

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

July 12, 2018

Virginia City Conference Center
10 South E Street, Virginia City, NV 89440

MEETING MINUTES

Notice: Items on the agenda may be taken out of order; two or more agenda items may be combined for consideration; and items may be removed from the agenda or discussion relating thereto delayed at any time. This is the tentative schedule for the meeting. The Commission reserves the right to take items in a different order to accomplish business in the most efficient manner.

The following minutes are a summarized explanation of the topics discussed. A taped recording of these proceedings will be kept for review.

CALL TO ORDER

Ron Gallagher called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. ROLL CALL

Tiffany Dubois called roll.

Chairperson: Ron Gallagher - Present
Vice Chair: Corrado DeGasperis - Present
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens - Present
Board Members: Angelo Petrini - Present
Lance Gilman - Present

Tiffany noted there was a quorum present.

Others: Deny Dotson, Director - Absent
Katie Demuth, Tourism & Marketing Manager
Tiffany Dubois, Administrative Assistant

Public Attendance: 20 members of the public were in attendance.

2. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

This is the tentative schedule for the meeting. The Commission reserves the right to take items in a different order to accomplish business in the most efficient manner. The Commission may combine two or more items for consideration and may remove an item from the agenda or delay discussion relating to an item on the agenda at any time.

R. Gallagher stated they will be moving Liquid Blue Event's update to the beginning of the agenda following public comment due to a conflicting meeting for Liquid Blue Events.

A. Petrini made a motion to approve the agenda with stated changes.

Second – L. Gilman

Approved – Unanimously

3. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. June 14, 2018

C. DeGasperi made the motion to approve the minutes from the June 14, 2018 meeting.

Second – A. Perry

Approved – Unanimously

4. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

Discussion may be limited to three minutes per person at the discretion of the Chairman. No action may be taken on a matter raised under this portion of the agenda until the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an item upon which action may be taken.

Richard Oates, Canvas Café, stated the Virginia City merchants have created a new coalition to address some issues and keep things in order and civilized. He states they have been getting together and working with Nicole Barde to facilitate the meetings. He states Breck Greninger, Kettle Corn, will be addressing the first two issues and states he will address the third issue after her. He also states he noticed the Outhouse Races were not on the schedule of events of the summer and asked why not.

R. Gallagher confirmed with K. Demuth it is scheduled.

Breck Greninger, Kettle Corn, states there has been a lack of a direct and clear voice of the merchants in the VCTC planning process. She states some of the issues are external vendors and services directly competing with the town's business which she feels has directly affected her in the past. She states cancellation of popular events without merchant input has been an issue. She states booth placement can be very difficult. She also states street closures that restrict movement of people to the whole of town are an issue. She explained other features that are missing during events include problems with the PA systems, which can only be heard in the center of town, not all the way up C street. She states at the beginning and the end of the street, nothing can be heard, only if you are in front of the Bucket of Blood. She states there is a lack of music and other festive events. She also states the only map available for visitors is a small black and white map that looks like a placemat and has outdated information on it. She states her store is not on it. She states there are also weekends during the season that have no planned events and the merchants would like to see those filled. She stated the merchants would like to have a representative seat on the commission for the merchants that is not appointed by the County Commission, but selected by the merchant coalition. She states the coalition would also like to have a standing events subcommittee that includes Liquid Blue Events, the VCTC and representatives for the merchants. She moved on to item two of the coalitions discussion which included poor communication from the VCTC to the merchants. She stated most merchants feel they are left out of the loop on some things and misinformed about what is going on. She states there is a lack of understanding for how the town actually gets promoted. She states the local perception is that there is no promotion at the airport.

R. Gallagher states there is promotion at the airport in the form of brochures.

Breck asked if any of the other merchants are aware of that. All present stated they were not.

T. Dubois stated she received a phone call from the company that distributes the brochures at the airport stating they were out and would be delivering more this week. There is a possibility that if you were there, you could have caught it on the few days they were out.

K. Demuth stated the brochures are in the rack with all of the areas other attractions and brochures near the baggage claim. She states RSCVA also puts a video together every year that includes Virginia City and it plays on the screens in the airport. She states the video is free to VCTC/Virginia City but the brochures are paid for by VCTC. She states that has been happening for the last eighteen months to two years.

Breck continued mentioning the Below the Surface videos are great, but do not go far enough to promote the specific attractions, shops, or food and lodging establishments. Breck proposed solutions to the preceding problem. She stated they would like to sit down and develop a strategy for better communication. She mentions emails alone are not sufficient as there is at least one person in town who is unable to read. She continued saying the coalition would like a clear, concise and factual explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the VCTC and its vendors with regard to events and overall promotions. She states they would like to review the overall promotion and marketing strategy for the town regarding events, general image and branding strategy. She states the coalition would like to particulate in the marketing and PR strategy going forward. She states this could be done through a chosen representative and a subcommittee. She states they would like more videos, in shorter duration, focusing on and featuring more of the town's unique offerings.

