

**Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Thursday, December 19, 2019**

**8:00 a.m. Gateway Convention Center – Cahokian Board Room**

**Present:** John Hopkins, Lauren Pattan, Mitch Bair, Michael Barker, Cameo Foster, Stacy Frierdich-Hinrichs, Tom Guarino, Sandy Hefner, Linda Jun, JD Lorton, Cathy Luttrell, Dave Miller and Cindy Warke.

**Absent:** Karen Brncic, Brian Campbell, Kim Durr, Kristi Hyten, Mike McCormick, Patty Rotermund, Doug Stotler and Erin Ventimiglia

**Staff:** Brett Stawar, Barbara Strack, Stephanie Tate, Katie Bennett, Nathan Grimm and Cathy Jo Meininger

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order by John Hopkins.

**Opening remarks from Chairman:** John thanked everyone for making it to the meeting, with a special thanks to Cindy Warke and the Gateway Convention Center staff for hosting the board meeting and providing coffee and pastries.

**Board Minutes:** John said the October board minutes indicated there would be no December meeting, but since there is one, he motioned to approve the October minutes with the correction of there being a December meeting. Cindy Warke seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

**Financial Statements:** John asked the board to review the October financial statements. Mitch Bair made a motion to approve the October financials; seconded by Michael Barker. All members were in favor and the motion carried. John then asked the board to review the November financial statements. Mitch Bair made a motion to approve the November financials; seconded by Michael Barker. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

**REPORT OF BUREAU ACTIVITIES:**

Brett thanked John (and Margaret) Hopkins for hosting the Tourism Bureau Open House on December 11<sup>th</sup> in their home. It was a lovely evening and everyone had a good time.

Brett introduced our new Accounting Clerk, Cathy Jo Meininger, to the Board. She will be working part-time to help with grant reporting and other administrative and financial needs.

Brett reminded the board there will be no January board meeting. Instead, we will host our annual Tourism Summit on January 16<sup>th</sup>, at SIU-E Meridian Ballroom at 8 a.m. We want a minimum of 200 people attending, but would prefer 250. He encouraged board members to attend and invite others. There will be no keynote speaker, but we will have members from local communities get up and speak about potential game changing events/attractions in our regional area.

Partnerships are at \$76,700 with ads totaling \$35,350 for the current fiscal year.

The 2020 Travel Guide is finished. Brett praised Stephanie for her dedication and hard work in getting it done, as it was a monumental task of 116 pages that covers the entire region from cover to cover. The format was changed to be almost full editorial as we dropped some of the traditional full listing views.

Collinsville Restaurant Week has been set for the last weekend of Feb. through the first weekend of March, with six restaurants participating.

We have started working on a new branded quarterly report. The format will be colorful and informative and meant to educate stakeholders on the bureau's progress to impact and grow tourism for the region. The reports will cover this fiscal year, beginning in July 2019.

Katie said the Meeting Planner fam tour on Nov. 5 and 6<sup>th</sup> went well with 4 qualified meeting planners in attendance. She is working on a 2020 Group Tour Planner FAM April 26-28, 2020. This itinerary will feature a 2-night stay and a tour covering the best of Route 66 and the River Road.

Brett said the Employee Handbook has been updated and revised. The items highlighted in yellow are new item/policies added to the handbook, and the gray items are updated policies. A quick overview was done of the handbook. J.D. Lorton made the motion to conditionally approve the Revised Handbook, pending legal review and approval. Cindy Warke seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried. The new handbook will become effective upon legal approval.

Mitch presented the Strategic Plan to the board. One of the strategic goals from the plan is for board members to understand and educate our government officials, local and state partners, and other supporters of the positive economic impact from tourism. The board reviewed the strategic plan, and there was discussion on the direction the board wants to go with it and the different goals. J.D. asked to include hospitality in the strategic plan. Board members were asked to review and analyze the plan further on how it relates to their applicable area, and it will be discussed again at the February meeting. John thanked Mitch for his contribution to the strategic plan.

The next board meeting is set for Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by J.D. Lorton and seconded by Sandy Hefner.

**Publications distributed:** Employee Handbook and Strategic plan

Respectfully submitted by,

Brett Stawar  
President/CEO

Lauren Patton  
Vice Chair