

**Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting
Thursday, February 18, 2021**

8:00 a.m. via ZOOM

Present: Lauren Pattan, Mitch Bair, Michael Barker, Karen Brncic, Brian Campbell, Kim Durr, Cameo Holland, Tom Guarino, Sandy Hefner, Linda Jun, JD Lorton, Mike McCormick, Dave Miller, Patty Rotermund and Erin Ventimiglia

Absent: John Hopkins, Stacy Frierdich-Hinrichs, Kristi Hyten, Cathy Luttrell and Doug Stotler

Staff: Cory Jobe, Barbara Strack, Stephanie Tate and Katie Bennett

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Cory Jobe.

Opening remarks: Cory welcomed everyone to the virtual board meeting and welcomed our new board member, Jennifer McClure, who is a Marketing Specialist at SIU-E and owns the Stone Cottage in Grafton. She is replacing Kim Durr, who retired in December. Cory said the virtual Tourism Summit in January went really well, and we are still getting positive feedback on the event. He then reminded board members to review, sign and send in their annual Conflict of Interest forms.

Board Minutes: Cory asked the board to review the November board minutes. Mitch Bair made the motion to approve both the November board minutes; JD Lorton seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

Board Financials: Cory asked the board to review the November, December and January financial statements. Karen Baker made the motion to approve the November, December and January financial statements. Dave Miller seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

REPORT OF BUREAU ACTIVITIES:

Cory said the Tourism Bureau applied for and secured a \$101,000 PPP loan from Carrollton Bank. This is a forgivable loan. In addition, we have secured \$41,000 from the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) to date.

We have had some staff changes. After seven years, Gail Wallace retired from the Tourism Bureau and her last day was February 9th. And Brenda Hoven, who volunteered for us five years and then worked for us part-time the past four years on special projects will be retiring on February 26. We have hired Sydney Peckham as the new Visitor Experience and Programs Manger and she will start February 22. Sydney previously worked at the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, AL.

We have begun working on the FY 2022 budget.

After working and meeting with Chairman Prenzler, we are now the official and only certified tourism bureau for Madison County. Cory thanked Chairman Hopkins and everyone else for their efforts who helped facilitate this. In addition, Cory will be meeting with Pontoon Beach and Granite City next week. Both communities are very excited about the future with our bureau.

The Spring/Summer Travel Guide ad sales just wrapped up and we sold nearly \$75,000 in ads and it will have a new look this year. It will be called The Go Guide, and will be more of a feature magazine format with exciting new content and feature stories on the people, places, events and things that make up our incredible region.

The 10th Annual Restaurant Week was a great success. All the participating restaurants had a good ten days. We even ran out of the glasses, and used up the remaining glasses from summer. We handed out approximately 3,000 glasses.

The 2nd Annual Collinsville Restaurant Week will run Feb. 26 – March 7, and we have nine restaurants participating this year.

Cory has been busy talking tourism at local and regional meetings, and Stephanie has assisted getting him presentations at over 12 media outlets over the past few months.

Eagle season is wrapping up and we have seen a huge success in our Eagle Passport Mobile App Program with nearly 2,000 downloads.

The Governor announced his FY22 budget yesterday, and Cory was recently appointed to the Illinois Council of Convention and Visitors Bureaus legislative committee. ICCVB is the state-certified trade association for the 38 CVB's in our state. Cory expects to spend some time in Chicago and Springfield meeting with legislators over the next couple of months to help them understand the economic impact of tourism while they finalize the budget.

Cory said John Hopkins is in charge of the Nominating Committee and should have reached out to the board members whose seats are expiring to discuss renewals. In March, John will discuss the renewal of nominees for our board and nominees for the Executive Committee.

Cory said in April, he hopes to form an Advisory Committee, which will comprise of community leaders from within our region whose area is not covered by someone on our Board of Directors. The goal is to keep those communities active in our efforts, so they remain dedicated to advancing our region for tourism growth and active lifestyle/livability.

Old Business: There was no old Business

New Business: There was no new business.

General Announcement: Linda Jun said there is activity starting back up in the motorcoach industry. She has had four group leaders contact her to start planning group tours, and the college sports teams are starting to travel again.

Katie Bennett attended a Tour Planer IL meeting last week and said our area looks strong for future events, while many other CVB's do not have much planned yet.

Mitch said Cindy Warke has departed from the Gateway Convention Center, and they have hired SearchWide Global for a replacement. Gateway was picked as a COVID vaccination site for Madison County and the National Guard will be arriving next week to assist. He said the contract with Spectrum at Gateway has ended, and they are looking to work with local vendors for in-house catering.

Adjourn: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mike McCormick and seconded by JD Lorton.

Respectfully submitted by,

Cory Jobe
President/CEO

Lauren Pattan
Vice Chair