Richard Oates, Canvas Café, addressed the third issue brought up by the merchant coalition which was the loss of the docent program. He stated he is unaware of why the docent program ended but in talking to some of the docents, they felt like they were getting the short end of the stick. He states in the discussions the merchants have had, they all feel that returning the docent program would benefit the town as a whole. He states they also feel there should be marketing of place like the Historic 4th Ward School and the St. Mary's Art Center and the history of the town in general. He states people loved the docents in town. He states when the gun fighters come and sit down on his patio and the ladies in their

outfits sit down, his patio fills up in a matter of minutes. He states when Stinky shows up with his donkey, the donkey eats his weeds and his patio fills up. He states the merchants feel there should be a way to bring that program back. He states as a merchant; he is willing to participate event if there is a cost to him. He states perhaps each establishment can do something like donate a few dollars or provide a subsidized meal. He states bringing those people back into town will provide a level of marketing that we had before. He states every person who has a cell phone takes a photo and then gets onto Facebook, Instagram, etc. and starts posting and it goes worldwide. He states that is a benefit to the community. He mentioned Deke and Stinky and spoke about the impact they have both had on his business and the town as a whole. He states he has received donations from visitors and they have created a running tab for Stinky and his donkey. He states the merchants are all enthusiastic about it and they discussed getting dressed up themselves, however, it would not always be possible given the schedules and types of work they all do. He states all of the docents he has spoken to would be happy to come back if they weren't feeling taken advantage of. He states they have suggested that the merchants chip in a couple of dollars each to help cover the costs separate of VCTC but states those are details that can be worked out if everyone comes together. He states there is so much more to offer from this historic town that is off the beaten path which the docent program could also help to share. He states the merchants believe this is something they'd like the VCTC to address either at the next meeting or perhaps without the formalities and just sitting down and having a conversation since it is for the benefit for the whole town.

R. Gallagher stated he believes everyone will be surprised when we are all able to sit down, that the dissemination of information in both ways will get us all to 2019 in an aligned fashion. He states the roles of the VCTC and the roles of the merchants need to be defined. He states that has become murky with the addition and removal of different responsibilities over the years. He states he believes that is a first step. He states we need to define what VCTC does and what the merchants do and then bringing that all together.

A. Perry states she has been attending the merchant coalition meetings and believes there are a lot of opportunities that are very clear on both sides for improving communication. She states most of the requests are valid and some of them will be a little more difficult and will take a little more nuances to iron out. She states she believes that steps have already been taken by the group and as a whole they are doing a great job of articulating what does and does not work for them. She states on the VCTC side, and coming from a position from St. Mary's Art Center, clearly there is a way that the VCTC can communicate better what our roll is and what we offer to the merchants. She states she is grateful to be part of the meeting and she is looking forward to continuing and the merchants staying engaged. She states there are many easy wins once we all sit down at a table together.

Debbie Lewis, Things, Thing and Things, states she is happy that the Outhouse Races are scheduled, but states they are not on the brochure they have received and have been passing out. She asked if it can be corrected because it is a big deal.

K. Demuth states she will take a look at it and see what she can do to fix it. She states that has already been printed twice.

R. Gallagher asked if it is on the website. He states that is something that can be fixed even if it is a separate piece of paper just to let the merchants know it is coming.

Jess Horning, Liquid Blue Events, states the outhouse registration is very strong this year. He states he anticipates that selling out again.

K. Demuth states she looked up the one she had printed and it is on there.

R. Gallagher states we can resolve that at another time.

Judy Cohen, Silver Stope, states she wants to thank T. Dubois for the accuracy of the VCTC minutes. She states it is about time there are true minutes for these meetings.

N. Barde, resident, states VCTC and RAD Strategies does a great deal of work online, but she believes this is a high touch business once people get to town. She states she is impressed that we are putting in the beacons to use with the App but there is a fairly large portion of the population that those are not going to work for. She states we should not forget that anything that has to do with hospitality or customers/clients' needs to also have touch in it. She states she believes some of that needs to be brought back into our strategies. She states it is a minor point but it is important in regards to the issues with communication. She states that VCTC owns where that message lands, which means you have to think about who the audience is and what they prefer. She states not all of the merchants are able to go onto the website to get the info so paper is going to need to be added.

R. Gallagher states there is not enough historic knowledge walking around this town. He states the docents in any town, must know what the hell they are talking about. He states there are some things that have gone on with docents and he has personally stopped and corrected docents who provide misinformation. He states there would need to be some parameters put in place to ensure the accuracy of the information being shared by docents. He states it is a great idea but it is not just dressing people up and letting them walk around, it has to be done correctly.

K. Demuth states there are multiple reasons that particular docent program ended. She states they heavily relied on the docents up here being honest with us about how much time they spent up here. She states she uses docents all the time still. She states she brings them up for groups and pays them and they come up for all of the parades and she feeds them lunch on those days. She states there are docents who come up on their own in costume and then sit at the Bucket of Blood, which is fine if they are on their own time, however, when they sign up and say they were up here for eight hours but didn't leave the Bucket of Blood, it is hard to justify giving them something in return. She states Sharon, who heads up the Living Legends program, is moving to Las Vegas this year. She states she is handing the docent program

over to two new docents whose hearts are very into the program. She states they have already met twice to try to come up with a plan to educate the docents and work things out. She states it is a project to be worked on this fall, because she does not have time available now. She states she has not announced this yet because she does not have an exact plan yet. She states that she appreciates the merchants bringing these things to our attention. She states she cannot resolve or answer all of these things now because she does not have the power or authority, but she states she will sit down with D. Dotson when he returns and review all of this.

