

HAMILTON COUNTY VISITOR AND CONVENTION COMMISSION  
37 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN 46032  
Thursday, May 15, 2025

Commission members in attendance: Jack Russell, Perry Williams, Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Connor Sullivan, Kersten Sommer Raza, Jamie Hopwood, Rachel Quade, Bob DuBois, Kelly Tabeling, *Kevin Walter*, Kelly Sujka, Andy Card, Lisa Hanni  
Commission members attending online: Sydnee Cseresznyes  
Also in attendance: Karen Radcliff, Brad Lynn, Sarah Buckner, Hayley Sears, Chou-il Lee

### **I. Welcome**

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

### **II. Review of the Minutes of the February 2025 Meeting**

J. Russell made a motion to approve the February 2025 minutes as presented. P. Williams seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

### **III. Visitor & Financial Metrics**

#### **A. Q1 2025 Visitor Report**

K. Radcliff presented the Q1 2025 Visitor Report, including daily occupancy. J. Hopwood asked if we have data that shows the segmentation and impact of government travel. K. Radcliff has not seen that segment in our data feeds. K. Radcliff reviewed the forecast for the US, this is a new option that HCT will send to business partners when available. A. Card asked how recent the reports are pulled. K. Radcliff informed on dates of various reports. K. Tabeling asked when the next Major Events Calendar will go out, May 27. J. Hopwood asked HCT to add the attendance back into the calendar.

#### **B. 2025 Tax Report**

B. Lynn presented the 2025 Tax Report, broken down between the 5% tourism promotional and 3% tourism capital funds.

#### **C. 2025 Tourism Commission Financial Report**

B. Lynn presented the 2025 Tourism Commission Financial Report, BEST fund now included on the Balance Sheet. Details shown are through March 31, 2025. A. Card asked for the earned interest rate on the bank account. B. Lynn stated 4.1%, which is not as strong as the CD, but this account needs to be fluid. A. Card asked if it is federally protected bank account, B. Lynn confirmed it is.

#### **D. 2025 HCT Financial Report**

B. Lynn presented the HCT Balance Sheet through March 31, 2025.

J. Russell made a motion to approve the 2025 financials as presented. P. Williams seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **A. 2025 HCT Business Plan Update**

K. Radcliff reviewed HCT's 2025 Business Plan. J. Russell shared that he is working with S. Cseresznyes and J. Hopwood on a CEO success committee to eliminate confusion over the plan and budgetary decisions, they are pleased K. Radcliff added this to the agenda. J. Hopwood asked about the marketing strategy around the Kentucky Derby. K. Radcliff noted that Louisville was identified as a strong market for new visitors. A. Card was curious about services, K. Radcliff shared details about our visitor service options. A. Card commended K. Radcliff's work on the Grand Park Master Plan. J. Russell thanked K. Radcliff for providing a detailed business plan ahead of the budgeting process.

#### **B. 2026 Appropriations Request & Draft HCT Budget**

B. Lynn reviewed the process of forecasting revenues to inform the 2026 appropriations request. Staff used a formula that included assessing major events that could impact revenues, new hotels added to the local market, as well as historical performance. K. Radcliff explained areas of flexibility in the proposed budget that allow the staff to live within

actual earned revenues if lower than projections when needed. She also explained the new 30% reserve policy in place as a result of COVID19 recovery and best practices. C. Sullivan asked for the date this will be presented to Council for appropriations, HCT has not yet been informed however expects to report in September. J. Russell asked if HCT is requesting enough based on the growth in previous years and believed 11% to be a conservative increase based on an annual 15% earned revenue increase. A. Card concurred and suggested HCT update the model to showcase a 15% increase. K. Radcliff stated forecasts show it is a flat year which is why the number is slightly conservative but agreed with the philosophy to match appropriation requests to anticipated market performance and to budget flexibly to manage market fluctuations. K. Tabelaing agreed that revenue projections remain flat for hotels. J. Hopwood asked to understand how much of the 11% is new inventory. K. Radcliff says we are up 6% in inventory and short term rentals are growing. With the new Talison, Residence Inn and Holiday Inn Express increasing supply and a three-year history of the market outpacing projections, it was suggested that revenue projections increase by an additional 5% with plans for additional end-of-year advertising if revenue is earned.

Based upon discussions, A.Card moved to approve the 2026 Appropriations Request and Draft HCT budget at \$11.5M. J. Russell seconded. No further discussion. Motion passed.

J. Hopwood moved to accept the Tourism Commission budget at \$5.7M based upon the same revenue modeling. A. Card seconded. No further discussion. Motion passed.

### **C. Tourism Commission Updates**

C. Sullivan shared the news of his resignation from the Tourism Commission and that this would be his last meeting. C. Sullivan suggested that as current vice president, J. Hopwood act as President. C. Sullivan's replaced appointment will be David Boyer, a Hamilton County government attorney.

P. Williams moved that J. Hopwood be named President of the Tourism Commission and J. Russell be named Vice President of the Tourism Commission. The group will look for a Treasurer to replace J. Russell. K. Tabelaing seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

#### **1. Funding Agreement**

K. Radcliff would like to adjust the normal annual schedule of procedures and move up the funding agreement approval to the August Tourism Commission meeting rather than the November meeting each year. In this way, HCT will be under contract before the County's budget hearings in September and can better represent the Tourism Commission.

C. Sullivan moved to authorize J. Hopwood as president to work directly with Taft counsel on HCT's 2026 Tourism funding agreement to be presented for approval at the August Tourism Commission meeting. B. DuBois seconded. No further discussion, motion passed.

### **V. Old Business**

#### **A. BEST Committee Update**

K. Radcliff informed that the review committee will meet next week to score the latest application.

#### **B. CEO Committee Update**

K. Radcliff has met with the CEO Committee and will continue to bridge any communication gaps between the Hamilton County Tourism board and commission throughout the rest of the year. The CEO Committee reported confidence in HCT's leadership and direction.

#### **C. Legislative Updates**

K. Radcliff talked about budget updates at the state level. Noblesville and Westfield each requested PSDAs, these requests were not approved. IDDC budget was cut from \$40 million to \$6 million over two years. The state sports bid fund remains flat but still funded at previous levels. HCT tapped into that fund for several events. Tourism Improvement District efforts did not move forward but will try again.

### **VI. Adjourn until August 21, 2025, HCT Offices**

A. Card moved to adjourn the meeting, J. Russell seconded. No further discussion, meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.