

HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM, INC BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN 46032  
February 7, 2025

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Board attendance:** Anne Clendenin, Bob DuBois, Scott Spillman, Norman Burns, Vince Dora, Chris Stice, Jimia Smith, Michael Balcolm, Susan Miller.

**Also in attendance:** Jamie Hopwood/Commission, Anne Poindexter/counsel, Brad Lynn, Karen Radcliff, Dave West, Tina Rodgers, Betsy Ekelof, Ashley Ledford, Chris Kersteins, Sarah Buckner, Mike Thibideau, Laura Kelner, Carl Daniels.

**I. Welcome**

S. Spillman called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. S. welcomed J. Hopwood from the Tourism Commission, in attendance to increase connection between the board and commission.

S. Spillman informed of a need to amend the agenda for an executive session to review D. West's 90-day success plan. N. Burns made a motion to amend the agenda, K. Arnold seconded. Motion passed.

**II. Minutes of the November 2024 Meeting**

S. Spillman requested any additions or corrections to the November 2024 meeting minutes. There being none, V. Dora moved that the minutes be approved as presented. M. Balcolm seconded. Motion passed.

**III. New Business**

**a. 401K Resolution**

T. Rodgers presented that with board roles changing, the 401k resolution document needed updated to replace V. Dora with M. Balcolm as treasurer. B. DuBois moved to update the 401k resolution to show the new Treasurer, K. Arnold seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**b. Indiana Fever and Ignite partnership**

D. West presented his idea to forgo typical advertising efforts and instead leverage relationships with the Indiana Fever and Ignite teams during their pre-game arrivals. This includes the HCT logo on a step and repeat plus red-carpet time for the game day outfits, and HCT would become the "official" destination of the Indiana Fever for a three-year deal. N. Burns inquired if partners will have access to the Fever logo, D. West informed partners will not be able to use their logo.

D. West also presented on a potential sponsorship with Ignite. Conner Prairie is a sponsor of the ignite. The plan would be the same, the HCT logo on a step and repeat plus red-carpet time for the game day arrivals. A. Ledford presented the costs for the projects. J. Smith requested more details on how this new plan would impact the current marketing budget. A. Ledford informed that the traditional layered strategy of radio, billboard, television, print would not continue. S. Miller asked why there is no requirement for the teams to stay in Hamilton County and shared that she has been told the teams don't want to send their guests to Hamilton County. D. West shared this does impact the layered budget, but this will increase earned media, plus there will be plans for a lot more opportunities including "Day in the Life" with players visiting Hamilton County.

Discussion continued. J. Smith inquired if marketing is comfortable with this change in strategy. A. Clendenin stated she believes this is innovative, will put Hamilton County on an international map. N. Burns says traditional marketing is more profitable for an attraction. K. Arnold shared concerns about the annual costs. M. Balcolm asked again about the impact to traditional marketing. C. Stice expressed concerns about not having an agreement that includes Caitlin Clark. A.

Ledford stated we would continue to do paid search and social media. B. DuBois asked for more detail on the ROI and requested that the entire board be provided talking points on the change in direction.

S. Spillman requested more data on demographics and audience, and more information from A. Ledford on the budget changes. Discussion tabled until the March board meeting.

**c. Update on staffing**

T. Rodgers reported the new Senior Grants Accounting Manager, Mari Sandifer, will begin soon. A search is in progress for D. West to have an executive assistant. And two marketing and one sports intern(s) will join the team during the summer.

A reorganization is recommended to dissolve the Visitor Experience department. C. Stice asked about Sarah Billman's hospitality and group service work in Visitor Experience, that department was helpful to parks. K. Radcliff informed the work will remain; staff will absorb the work in other departments. The financial resources will follow the work. There will be a reduction in overlapping work.

**d. Review of budget shift**

B. Lynn broke down the split of the Visitor Services budget, showing the funds to be dispersed to the sports and sales departments.

N. Burns made a motion to reallocate the funds, B. DuBois seconded. Motion passed with no additional discussion.

**e. Other**

**i. Whistleblower policy**

T. Rodgers shared that by taking the role of treasurer/secretary, M. Balcolm is now the contact for any Whistleblower events. Documents need to be updated with Balcolm's name. K. Arnold made a motion to move M. Balcolm to the whistleblower role, V. Dora seconded.

**ii. Datafy**

D. West presented on a new Datafy contract, staff will soon have detailed insights to visitor spend in lodging, attractions, food & beverage.

**iii. Touch screen / mapping**

D. West presented an update to the conference room to include a touch screen so staff can better understand geographic locations connected to new development.

**iv. Strategic planning**

D. West reported his desire to create a five-year strategic plan.

**f. Old Business**

**i. Update on Westfield master planning**

K. Radcliff reminded us that she reviewed the Westfield master plan with the board in November and that Hamilton County Tourism was a part of every step of the master plan.

**ii. Update on Carmel master planning**

D. West informed that the Carmel master plan project will not be as big as Westfield's master plan, but tourism representatives will work along with the City of Carmel every step of the plan.

**iii. Update on Noblesville building renovations**

B. Lynn presented before and after exterior photos of the Noblesville Creates buildings. New siding was installed using support from grant funds received from the City of Noblesville. B. Lynn also informed the Judge Stone House at Noblesville Creates is next and with plans to apply for a second grant to cover porch updates and tuckpointing.

**IV. Other**

**a. Staff Updates**

**i. A.I. initiative**

Chris Kersteins presented on Hamilton County Tourism's internal AI education via workshops and several month-long courses offered to tourism organizations.

**V. Adjourn until Friday, March 7, 2025**

K. Arnold made a motion to adjourn until Friday, March 7 at 8:30 a.m. M. Balcolm seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.