

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

August 9, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

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
Vice Chair: Corrado DeGasperis
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens
Board Members: Angelo Petrini
Lance Gilman - Absent
Arika Perry

Tiffany noted there was a quorum present.

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

Public Attendance: 12 members of the public were in attendance.

2. CHAIRMAN DOTSON 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.

A. Perry made the motion to approve the agenda.

Second – A. Petrini

Approved – Unanimously

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

A. July 12, 2018

R. Gallagher stated after reading the minutes, he wanted to clarify that at the last meeting when he spoke about the storefronts in Virginia City, he meant that there are fewer vacant store fronts now than in recent years.

D. Dotson states acknowledged the issues with the PA system in town and states he is working on a solution. He asked for a typographical error in the minutes to be corrected. He also stated he likes the idea of having a docent at the airport and thinks that is something that can be approved upon. He also stated there is a coalition for some of the non-profits and he explained when he was traveling, he came across some other organizations who are doing similar things.

A. Petrini made the motion to approve the amended minutes from the July 12, 2018 meeting.

Second – C. DeGasperi

Approved – Unanimously

4. CHAIRMAN DOTSON 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.

Steven Saylor, Comstock Historical and Cultural Foundation, stated the Donovan Mill renovation is moving along well. He states it is not opened to the public, however, he can do the private tours for people who are interested if they call him to schedule it. He provided information on how to become a member of the Comstock Historical and Cultural Foundation. He states the foundation is continuing the lecture series on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Gold Hill Hotel. He states they have been selling out. He provided some information about the speaker that evening. He spoke about the next lecture which will be regarding camels in the 1860's in Virginia City. He invited everyone to visit the foundation's website to book tickets for the lecture and see other things regarding the foundation.

A. Sober stated Hot August Nights was a successful event and the people who attended respected town

5. CHAIRMAN DOTSON BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MERCHANT UPDATE

Jim Ward, Grandma's Fudge, spoke on behalf of the Storey County Community Coalition. He addressed the docent program in Virginia City. He stated as merchants, they feel they can run the docent program without the involvement of VCTC but rather some cooperation. He states the airport idea sounds great and they may need some help coordinating that if they choose to do it. He explained they are discussing some kind of training for the docents so the information they provide is accurate and historical and not made up. He stated the coalition would like to take the lead on the program so it does not add to the VCTC word load.

A. Sober added they are going by the Storey County Community Coalition at the moment. She states they will be meeting to decide whether they want to become a more formal group or stay as a loose knit coalition. She will provide an update to that at the next meeting. She states they are all working well together and feels they owe a lot of gratitude to A. Perry who has been attending the meetings and donating her personal time to work with the coalition and provide feedback for their concerns. She also thanked the commission for their time and hearing the coalitions concerns and addressing them as they can. She explained at the last meeting, some of the coalition members spoke regarding issues that are concerning to them. She stated the ball is in the VCTC's court and she would like to know if they have anything for the coalition today regarding those concerns.

Lee (last name inaudible) with the Virginia Hill Mercantile suggested partnering with the 601 Vigilance Committee for the docent program. He states the majority of them have appropriate dress and are knowledgeable about Virginia City and the history.

R. Gallagher spoke about the "did you know" information that is in different facilities around town. He states they have fun history that doesn't require extensive knowledge. He states cheat cards can be used by the docents and work them into their costumes.

Jim Ward states it would be very helpful if the VCTC would be willing to share any information they have in regards to training the docents before the next coalition meeting. He also added that the last VCTC meeting was the best one he has been too and feels the spirit of working together and cooperation.

A. Sober states there is a petition circulating through town to have D. Dotson removed as the Director of VCTC and she would like it to be clear that the petition is not in any way associated with the coalition. She states it is from some individuals in town who have taken it upon themselves to create it and collect signatures.

A. Petrini asked if there was a copy of the petition available.

A. Sober provided a copy of the petition to the commission. She states it was created by Drew at Reflections and they have been collecting signatures from merchants, residents and visitors. She states the coalition has made a formal announcement in the newspaper, as well as, in their meetings letting everyone know they are not associated with that petition as a coalition. She explained there may be some people who are in support of it who are also involved in the coalition, but their support is their individual right and now the view of the coalition.