Breck Greninger states in regards to the docents being honest, perhaps a sign in sheet in different businesses up and down town for them to sign in, could alleviate them staying in the same place all day.

R. Gallagher states it seems that everyone agrees that there needs to be a docent program, but the issue is it needs to be a more refined program. He states things can be figured out over the next few months with roundtables that will be set up when D. Dotson returns. He states by the end of the year; we will have a docent program.

C. DeGasperis thanks the merchants for all of their efforts and professionalism. He states he believes there is a common goal with everyone working together. He states that goal is to enhance Virginia City tourism and to celebrate, protect and share the Comstock's history. He states it should not be an us versus them approach since we have a common goal and everyone has a role which can be defined more clearly. He states if they find there is someone trying to undermine tourism or block Virginia City's growth, they should be removed from the equation. He states if they are just not communicating well and not planning cohesively, those are things that can be fixed right away. He states it sounds like those things are already being worked on. He states he could not agree more with the higher touch marketing approach. He states he believes media is being used effectively and we have come a long way from where we were and staff should be supported to continue with those things, but the high touch piece should be used more too. He states he is in the airport often and has not seen anything for Virginia City. He states he sees some great booths at the airport. He states there would be some costs. He states there is increased traffic in Virginia City. He states he believes that those numbers are disproportionate because he does not believe we are necessarily grabbing everyone who is traveling through the county. He states he is surprised by how many Northern Nevadans are not even familiar with the Comstock. He states we are immersed in it but we should touch it more with either a docent or more videos like the Below the Surface series. He states the Below the Surface videos are great, but you have to be in the court house to see them. He states those might do well in the airport. He states he is not necessarily proposing these things, just saying he agrees with the obstacles that are being raised and believes if there are quick fixes, those should be done, but would like to look a little broader at how the VCTC plans and incorporates some of these objectives. The objective is a more integral docent program, there could be alternative ideas like teaming with the 601. They used to hang out at the Bucket of Blood and they are broadening their organization and they could possibly govern or organize docents because it is part of their mission. He states again, these are not proposals but just supporting comments acknowledging we all have a common goal.

R. Gallagher states these are all things that can be worked out in a series of workshops over time.

Debbie Lewis, Things, Things & Things, asks if it would be possible to place a docent at the airport.

C. DeGasperis states we should consider doing a trial with some of these ideas.

R. Gallagher states these are all decisions that have to be discussed and we cannot decide them today. He states anything we come up with, there will be dollars involved and due to that, we need to define VCTC's roll and the merchant's roll. He states going forward, we will set up a series of get-togethers to discuss these things.

L. Gilman states he has been on the VCTC board for several years and he found it interesting that no one came to these meetings. He states the last meeting when everyone was present, was the first time he saw anyone from the merchant side at the meetings. He states it is a wonderful development for the merchants to be at the meeting. He states the workshops will be just that. He states the VCTC wants donations all the time because everything we do costs a lot of money. He states he believes as this develops, we will look at the wish list of things being asks, and then we will have to sit down and figure out how we afford them. He states he believes the VCTC board and staff are doing the best they can. He states if the events break even, that's good because there is not a lot of money in the bank. He states they bring a lot of people here and that gives merchants a great audience to work from. He believes everyone coming together will be very fruitful. He thinks there needs to be a special workshop where the board can hear from the merchants and then we can figure out how to fund these programs. He states everything we come up with will have a price tag attached to it and we have to decide what we can afford and what we cannot and if everyone can come in and help with the costs. He thanked all of the merchants.

Judy Cohen, Silver Stope, states she opposed the purchase of the hole in the ground on C Street next to the Mercantile.

R. Gallagher states that is the Black & Howell building.

Judy Cohen states she spoke to Hugh Gallagher and that was not purchased by the county. She states it was about \$85,000.00 to purchase and nothing is being done with it. She suggests selling that to recover that money which could be used for marketing.

R. Gallagher states there was a plan for it because it was a reasonably priced property. He states that the plan was possibly building another VCTC location that would showcase Virginia City better than the Crystal Bar. He states the Crystal Bar would then be sold to offset the cost of the Black & Howell project.

Judy Cohen states funding something that is not being used doesn't make sense when that could be converted into dollars available for use somewhere else.

Elaine Spencer, V&T Railway, provided an update on the railway and its progress through the season so far. She stated

she is the new General Manager and started in April. She states they have been filling trains and the riders will be easier to identify as she will be providing stickers for them to wear. She states she will be going around to all of the merchants to see if some kind of discount can be offered for the train riders. She states when the riders are loading at the East Gate Depot, they are telling them all about Virginia City and then when they return, they are told all about Carson City. She states she will be sending out some information regarding some of the specialty trains they have planned for the season. She states there are seven specialty trains planned between now and October. She discussed what some of the specialty trains were. She discussed the Camel Race Train and how it lent itself to cross-promoting Virginia City and the train. She states in the three months she has been at the East Gate Depot; she has discovered people love the steam trains. She discussed the Durango train and how they have their experiences set up and proposed to the merchants they work on setting that up. She states she would like to do two trains per day and get the #18 Engine back on the tracks.

