

**Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
November 11, 2019, 8:30 a.m.**

A Regular Meeting of the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors was held in the Boardroom of the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Monday, November 11, 2019 at 8:30 a.m., with the following members present:

	Bruce Eckard; Chair	
Donald Duncan	Patricia Hatch	Leroy Lail
Renee Keever	Lindsay Keisler	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 October 14, 2019

Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. Lail, that the Minutes of October 14, 2019 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Financial Reports - Ms. Hildebrand

A. October 2019 Financial Report

Ms. Howard reviewed the comparison of events from October 2019 vs. October 2018. There were 22 events in October 2019 as compared to 18 events in October 2018. There were several high revenue events in October 2019, such as the Garden Bros Circus, Delta Sigma Theta Conference, and Franklin Graham Decision America Tour.

Ms. Hildebrand presented the occupancy tax chart for September 2019. Numbers are down for the fiscal year; around \$29,412.11 less than this same time last fiscal year. If October 019 is at least \$164,000, which she thinks it will be, occupancy tax would be at 33%, which is ok and meets budget.

Ms. Hildebrand reviewed the financial statement for October 2019. For the fourth month of the Fiscal Year, income and expenses should be at 33% of the budget. Income is at 28.2% without October occupancy tax and expense is at 22.8% of the budget.

Mr. Lail asked how many staff positions have been added since Ms. Hildebrand became CEO? Ms. Hildebrand explained that there are nine full time staff members, which is the same number as when she began her tenure here. Hildebrand further explained the two newest positions duties and how those positions help to fill the gaps. These positions were filled by different people in the past and had different job responsibilities, so they aren't technically new positions. Mr. Duncan pointed out that he doesn't know how staff runs the convention center with only nine full time positions and Ms. Hildebrand added that there are several groups, the NC Society for Human Resource Management as an example, that has pointed that out as well.

Mr. Duncan spoke about budgeting conservatively and feels that if staff continue to do so, the TDA should be in good shape.

Mr. Lail added that he has a completely different perspective about the TDA owing money to the City of Hickory for building debt. When the Tourism Development Authority was created, it was created by the State as an Authority and the first few loans were commercial and the desire to have the loans through the City of Hickory was just so the TDA could take advantage of the same benefits as the City. The City of Hickory didn't create this authority and does not own this authority, and Mr. Lail feels that we should be congratulating ourselves that we use no other tax besides occupancy tax to fund ourselves.

Ms. Taylor commented that on the day we make the last building debt payment, the City of Hickory no longer owns the building, because there is an option to buy. If we receive the title and then turn around to borrow more money and have to transfer the title back, there will be several fees associated with that. She suggests that if we are borrowing more money, we need to borrow in the same fiscal year as the loan is paid off, to keep from moving the title back and forth between the TDA and the City of Hickory. Mr. Lail added that we are the only community that has pulled this off (using only occupancy tax to fund the convention center) and that we should pat ourselves on the back.

Mr. Yount moved, seconded by Mr. Duncan, that the Financial Report for October 2019 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

## V. New Business

Ms. Hildebrand presented the schedule for 2020 TDA Board Meetings. The April 2020 date falls on Easter Sunday, so Board agreed to move that meeting to April 20, 2020.

Additionally, the June 2020 event conflicts with the NC Pupil Transportation Association so we will move the meeting to a different location that will be determined at a later date. Chair Eckard moved, seconded by Mr. Duncan. The motion carried unanimously. 2020 dates are January 13, February 10, March 9, April 20, May 11, June 15, August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 14.

Mr. Lail shared a story from his meeting in New York this past week. He spoke with a gentleman who asked where he was from. When he said he was from Hickory, North Carolina, the gentleman commented "that's the furniture capital of the world!". Mr. Lail wanted to reiterate that the TDA needs to focus more on special events that promote furniture. The Catawba Valley Hospitality Tourism Alliance is going to be re-energized and it could be very helpful for promoting furniture without any utilization of the TDA resources. Ms. Keisler added that she thinks this is a great opportunity for collaboration opportunities, she just doesn't want to see several groups working separately on the same effort.

#### VI. Old Business

Ms. Hildebrand gave an update on the most recent building committee meeting. All recommend a one-story addition. Mr. Lail added that most of the initial items that need to be done by the building committee are complete. At this point Mr. Mitchell (Architect) is working on visibility for the "Furniture Capital" opportunity. The drawing is highly functional, well done, and Mr. Lail feels that it will be a very successful project. Mr. Yount asked what the estimated cost was? Mr. Lail estimates around 8-10 million and that some of those monies will be put toward making the current building more accessible. Hildebrand added that the goal is for Mr. Mitchell to attend the December 9 meeting and present the schematic to the group.

#### VII. Marketing & Sales Report - Ms. Davis

Updated current meeting/conference sales opportunities that staff is working to bring to the Hickory Metro.

Reviewed pickup reports from August through October events.

Reviewed current sports sales opportunities that staff is working to bring to the Hickory Metro.

Mentioned that Cycle NC event for this year was very successful! Hotel pickup is still being collected but expect to see great numbers for the event.

Added that Catawba Valley Youth Soccer Association sponsored Autumn Blast was this past weekend and was also a great success. Hotel pickup for that event should be good as well.

VIII. CEO Report - Ms. Hildebrand


Congratulated Ms. Davis for being named as one of the "Top 40 Under 40". Ms. Davis was in the top ten which is a great accomplishment.

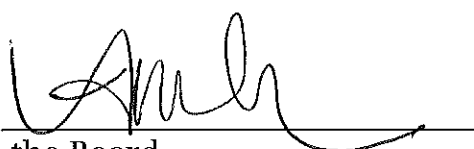
LED lights have been added in Hickory 1-4 and Conover 1-3. Not only are the lights more functional for the rooms, but staff looks forward to seeing a savings in future utility bills.

Spoke about the most recent Tourism Partners Meeting, held at Rock Barn. The meeting was a big success with representation from over 40 hotels, bed and breakfast, attractions, and restaurants. The group meets on a quarterly basis and the next meeting will be held at the recently updated Holiday Inn Express - Conover.

- IX. The next TDA Board Meeting will be held on Monday, December 9, 2019 8:30 a.m. in the Boardroom of the Hickory Metro Convention Center.
- X. There being no further business, motion was made at 9:22 a.m. 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