N. Barde read the petition to the meeting which included four main points: 1. Prohibiting outside vendors for events and only allow Virginia City merchants to sell goods at events; 2. Allow merchants to choose by majority vote which events are brought to Virginia City; 3. Require special event participants to be spaced out on C Street to go the length of the whole street; 4. Remove the VCTC Director from office. She states it is interesting to note that the first three items are all part of what the coalition has discussed with concerns and solutions. She states that the fourth issue is not something that the coalition is interested in taking on. She states that the downside is they have been trying to get visitors to sign this as well and it is now being spread through email. She explained she has tried to get a handle on it and get it to stop.

R. Gallagher states the Commission is dealing with the coalition.

Breck Greninger, Virginia City Kettle Corn, states she signed that petition when she was approached about a week ago. She explained she was busy with customers and did not see the portion regarding D. Dotson. She states that signing it was a mistake.

A. Sober states many people in the community have come to her with the same complaint. She explained many people were approached on 4th of July when merchants were extremely busy. She states she feels that the majority of the signatures are not necessarily valid.

R. Gallagher thanked them for clarifying that and states they will move forward with working with the coalition.

D. Dotson states he would like to circle back with the docent program to explain many things that the merchants are probably unaware of. He states he works with the RSCVA and Travel Nevada on international travels. He states that they have someone meet the special international flights at the airport or somewhere else to be greeted and then escorted. He states the biggest problem with the docent program was that as volunteers for the county, the docents had to go to the county and become an official Storey County volunteer, which means they cannot carry a firearm or have a beer or anything outside of Storey County HR policy. He suggests they work together to keep or bring back some of the fun parts of the docent program and find a way to work together. He states they tried to work with the 601 group on the cowgirl crawl, but the timing didn't work out. He states he'd like to circle back with the coalition and work out some plans for the docent program.

Jim Ward, Grandma's Fudge, states they are working on more of a localized program for C Street. He states they do not have the funds to be sending people to the airport. He explained they are looking at the program as more of an attraction for C Street while people are here in town. He states they are working on providing food or snacks for them and helping the docents with their period attire rather than paying them.

R. Gallagher states he would be happy to provide information for the docents and explains it is readily available, it is just a matter of getting together to share it.

D. Dotson states there are two parts to this. He explained that the VCTC program and the merchant program need to dovetail to make sure the branding stays consistent. He states they need to make sure the docents are sharing honest information not fibs. He states that once people come here and they enjoy it, they become Virginia City ambassadors.

A. Perry states on the next agenda, she would like to see the coalition's proper name.

A. Sober states they are currently going by Storey County Community Coalition for a few reasons. She explained the coalition is open to the county, not just C Street and there are no tax implications by being a coalition. She states the coalition is open to any business owners in the county or county residents.

A. Perry asks if that time can also be shared with people who are not part of the coalition to speak or is it only reserved for the coalition members specifically. She also asked D. Dotson to explain what RSCVA is for those who do not know.

D. Dotson explained it stands for the Reno Sparks Convention and Visitor Authority.

Jim Ward asked for an explanation of what the 601 Vigilance Committee is.

C. DeGasperis provided an explanation. He explained the group is a non-profit organization that historically, dealt with corruption of the law by handling matters of justice themselves. He states it is rumored that 601 stands for six feet deep, zero tolerance and one rope. He states that the organization also took part in things like supporting Piper's and other community programs. He explained that a lot of the donations the organization makes are to things that support the history. He states they are very into the history and are docents to a degree. He states he knows the quality control of the other program is a different thing, but he believes the idea of putting these natural participants into the program is brilliant.

R. Gallagher states he had the opportunity to speak with the gentleman who organizes the gunfight show in town and his manager and they are interested in organizing some type of walking tour. He explained she stated she wanted to do it correctly and make sure the information was correct. He asked if anyone had spoken to her since she was moving in that direction.