L. Gilman asks where the money will come from.

Elaine Spencer states they already have the cars, and work is being done on the #18 Engine to get it running again. She states she receives money from Storey County and Carson City. She states everything is there, it's just getting together and doing it.

L. Gilman asks what the cost and the timeline is of getting the #18 finished.

N. Barde states she understands the engine is so unique that they are having to get mechanics and parts specially machined because it is such a unique train.

E. Spencer states the #18 is a priority since running two cars it is a break-even, and sometimes losing, ride for the V&T Commission.

R. Gallagher states E. Spencer should be part of the roundtable discussion as well.

Elaine Spencer states N. Barde is correct about the #18 Engine.

Jim Ward, Grandma's Fudge, states he has ridden the Durango train and the difference he sees is that when the passengers get there, all of the merchant owners are aware of when they are coming and are ready for them.

Elaine Spencer provided the train schedule and states she will update the merchants on any changes.

A. Petrini asks the merchants if business is better now than it was in the recession and generally overall.

The majority of the merchants in the room gestured they had not seen a rise in business.

A. Petrini states he has owned a business on C Street for more than 50 years and remembers when there was hardly any advertising being done at all. He states there was no money to advertise, but with the VCTC, more money is being spent than has ever been spent. He states he sees the town filled up daily and especially during celebrations and events. He states his business has gotten better over the last few years. He states more people are coming to Virginia City than ever. He states there has been an attempt to get statistics from the Highway Department. He states parking is also a problem and yet business owners continue to park in front of their stores. He states that a business owner should be using 7% to 8% of their gross income to spend on marketing and advertising. He states in Virginia City there is about a four block business district and there are very few businesses who advertise individually and everyone is just relying on the VCTC to do the marketing for them. He asks what the current VCTC budget is.

K. Demuth states it is just over \$1 million but that also includes staffing and benefits.

A. Petrini continues stating that due to TRI, Storey County is the richest county in Nevada per capita. He states more money is being spent on advertising than ever before and there are people coming here. He states everyone needs to look a little further than just stating someone is not doing their job. He states Virginia City is more "on the map" now with people coming than before. He states he would like to see the road counts. He states there is also really good signage on the highway up here. He states he believes we are in better shape now than we have ever been.

R. Gallagher states that will be the purpose at the workshops.

N. Barde states it might be the case that there are more and more people in Virginia City, but the costs are going up for the merchants too and therefore that bottom line may not have changed as dramatically as others.

R. Gallagher states there are very few store fronts in Virginia City now too compared to in the past.

N. Barde states she believes the board needs to listen to the merchants when they are saying they aren't seeing things pick up.

A. Petrini states he would like to see the road counts and use them to determine a number for measuring things.

R. Gallagher states he has the road counts every month for the last seven years.

T. Dubois states she used to receive them but stopped getting them. She states she will find out why it stopped and ask for them again.

R. Gallagher states that even when looking at the road count, it is still difficult to determine the numbers of people in and out.

K. Demuth states it is difficult to use the road count. She states for example she crosses those strips twice a day but she is not a tourist or resident here. She states there are a lot of commuters that travel through here. She states she can share those numbers but keep in mind they are only as good as the people collecting them.

R. Gallagher asked for further public comment.

Laura Mather, Historic 4th Ward School, spoke regarding a new project she and several other property managers are working on. She states herself, and the directors of the St. Mary's Catholic Church, The Silver Terrace Cemetery, Saint Mary's Art Center and Piper's Opera House, are working on a private tour that includes all of these locations and the places in them that are not generally opened to the public. She states the tour will include transportation between each location and will be catered since it is an all day tour. She states they will be marketing it to the high-roller handlers at all

of the local casinos and in Lake Tahoe. She states they are still working on the name and schedules. She states it will be done four times per year. It will be limited to no more than 20 people. She states they have also met with K. Demuth to get input from the VCTC as well. She states they are still working on transportation between locations and pricing which will depend on catering.

A. Perry states all of these properties are non-profit 501(c)3 organizations.

Debbie Lewis, Things, Things & Things, states she loves it. She states many people come into her store and ask what there is to see.

A. Perry states all properties have their own tours and this will be in addition to those.

C. DeGasperis expresses his appreciation of the tour project. He states the real history of what happened here is important. He states the Comstock Foundation spoke in their meeting about creating a tour of the mills. He states they use the Historic 4th Ward like the gold standard for them to aspire to.

L. Mather states people come into the Historic 4th Ward and always ask to see her desk. She states she is happy to show those other areas as part of the private tour package.

Breck Greninger, Kettle Corn, states the merchants are not aware of these things and asks if it would be possible to do a merchant tour for a nominal fee to cover costs.

L. Mather states the Historic 4th Ward is only open May through October, but she is there year round and can do tours if people would just call her.

C. DeGasperis states they have done tours of the Sutro Tunnels and the response has been overwhelming every time. He states they have raised thousands of dollars and people want to come back. He states he believes people will love the idea of going to the five locations.

