, income is at 13% of what was budgeted without September occupancy tax, and expenditures is at 16% of what was budgeted.

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

V. New Business

A. Sports Related Events

Mr. Wood spoke about sporting events coming to Hickory and the need for a sports arena/gym type facility. The City of Hickory wants to conduct and pay for a study to see what it would cost to either raise the ceiling of the Convention Center or build something from scratch.

Mr. Lail commented that he doesn't feel sports will bring in very many overnight rooms as the facility wouldn't be large enough to accommodate groups that bring in folks from

out of town. Mr. Lail stated that the hotels are against re-fitting the convention center ceiling for sports events.

Mr. Lail added that he has been working with architect Scott Mitchell and has talked with others and it's going to be difficult for him to tell the furniture story in the small space that is planned for the Furniture Hall of Fame in the new addition, but he is figuring out how to do it in the space allotted. He hopes to have a plan by November of how to make the space work.

VIII. Old Business

A. Restroom Renovation

Ms. Hildebrand said that the restroom renovation will begin when the new sinks arrive at the convention center, which should be the end of October or first of November. Looper Construction has everything in place to begin as soon as the items arrive.

IX. Marketing & Sales Report - Sarah Davis

Ms. Davis reported that staff is currently working on RFP's for NC Library Association, 2021 Gymnastics Competition, NC Building Inspectors Association, and a large Outdoor Expo.

HCTDA was awarded \$71,000 in marketing credit from Visit NC. Marketing team chose ten programs that are to be completed by December 30, 2020. Breakdown of programs is as follows:

- paid social media programs - Facebook & Instagram; one tailored to outdoor recreation, one tailored to furniture
- travel focused mobile media and attribution programs; same focus as above
- Garden & Gun digital program; one tailored to furniture, one tailored to dining out
- Garden & Gun print co-op; tailored to furniture
- four digital out-of-home programs (Charlotte market); tailored to outdoor recreation, dining out
- Count On Me NC website feature; tailored to furniture
- Instagram UGC (User Generated Content) Promotion; focus on Hickory Furniture Mart, Hart Square Village, Bakers Mountain Park, and Downtown Hickory.
- Instagram Story Feature; 9 stories of locations throughout the Hickory Metro provided by our team which post throughout Visit NC's Instagram story.

Visit Hickory Metro was also awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Tourism Recovery Committee: NCTIA & EDPNC. The first is a convention center re-opening and safely hosting events video project. The second is a community focused video showing how area hotels, restaurants, etc. are reopening in a safe way. The remainder of the grant is being used for two digital tradeshow.

Chair Eckard commented that staff should track what comes in from these marketing programs so that staff can use the pieces that work well in the Spring when the convention center is hopefully back to full capacity. Ms. Davis reminded the Board that no budgeted money for these projects is being used as the HCTDA was awarded these monies from Visit NC.

X. CEO Report - Mandy Hildebrand

Visit NC decided not to come to Hickory for an in-person conference in 2021. Visit NC does want to hold a conference in Hickory in the future, but since construction may be underway in 2022. Visit NC would consider coming to Hickory in 2023 or later.

The Visitors Center opened last week. There have been a few visitors, and staff has been mailing more brochures to people who call to ask about visiting the Hickory Metro. In addition, marketing collateral is being picked up from an outside brochure holder right outside the Visitors Center door.


Ms. Hildebrand mentioned that staff will send a donation and card on behalf of the staff and board to the Kevin Greer family. Mr. Greer passed away in September and he was a tremendous asset to the community and spent a lot of time helping with projects and potential projects for the convention center. Ms. Hildebrand asked that all keep Kevin Greer's family in their thoughts and prayers.

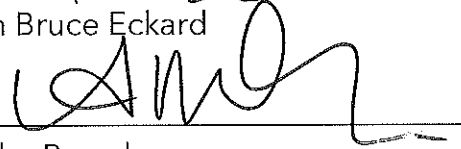
Ms. Keisler mentioned that a Food and Beverage, Hotel Management, etc. hospitality and tourism group has met a few times since the start of COVID-19. Ms. Hildebrand spoke about this group at the last meeting and they have met again since. These hospitality partners decided to create a pipeline that would benefit all in the Hickory Metro hospitality industry. CVCC is involved and they are in process of putting together a hospitality training program. Ms. Keisler finds it inspiring that the area businesses want to come together and do something for the sustainability of everyone, not just their business alone. The goal for the first cohort is 12-15 students but she thinks we will exceed that number. Ms. Keever recommended that Scott Walker be involved as he taught in the program at Caldwell Community College. Ms. Keisler also asked that everyone speak about this in their

meetings and amongst their colleagues. Students going through the program will receive a certification, but the hope is this will be a step to further education in the hospitality and tourism industry.

- XI. The next HCTDA Board Meeting will be held on November 9 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