Jim Ward explained they have not spoken to her, but they do want to involve the gunfighters in this program, they just haven't gotten to that stage yet. He states he would like to get involved with the trolley as well. He asks if the 601 Vigilance Committee has a spokesperson who he can reach out to.

C. DeGasperis states there is a spokesperson and he can get them connected through email. He states when Fred Dutton moved to Texas, there was a change in leadership within the 601 organization and they are wanting to be much

more engaged in the community.

D. Demuth states the docents used to be managed by a lady who is moving. She explained the program management is being handed over to a couple who live down the hill, and one of them happens to also be a 601. She states they may be a better place to start. She states she has been working with them and explained their goal for the docents is to move away from being a social club and focus more on being a group that educates people about the history here. She believes it would be a good idea to bring them into this conversation about the program since they have the complete list of docents and all of their contact information.

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

- A. *Tourism Tax Report*
- B. *Transient Lodging Tax Report*

D. Dotson shared the fiscal year-end report for Tourism Tax. He states VCTC finished the year at about \$400,000 which is \$91,000 over last year. He states the budget was about \$385,000 so VCTC finished the year about \$85,000 over budget. Overall, he believes it was a good year for sales tax. Next he presented the Transient Lodging Tax for the fiscal year. He stated it was at about \$180,000 for the year which is about \$21,000 over last year. He stated the budget was projected with the idea that we would receive around \$50,000 from Suite 6, but they only produced about half of that. He states going into the next year, he budgeted \$100,000 for Suite 6, and he believes they will reach that mark.

N. Barde states that last year there are 1,752 rooms in June of the prior year and 3,541 rooms in June this year which is about double, but she does not believe the corresponding percentage is correct.

D. Dotson states the information that is entered into there is the information provided to us by the hotels. He explained they tell us how many rooms they had available each night and how many were occupied each night. He states those numbers are then entered into the formula to create the percentage.

N. Barde states that percentage should be higher.

C. DeGasperis states that if you added a hotel and the hotel was sold out, you would expect to see a jump in that percentage. He states it is going in the right direction but it seems low.

N. Barde states the room tax has always been confusing because of the way it is calculated.

D. Dotson states there were a few properties that changed hands last year and have been going through remodeling too and that accounts for some of the odd numbers.

N. Barde asks if he is saying the two numbers are not connected.

D. Dotson states that is only what is reported, it is not an apples to apples comparison.

N. Barde states she is trying to find the correlation and it is not there.

C. DeGasperis asks if it would be worthwhile to show rooms rented versus rooms available somewhere. He states if you back into the 32% reported, that would mean there are about 9,000 rooms available each month. He asks D. Dotson if that is about accurate.

D. Dotson states that is about accurate. He then provided an update on previous budget information for VCTC. He states that on June 30, 2010 audited balance sheet for the VCCTA had an ending fund balance of about \$611,000. He states today we have an ending fund balance of about half of that, but that also includes the purchases of the Black and Howell and the Gin Herse. He states the expenses for the VCCTA was about \$497,000 and their revenue was about \$331,000. He states the current revenue and expenses are at about \$1.4 million. He states that is not all special events. He states there is a lot of information available about how the VCTC has done over the last eight years. He states the volume and the business has increased. He states he would like anyone who is interested in knowing how VCTC is doing to come and talk with him.

R. Gallagher states in the next few months, when the dust settles, he would like to have a meeting to work on these things and answer any of the questions that everyone has.

A. Sober states she thinks the coalition would like to discuss having an annual or bi-annual meeting to go through the budget item by item so that we can all understand it and then no one is running on assumptions anymore.

R. Gallagher states that sound like a single meeting and him and D. Dotson have been down this road many times and it is a very elaborate program where they go through each item and meet with vendors on each item that pertains to them. He states he understands what A. Sober is saying but believes it would be best to do an overall meeting because one single meeting where each item is discussed may not work well.

D. Dotson all of the final numbers are presented in March at the meeting and then it is approved in May. He states he tries to get an updated balance sheet quarterly, but audited numbers are difficult to get. He stated he is happy to go over any piece individually with anyone.