R. Gallagher shared that VCTC tried to get a bus at one point to take merchants to different locations in town to share the history and the attraction with them, and it was not successful. He stated he could not get the merchants to come get on the bus. He states he would be glad to try again any time.

L. Mather states that the merchants have to remember that some of the organizations are run by one person who could be either full or part time and volunteers. She states they wear a lot of hats and may not always be able to reach out, but states they are all available to open the doors or gates to let people in.

A. Perry states the historical attractions could post more on the merchant Facebook page for those merchants who like Facebook.

L. Gilman states we need to establish criteria to measure success. He states that the VCTC now uses the highway count and a people count. He states if we are bringing a lot of people into town for events and that increases year after year, we track that as success. He states he would like some information from the merchants about what kind of numbers we could use and what they might be able to help assemble to track whether we are being successful or not. He states he would like some standards suggested by the merchants.

A. Perry states they have spoken to that in the merchant meetings and discussed creating a way to measure success on their side so it can be articulated to the VCTC board. She states she believes that is coming soon.

C. DeGasperis states as owners of the Gold Hill Hotel, they are concerned with the occupancy rate and room nights. He states there needs to be more events and more overnight stays. He states we need to look at how modify some of the advertising to help with that.

R. Gallagher states in the future, there will be an agenda item added so there is a designated time for the merchant group.

5. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE

Neil Horning and Jess Horning, Liquid Blue Events, provided an update on special events. N. Horning provided the final budget for Chili on the Comstock. He states the event made a profit of \$15,396.01. He states the event has gone very well every year with input taken from the community.

J. Horning states this event is one of the very few that actually make money.

N. Horning provided an update for Taste of the Comstock. He states it was a great event but was very windy that day. He states there are some large expenses attached to this event.

J. Horning states when this event began, it did make a little money. He states it was more than just bringing people the taste of the food in town, but also a taste of the lifestyle.

N. Horning provided an update on how the Cowgirl Crawl went. He states the attendance was much lower than they anticipated, however, this is the first year for that event so they did not know what to expect for sure. He states they did have a lot of people calling to see if they could participate, they just did not have the walk up traffic they planned on.

J. Horning stated this event has many legs and the crawl itself is not necessarily the main focus of the event. He stated they were creating an experience with people line dancing in the street and also used it as an opportunity to market the Rodeo and just having a good time. He stated this event will take some time to build but he believes it will grow in the future.

N. Horning states the biggest expense was the entertainment group. He states this will be the same group they work with for the rodeo and the camel races.

N. Horning provided an update on the rodeo. He states they are placing marketing at a soccer tournament in Reno where people are coming from all over, including Mexico to play in and it is the demographic they are hoping to target.

N. Barde states one thing mentioned at the last merchant meeting was that there is more of a Hispanic presence in town lately. She asks the merchants if that has been a recent development because that could be counted as an indicator of success.

Breck Greninger, Kettle Corn, states she has been doing the kettle corn for about five years and the Hispanic population has always been some of her best customers. She does not believe there has been much change recently.

Jason Teague, Comstock Bandido, states he has always seen a large Hispanic population in his business.

J. Horning states every event tries to capture a different audience base. He states in the last few years, they have noticed a higher Hispanic population in attendance and decided to try to shift their focus more to that demographic since there are no other events up here for that demographic.

A. Perry states she loves the idea of targeting the Hispanic population and asks if the marketing is being done in Spanish for them.

N. Horning states it is.

Shannon Moore, RAD Strategies Inc., states they just secured a contract with the Spanish radio stations and there is a Reno representative that is going out and speaking to the Spanish market.

N. Horning provided an update on Camel Races. He states the schedule is almost set. He states they are working on moving people to C Street and how that will work. He states it is a work in progress. He states ticket sales are looking really well.

J. Horning states there have been changes every year to the Camel Races. He states when they took it over it was losing about \$20,000.00 per year and it is now turning a profit that can be reinvested into the event. He states they are trying to bring the hype up for the event and keep up the energy during the show. He stated they have also involved the school district so this event is beneficial for them as well.

Jim Ward, Grandma's Fudge, asked if there was any plan on how to make it easier for people to get back up to C Street after the event.

J. Horning states they are working on a plan to take traffic one way coming out and hopefully landing them back on C Street as they leave.

S. Moore states all of these changes were in the e-blast sent out earlier in the week and requests that anyone who did not get it fill out the sign-up sheet to be added to the list.

J. Horning states they have in the past offered things like coins to bring kids back up from a sample of fudge or some other item. He states those are ideas they are completely open too if businesses want to work with them to get people to come back up to C Street when the event is over.

A. Perry states she is aware the trolley business is for sale, but asks if anyone has discussed some type of a step on step off idea to move people back up to C Street.

R. Gallagher states it has been discussed and it has been attempted, but the problem is, we are dealing with a state highway and if you do anything other than tips, there are licenses required.

A. Perry states with the parking that is now available down at the fairground, it seems if we could do that, it would alleviate some of the negative effects on C Street because we can get them up and down from C Street.

J. Horning states a lot of people still park uptown and they will be moving people with the school buses. He states they are also speaking with Carl at the Trolley too.

