

HAMILTON COUNTY VISITOR AND CONVENTION COMMISSION  
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN 46032  
Thursday, February 20, 2025

Commission members in attendance: Jack Russell, Perry Williams, Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Sydnee Cseresznyes, Connor Sullivan, Kersten Sommer Raza, Jamie Hopwood, Kelly, Rachel Quade, Bob DuBois, Kelly Tabeling, Kevin Walter, Kelly Sujka

Commission members attending online: Lisa Hanni

Also in attendance: Ken Alexander, Anne Poindexter, Chou-il Lee, Scott Spillman, Karen Radcliff, Brad Lynn, Sarah Buckner, Betsy Ekelof, Mari Sandifer

### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

C. Sullivan called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

A. Poindexter & S. Spillman joined the meeting to provide updates on CEO staffing updates with the resignation of David West. K. Radcliff will provide a full statement to Commission members. She reported there was no staff lost during the transition and all were optimistic. J. Russell asked about next steps and timelines. A. Poindexter informed on next steps of reviewing contracts and working with the search firm. S. Cseresznyes felt strongly about ongoing communication between the board and commission and would like the CEO success committee to continue. K. Radcliff agreed to establish those meetings in the interim and that moving forward there will be more opportunities to connect.

C. Sullivan then introduced new commission members, Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis appointed from the City of Carmel, and Kerstin Sommer-Raza, appointed from the City of Westfield. C. Sullivan then asked new HCT staff member, Mari Sandifer, to introduce herself to the commission.

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

J. Russell made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, P. Williams seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

### **III. Year-End Review**

#### **A. 2024 Visitor Report**

K. Radcliff presented the 2024 Visitor Report. Indications show high income earners intend to travel in 2025, but the uncertainty in the economy may suppress low income earners and business travel. HC tourism KPI is expected to flatten in 2025. K. Radcliff presented Hamilton County's strong performance in RevPar beating our comp set. J. Russell inquired on Howard County's increase in hotel supply. K. Radcliff informed on Kokomo's development driven by housing construction workers on their new automotive battery plant. HC hotel demand surpassed 1.1 million room nights in 2022, will exceed 1.2 million room nights in 2025. K.Sujka asked to include booking reports from the HCT sales & sports departments in future commission reports. K. Sommer-Raza requested events coming for the future in county and Indiana. K. Sujka and J. Hopwood shared that the shift in major events such as Eclipse and Taylor Swift will show deficits in YOY reports this year.

#### **B. 2024 Tax Report**

B. Lynn presented the 2024 tax report. No questions or discussion.

#### **C. 2024 Tourism Commission Financials**

B. Lynn presented the 2024 tourism commission financials. J. Russell requested more details about the use of the money market interest. B. Lynn informed the commission currently uses the funds to offset legal & admin fees. No further discussion.

#### **D. 2024 HCT Financials**

B. Lynn presented the 2024 Hamilton County Tourism financials. C. Sullivan asked if we have adjusted the budgeted with the loss of ARPA funds, B. Lynn informed that we have made the necessary budget adjustments.

J. Hopwood made a motion to accept the financials as presented, J. Russell seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

**E. 2024 Top 10**

K. Radcliff presented the top 10 highlights of 2024. No questions or discussions.

**IV. New Business**

**A. Legislation Update – HB 1223**

K. Radcliff presented on HB 1223 – which includes a Tourism Improvement District (TID) which will receive a hearing. State Tourism budget currently down from \$20m to \$5m annual, Indiana state BID fund is currently down from \$10m to \$3m annual. S. Cseresznyes said 1223 died, requested in the future to be informed on what we follow so she can pay closer attention. We are following the TID, state tourism budget, and the PSDAs for Noblesville and Westfield. Our position is supportive of each.

**B. 2025 Major Events Outlook**

K. Radcliff presented the most up to date 2025 HCSA Major Sports Events. Discussion included excitement over events coming to the area.

**V. Old Business**

**A. BEST Fund**

K. Radcliff updated on the BEST Fund. Letters of agreement and contracts are ready to go to the four projects that have been awarded previously by the commission. K. Alexander let the commissioners know projects can be approved by the county council at any meeting. No further questions or discussion.

**VI. Adjourn until Thursday, May 15, 2025**

J. Russell motioned to adjourn the meeting, J. Hopwood seconded. No further discussion, meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.