C. DeGasperis broke down the math with the room tax, stating if you take the difference between rooms rented in May and June, there are 9,057 rooms available. The following month shows 11,000 rooms available. He states if you divide that by the thirty days, that leaves you with 65 rooms per hotel. He explains if all the rooms were sold out, there would have 38% occupancy. He states the needle does move but not as dramatically as one would think.

T. Dubois addressed N. Barde stating she could sit down with her and explain how the percentages are calculated and how reporting comes together. She stated the percentages and numbers reported here are the same numbers that are required by the Nevada Department of Taxation. She also reminded everyone the numbers input into the formulas are

the numbers provided by the hotel owners and that is all of the information VCTC receives from them.

D. Dotson stated that has been a discussion with the Comptroller as well, and they have considered auditing the hotels to ensure their reporting is correct.

N. Barde asked what they would be audited on.

D. Dotson states according to NRS, they are able to audit their reporting. He states the Comptroller and himself have discussed auditing properties several times to make sure the information the county is reporting to the state is correct.

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

Ronele Dotson provided an update on the new VCTC website. She states the new website began transitioning over to the new site on Monday night. The site is responsive on all devices. She states there were some issues with using different browsers to view the site, but most of those have been worked out now. She explained that websites used to be like looking at a digital copy of a brochure, but that this website has evolved from that. She states it is a living breathing thing and asks for feedback from people if they notice things missing or that are incorrect. She states they have done their best to add every business in there, but they still have a few more to add. She went through the main pages of the website and explained the features on each page. She provided instruction on how to access events and other information on the website. She provided a walkthrough of the website showing how different types of merchants were highlighted in areas and the history in other areas. She explained the mobile app and what it is capable of doing. She explained the events are able to be saved to anyone's calendar or social medias.

A. Sober asked to be shown how to add one of their events to the website.

R. Dotson stated she would not be able to add it herself, she would need to send it to VCTC and they would add it to the website.

A. Sober asked what that event would look like on the VCTC website. She stated that when it comes to events, she has a specific look, feel and voice for the events she hosts at the restaurant and she would like to make sure it stays consistent with her brand. She explained she understands that is not always possible but was curious to see what it looked like.

R. Dotson states all of the events will follow the same format and include an image and text.

Johyne Saylor, Comstock Foundation for History and Culture, asks if their events could also be placed on the website.

R. Dotson stated she believes all events are able to be put on the website.

D. Dotson states there will be some criteria to which events go on the website. He states all of the big local events will be on there, however, if it is something like a local fundraiser, it can be added to the calendar, but probably won't be a big highlight event.

R. Dotson continued with the tutorial of the website. She showed everyone where to find all of the forms and applications for parades and events, as well as, board packet information and minutes.

A. Sober asked what the merchant's program section on the website is.

R. Dotson states that is for things like when K. Demuth puts together the Christmas light competition and things of that nature. She states she also updated it with current information needed by the community and the merchants for Hot August Nights, and explained they are planning to use that for communicating with people.

D. Dotson states the old meeting minutes and board packet information is not available on the site, it is now available by public records request and VCTC will get it for you.

A. Perry asked if the event notice on the calendar will contain the image that is sent or if it is something different.

R. Dotson provided an example of what an event announcement would look like if it contained text versus just a photo. She stated she prefers to have a photo.

Shannon Moore, RAD Strategies, provided an update on the marketing done in July.

Tim Fackler states he is originally from Texas and has been coming here since the 1980's and moved here in 1993. He explained when he used to fly in, there were large three to five foot advertisements and billboards on the way through Reno and up to Virginia City, but he does not see them anymore. He asks that that is evaluated and considered as part of the advertising plan. He explains he believes the marketing needs to include specifically targeting an older crowd who do not necessarily participate in social media and online marketing.

Judy Cohen, Silver Stope, states she agrees that they should be focusing on the older crowd for marketing because they come to Virginia City and have more disposable income and spend more money when they are here.