N. Horning states people will be moving through town so do whatever you can to get them into your stores. He states they will fully support that. He states they will also be sending out a schedule of events for the weekend so people know what times the shows get out and what the plan is so merchants can be prepared.

S. Moore states when she was in town for 4th of July, she noticed many merchants were doing specials. She states if they let her know, she can take pictures and help share them as well.

6. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATE

Shannon Moore, RAD Strategies, provided an update on the marketing. She states the main focus is getting Virginia City attention. She states they have been passing around posters for the Rodeo. She states they have been focusing the Rodeo efforts in the Reno area because there is a large Hispanic demographic there. She states statistics are showing there are a lot of people in the Hispanic community who are interested in being here. She provided an update on the Hot August Nights marketing that has been happening. She shared a picture that will be featured in the Hot August Nights publications.

L. Gilman states that with the focus on the Hispanic community, it may be a good idea for many of the merchants and business owners to have someone on site who speaks Spanish and can translate because it will likely increase their sales.

S. Moore states her and K. Demuth attended a China Ready seminar recently regarding the China tours and they talked about different ways to capitalize on that like getting interpreters up here. She continued with her update by sharing a post that she put on the merchant Facebook page which included positive reviews of many of the merchants and businesses in town. She states she will continue to monitor that and share it with everyone. She provided new statistics

for the VCTC website and mobile app. She states the numbers are up now over last year. She states they have heard the request to have it in different languages, but that costs a significant amount of money. She states they are working on the mobile app still and the walking tour. She presented the different media outreach that has been done in the last few weeks regarding VCTC and Piper's.

A. Perry states she is aware that Saint Mary's Art Center is on the haunted tour, but before these locations are marketed that way, there should be a conversation about it as she states she tries very hard to counter the "haunted" side of the marketing for Saint Mary's Art Center.

S. Moore continued with the media outlets that have been in and around Virginia City for different events. She shared some of the information that was brought out for the Cowgirl Saloon Crawl. She states there was great attention for the event and they were able to get some great photos to use in next year's marketing.

She spoke about the social media outlets. She states she has started doing Facebook live videos as they are getting more attention than stagnant sentences. She states the haunted attractions post received 21,000 views. She provided an update on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and the growth they have seen in the last several weeks. She spoke about an Instagram post requesting donations for 4th of July and it was somewhat success. VCTC did receive some donations from the post. She provided an update on the demographics that are currently following and interacting on our social media pages and stated the marketing is targeting them.

N. Barde states that these are people who are self-selecting into using socials. She asks if there is a large population who are not part of Instagram or social media. She asks how RAD is reaching people who are not on social media. She states she sees they are passing out posters and using radio. She states she is excited about the idea of marketing in the airport. She states the reports are not including what other marketing that is being done.

S. Moore states she can add that to her next presentation. She shared more about marketing that has been shared on social media.

R. Gallagher states because of the Chinese potential, they are looking at doing some of the exhibits in the Slammer Museum in Mandarin because of the Chinese influence that was in this area. He stated if they can get people into there first, they will have a better understanding of what Virginia City has to offer.

S. Moore states they are reaching out to the media with Cemetery Gin. She states online followers are up.

S. Moore states the followers for Piper's Opera House are also up. She states Piper's was on a special for Artown and they are still working on growing the email database for Piper's.

Jason Teague, Comstock Bandito, stated the marketing is great and it much needed, but he agrees with N. Barde in that there needs to be more explanation of what other marketing is being done. He states many of the people who come into his shop are usually more than 50 and have more money to spend so they tend to buy higher priced items. He states he would like more of the numbers on how RAD Strategies is reaching those groups. He states it is great to bring a lot of people to town, but he would like the focus on the people who spend money when they come to town.

S. Moore states she is fairly new with RAD Strategies and is very open to new ideas and new ways to do these things. She states she is going to try to meet with individual businesses more.

N. Barde states she suggests a strategy on how to reach people 55 and over.

K. Demuth states people who are in the age range of 55 and older are the largest user group on Facebook right now. She states doing advertising on Facebook is the best way to reach that age group.

Jason states he just saw the statistics that were being shared earlier.

S. Moore states that is true of Facebook statistics and Instagram has more of an international market which is why we get the international play on Instagram. She states she is just getting started. She stated she can definitely do more but it is going to take a little bit of time.

A. Perry states she enjoys what she is seeing on Piper's but she would also like to see more on the other non-profits in town. She states the other non-profits in town add to the culture and the history here as well.

S. Moore states she agrees and if everyone gives her a few months, she is just getting started.

7. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATE

K. Demuth provided an update on the current financials for the VCTC. She presented the Tourism Tax first stating it is up tremendously. She stated December's sales tax is up significantly and VCTC is up over last year as a whole. She also stated that the VCTC budget does not go back into the general fund of the county. She states VCTC money belongs to VCTC and that ending fund balance does not go back to the county, it stays with us.

N. Barde asks if the county is doing accrual or cash. She states she was told by Hugh that we do cash not accrual accounting.

C. DeGasperis states the numbers are very volatile. He states eight of the months are up and four are down, but five of the months are way up. He states we are up fifty percent over all.

