



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, February 17, 2021

NOTE: DUE TO THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS CAUSED BY COVID-19, THE FEBRUARY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED AS A VIRTUAL MEETING

Commissioners Present; Lauren Becker, Vice Chair; Jamie Waters, Secretary/Treasurer; Sherricka Day; Dan Gilbert Miles Greathouse; Donna Hix; Mamie Pound; and Marianne Richter.

Commissioners Absent: : Amish Das, Chair

Special Invitees: Cyndy Cerbin, National Infantry Museum, Helena Coates, Uptown Columbus; Norm Easterbrook, RiverCenter for the Performing Arts; Merri Sherman, Columbus Sports Council; Hayley Tillery, Columbus Convention & Trade Center; Carrie Beth Wallace, The Columbusite; and Ed Wolverton, Uptown Columbus.

Staff Present: Peter Bowden, Carter Flynn, Shelby Guest, Joel Slocumb, Andrea Smith, and Ashley Woitena.

Call to Order **Lauren Becker**

- In the absence of Board Chair, Amish Das, the meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Vice Chair, Lauren Becker.

Approval of Minutes & Financials **Jamie Waters**

- Jamie Waters asked the Board members present if there were any questions regarding the minutes from the January meeting. There being none, a motion was made by Mamie Pound to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Miles Greathouse. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved.
- Mr. Waters then went over the financials for January 2021, reviewing the hotel/motel tax income, specific line items, and highlighted the net gain for the month. He reported revenue for the month fell below \$125,000 so a draw-down was made against the Development Authority COVID-19 MOU with VisitColumbus. He then asked if there were any questions concerning the financials and hearing none, he called for a vote to approve. Dan Gilbert made a motion to accept the financials as presented. Marianne Richter seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.
- **Fiscal 2022 Budget**
 - Ms. Becker asked Peter Bowden to present the proposed FY 2022 budget. He began by reminding the Board the budget for the upcoming fiscal year (beginning July 1) is always presented at this meeting for Board discussion and approval and in keeping with the Columbus

Consolidated Government's (CCG) request, once approved, the budget is forwarded to the City Manager's office for inclusion into the CCG's budget, where it becomes a pass-through item.

- Mr. Bowden explained staff is being cautious in its projection for revenue and built the budget on no increase in hotel motel tax. He went over several specific line items to include Salaries, Group Health, Promotion & Advertising, Contract Services, Special & Ongoing, etc. These were highlighted to show savings or other adjustments compared to last year's budget.
- He also announced the CVB has received notice of approval for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The funds have not been received as of the meeting, but the estimated amount is just over \$117,000.
- There have also been conversations with the City Manager and representatives from the Development Authority to continue the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for COVID-19 Relief into the next fiscal year, with the same conditions and parameters.
- Mr. Bowden ended the presentation by commending the CVB staff for their efforts and hard work during this pandemic.
- At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Becker asked the Board for any questions or comments regarding the proposed budget and there being none, she then called for a motion to approve the budget as submitted. A motion was made by Jamie Waters and seconded by Dan Gilbert. A vote was taken and the budget was approved.

- **Uptown Columbus Presentation with Ed Wolverton**

- Mr. Bowden introduced Ed Wolverton, Executive Director of Uptown Columbus, Inc. and Columbus BID.. Mr. Wolverton began with some background on himself, then cited the mission of Uptown Columbus. He discussed the economic progress that occurred in 2020 (despite the pandemic), highlighted the Clean Team & Ambassadors, special events and marketing, organizational development & fundraising, and special projects & infrastructure. He also focused on current development projects to include renovations at the Columbus Marriott, new hotels AC Hotel by Marriott and Hotel Indigo, the new Mercer Medical School, Second Avenue Apartment project, City Mills, etc.

Chair's Report..... Lauren Becker

- **Uptown Hotel Coalition**

- Ms. Becker asked Peter Bowden for an update on the Uptown Hotel Coalition. He explained this is a group representing the Uptown hotels, to include the Trade Center and Uptown Inc. This group was formed to conduct regularly meetings as a result of the additional hotel product in Uptown. At the latest meeting, a presentation was given by Digital Edge, the consulting firm engaged by VisitColumbus to assist in a comprehensive program of work to create awareness and lead generation for conventions and meetings. Mr. Bowden described that staff plans to continue working with Digital Edge in an effort to maintain the momentum VisitColumbus is receiving from meeting planners as a result of the rollout of the current campaign and strategy.

- **Short Term Rental (STR) Update**

- Ms. Becker reported on a meeting held recently with members of the VisitColumbus staff and the City representatives to discuss the enforcement of compliance for Short Term Rental Units. It was noted, on average, these operators remit approximately \$10,000 in fees each month. The City is also looking into the enforcement process. The VisitColumbus staff is developing a direct marketing campaign to encourage operators to work with the City on compliance and fee issues.

President’s Report..... Peter Bowden

- Mr. Bowden asked Joel Slocumb, Film Commissioner for the Columbus Film Commission, to report on the status of the film in Columbus.
 - Mr. Slocumb began with an overview and history of the Columbus Film Commission and the current film incentive. He explained there have been 12 projects since 2019, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many projects have been halted. He reminded the group that he and Shelby Guest attended the Sundance Film Festival in January 2020 and over the three-day period, conducted meetings with producers and directors and came back with more than 50 leads for potential projects; again, the pandemic caused staff to put any follow up on hold.
 - His work includes attending (virtual) meetings and events related to the film industry both the national and international level, as he continues to promote Columbus as a film destination when restrictions are lifted. This time has presented the opportunity to make new relationships and revise strategy going forward.
 - The primary goal of the Film Commission is to attract a television series/episodic, as those projects would work for months at a time; however, independent films and other projects are still part of the program of work.
 - Mr. Slocumb did indicate things are beginning to pick-up in 2021 with a national Chevrolet truck commercial filmed in Columbus; an independent film already in pre-production with filming beginning in March; and another film in the works for early Spring.
 - He is also working with a third project with representatives planning to scout for locations in Columbus.
 - Mr. Slocumb concluded his remarks by explaining that there is a plan is to launch a revised incentive program in March.

Other Business..... Group

- Dan Gilbert with Whitewater Express referenced the “Wintering Grounds” short documentary film about kayakers traveling to Columbus to hone their whitewater skills on the Chattahoochee. He offered to provide a link to the trailer to Board. He also mentioned the impact of the COVID pandemic on rafting & ziplining, but his company has been able to rally back with just a 25% loss of bookings from last year.

Adjournment.....Lauren Becker

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.