N. Barde asks if it is cash or accrual.

R. Gallagher states we are on the county's accounting basis.

T. Dubois explained the wording was changed on this report because it was creating a lot of questions from people. She stated now looking at it from that view, she understands how it is somewhat misleading and states she will change it to make it more clear in the future.

R. Gallagher states there is a difference between private sector accounting and government accounting and therefore it can be confusing to try to understand.

C. DeGasperis states from year to year to go from \$267,000 to \$400,000; it is a \$133,000 increase which is about 50% increase, whether it is cash or accrual, that is fantastic. He states he would like to know whether it is cash or accrual. He states this is a metric right here, and it's up. He states even though everything is up, we should not get complacent. He states we had the highest month ever for transient lodging tax in June.

R. Gallagher pointed out that is because the new market is opened.

C. DeGasperis acknowledged that was correct and states that even with that, we are still at 30% occupancy and we were at 12% and 14% occupancy before. He states the trains, the overnights and other things are bringing people, but there is still work to do.

N. Barde asks about the occupancy rate and how it is calculated.

K. Demuth states they report how many nights they were opened and how many rooms were available each night.

T. Dubois stated they report how many room nights were available during the reporting period and how many room nights were sold during the reporting period and the percentage is based on that.

N. Barde states that 30% occupancy is going out of business.

A. Perry states there are also organizations like Saint Mary's Art Center that are calculated as a part of this, yet Saint Mary's does not operate on a seven day per week operation.

N. Barde states something in these numbers does not seem right.

Jason Teague states some of the hotels and motels are closed during the week and only opened on the weekends so their percentage during the week is going to be zero percent.

T. Dubois states that would not distort the numbers because the occupancy rate percentage is only based on the number of room nights available and the room nights are not available when they are closed.

R. Gallagher states what it amounts to is that no matter how it is calculated, the occupancy rate is not what we would like it to be. The issue is how do we fix it. He states the argument always comes back to the hotels not staying opened because there are not places opened at night and the merchant saying they won't open at night because there is no one staying in the hotels to open for. The rhetoric has always been the same, but nothing is ever done to fix it. He states regardless of how it is calculated; we are simply not getting enough people staying here over night.

A. Petrini states that is because we are not a destination. People who come here are already settled at the lake, Carson City or Reno. He states for years this has been the situation and it is difficult to overcome.

R. Gallagher states that is correct, we are a day trip not a destination.

C. DeGasperis states the hotel owners and restaurant owners here have a bigger challenge. He suggests a sub-group of merchants can get together and work on how to improve that.

A. Petrini states they have been trying to work on that for years.

C. DeGasperis states the occupancy rates don't need to be inflated. He states they should be reported as the number of rooms available at capacity because if businesses are closed during the week, it is probably not because they want to be. He states it should be capacity and then that can be used as opportunity otherwise those businesses won't succeed and they just go out. He states he does not believe we are saying we want to be a destination; we are not a resort. However, we do have bed and breakfasts and country inns and that is an engine that underlines commerce for us. He states he is down in Gold Hill so he doesn't see the C Street traffic and therefore has to work harder.

N. Barde states she worked with hotel/motel owners a few years ago on how to get people to stay more. She states the work done then is still valid today. She states the issue was what is there to do here after 6:00 p.m. for people and families. Sally Duffy, Storey County resident, states she has lived in Virginia City for four years and she agrees that there is not enough to do here for families and children. She states she would like everything to be more family friendly and no more bar crawls added. She states movies in the park or other events with the swimming pool or the park would be great. She states she would like to see more where children can be involved.

N. Barde states she would like to see more of those things mid-week as well, not just on the weekends. She also stated if she could be given time on the agenda, she would like to give the board the research and information she gathered when working with the hotels a few years ago.

R. Gallagher asked T. Dubois to make a note that N. Barde will need an agenda item at the next meeting. He also asks what is the community doing to create things that the local kids do that could spill over to the community too.

Sally Duffy, resident, states she would like to volunteer her time for that.

R. Gallagher states that is where the roles of all parties need to be clarified before we can do that. He states he is all for it, but it needs to be clarified.

A. Petrini states the school imports 70% of the students from outlying areas.

S. Moore states they have been trying to push for two day events to get people to stay overnight. She states the rodeo is a good example of that. They have it set up so if your child is in mutton bustin on Saturday and they qualify for Sunday, they will be here for the rodeo both days and they are trying to get people to just stay in town that night.

C. DeGasperis states in listening to E. Spencer speak about the train, perhaps we could do a package deal with the Gold Hill or even the Silverland and they ride the train up and then stay and go back the next day. He states that is between the businesses though.

8. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: GROUPS, FAMS, TRADE SHOWS AND VISITOR CENTER UPDATE.

K. Demuth provided an update on the 4th of July Celebration. She states the event went very well but she believes that the attendance was down from past years. She believes that was because it was on a Wednesday. She states she was in town until about 5:00 p.m. She states families are the audience but on a Wednesday night when people have to work the next day, it is hard to get people up here. She shared some of the photos that were gathered from different social platforms and photographers in town for the celebration. She states the event itself went pretty smoothly and traffic was controlled well. She states it was pretty windy but the fire department found a window when it stopped and then it kicked back up again about ten minutes after the show ended. She states the event itself lost about \$7,000.00.

A. Perry asks with fireworks not starting until around 9:00 p.m., how many merchants stay open for people to shop. Several people in the room state they saw stores opened until around 9:00 p.m.

R. Gallagher states he had family in Virginia City over the weekend and they told him that it was busy in town, but they were closing at 4:45 p.m.

A. Petrini states that is proprietorship and if there are people on the sidewalk, you should stay opened. He states he does not believe there is another town in Nevada like Virginia City. He states it is a four block business district and all you have to do is open your door. He states there is little if any individual advertising being done because most of the advertising is being done by the VCTC.

C. DeGasperis states he supports the honesty on the P&L's but he states he likes when a big event is not automatically on a Saturday. He states we should be filling the weekends anyway. He states if it is incremental, but there is a cost it is worth it. He states the VCTC also worked with the 601 and he was asked to provide a photo to the VCTC in appreciation of the work they have done together. He provided K. Demuth with the photo from the 601 organization.

A. Petrini asked if that is the same sign that is on the side of the road.

C. DeGasperis states yes, but the ones for the 4th of July were only temporary.

K. Demuth states she will have the final budget next month after everything is collected.

K. Demuth continued updating events and groups. She states the Comstock Classics Car show is coming up. She states it is a Saturday only and it is all done at the park. She states it is worth going down and walking around. She states the event is very small town, parking your car on the grass and barbequing in the park. She continued with the Hot August Nights event. The street will be closed from Flowery to Sutton. She states there will be a cruise both nights and there is also a walking poker run in town. She also explained the receipt raffle that is done by the visitor's center for money spent in town. She states for every \$5 spent, they get one raffle ticket. The prize is for a dining and lodging certificate in Virginia City that includes a few attractions too. She states last year they collected around \$5,000 worth of receipts.

N. Barde asks the merchants if any of them were aware of the raffle.

Many merchants said they knew in the past it had been done, but were unaware of it this year.

K. Demuth stated she personally went around last year, but that has not happened this year.

L. Gilman states with the merchant association idea, that may be a vehicle to use to communicate these things as well.

K. Demuth states she understands not everyone likes emails for information. She states with more merchants coming to meetings, you'll know more, but with regular merchant meetings we can disseminate information there too.

N. Barde states there is also a new Facebook page created for the coalition and information can be posted there. She states as that starts getting up and going, VCTC can be posting stuff on there as well. She states it could be quick posts explaining event updates.

A. Perry cautions with posting on another page. She states the coalition page seems to be more for the internal conversation of the merchants. For updates, they should be paying attention to the VC Merchant pages. She states not everyone has time to update and pay attention to two Facebook pages. She states the VC Merchant page is the one the time should be spent on. She also stated for the next agenda, this group needs to pick a formal name.

R. Gallagher states that is correct, they need to have a title so we can call them something.

K. Demuth continued with her update on groups. She states we have had almost 2,000 visitors involved with groups. She stated she does not know about all of the groups that come to town so this does not include what she doesn't know. She states there were just over 3,100 people last year. She states July, August and September group numbers go up. She states she is working on reaching out to tour groups who are regularly bringing people here but not letting us know. She states she would like to work with the merchants about offering more to the group when they come up.

Next she provided information on the grants that were awarded by Travel Nevada for the new fiscal year. She states she was awarded four grants. She received some funding if not all from each one she applied for. She states VCTC will receive \$10,000.00 toward PR marketing campaigns, for digital campaigns she received \$7,000.00; she received \$6,000.00 toward the Rodeo which will mostly be going into the Spanish speaking campaigns; and \$6,000.00 for print advertising. She states Piper's received funding for three of the four grant applied for. Piper's received \$2000.00 for the Nightmare Before Christmas production; \$1,500.00 for print media advertising; and \$4,000.00 for Digital and PR marketing. She stated the one they did not receive was for a bridal show. She stated she has received all of her current grant reimbursements.

Next she spoke about TripAdvisor reviews regarding Virginia City. She shared the ratings for TripAdvisor and some of the information that can be found on there. She states she did not find any negative reviews recently. She suggested that all of the business owners jump on and take a look at the reviews people are leaving for their businesses.

9. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE UPDATE

Whitney Brunson provided an update on Piper's Opera House. She stated the following two weekends will have the Midsummer Night's Dream plays. She states it is a community theater production with children and adult volunteer actors. She states there is a band coming up for the Hot August Nights kickoff weekend. She states there will be auditions soon for the Nightmare Before Christmas production. She states there is a concert for Athena McIntyre scheduled in August. She stated she has KNPB doing their presentation scheduled in late August and tickets are still available. She stated tours are doing well. She stated she is trying an open house type of tour rather than scheduled narrated tours and it seems to be going well. She stated she has already started booking into 2019. She stated there are three weddings coming up soon. She provided a list of sponsorships for the Midsummer Night's Dream.

10. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: NEXT MEETING DATE(S) & AGENDA ITEMS

T. Dubois stated the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 9, 2018 at 9:00 a.m.

11. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: ADJOURNMENT OF COMMISSION BOARD MEETING

R. Gallagher adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.