A. Sober states on behalf of the coalition, the online presence is strong and beautiful but there is a lot of talk in the valley and there should be more focus on that. She explained her and R. Oates had a radio station come up and do a live show here as well as thirty second spots three times per day for the next four months. She states it was not very expensive and they paid for it. She states as the community and as a whole, everyone could pitch in to help pay for those things and get more attention.

A. Petrini states over the course of twenty years that marketing has been done. He states billboards were used as well as taxi cab signs on top of cars in Reno. He explained they have moved into this new type of marketing, but the billboards and visual advertising has been done in the past.

T. Fackler states that is great and perhaps some of those things should be looked at again and brought back on a smaller basis.

R. Gallagher states the reduction in billboards wasn't done lightly in the last few years and it was not done unilaterally with

marketing groups throughout the areas. He states the impact of those signs has been reduced because people are going faster and not seeing them and other things. He states they moved away from some of those signs because there were other ideas where we got more bang for our buck.

A. Sober states another idea is to start making something that is more of a personal interaction. She states it is time to start sharing our story again.

D. Dotson states VCTC is doing all of that. He states they have been doing it and are still doing it now. He states they have billboards; they have stuff in all of the hotel rooms. He states people don't know what they are doing but they aren't here. He states they have a digital board up for the rodeo and other special events. He states they have done them for rodeo and for camels. He states there is also a billboard in Mound House and another here in town. He spoke about a video that was put together by RSCVA which ran at the baggage claim in the airport for almost three years. He states that may have ended since they have remodeled. He explained all of the marketing is all wrapped up in the bigger marketing number in the budget and he states he would be happy to circle back and go through all of that with anyone who is interested in looking into it. He states he just wrote a check to Hot August Nights for \$30,000 and asks who everyone thinks their target market is. He explains that special events include a look at demographics as well and explains each event also has its own marketing plan and budget.

Shannon Moore, RAD Strategies, states the goal is to always get the client the best return on their investment and create buzz for them. She provided a snip of the billboard at the Greater Nevada Field. She provided updates on all other rodeo advertising and marketing.

A. Perry states the snip provided of the banner ad is actually from her Pinterest that came up on her account at 2:00 a.m. and she stated she was quite surprised when it did, but was pleased to see it there.

S. Moore states they are aware of where they are placing their ads to get the best return on them. She provided pictures of the charro contest associated with the rodeo event. She explained a lot of the other marketing that has happened with the rodeo and provided where the focus has been on reaching their target demographic. She provided statistics for the website and the new website. She explained gaining new users is a very important and showed that the new user group is increasing.

A. Sober states there has been an international food critic who have been sneaking through Virginia City. She states she believes the reviews those critics have left are very important and should be included on the VCTC website.

S. Moore agreed with A. Sober and asked her to send her that type of information when she has it. She continued with her update by sharing an eblast that went out for camels. She also spoke about the public relations work they have done over the last month. She shared that we were shared in the 4th of July article. She stated the international FAM tour reviews are great but they do take a while to get the return. She spoke about a French FAM group who came to town and spent time with the Hat Maker and had a great time. She states they try to pass along the information any time they have a FAM group, but they do not always know they are coming until after they are here. She stated all social media avenues are up and the content is doing really well. She provided an update on Cemetery Gin. She stated it was a sponsor for Hot August Nights and it has received a lot of attention. She provided an update on Piper's Opera House and the marketing for Mid-Summer Nights Dream. She states it has been placed on the mobile website, desktop site and Facebook as a sharable event. She states she has been updating the website to make sure everyone knows about the tours.

T. Fackler asks who owns the liquor license to sell gin through the VCTC and asks who pays the liquor taxes.

D. Dotson states the VCTC owns the liquor license.

T. Fackler asks what the expense is for that license.

T. Dubois states she would have to look and confirm, but believes it is less than \$500 per year.

T. Fackler asks where the profit for the gin goes.

D. Dotson states it all goes back to tourism.

8. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: HOTEL PRESENTATION BY NICOLE BARDE

Nicole Barde presented the information she gathered in 2014 when working with hotel and motel owners in Virginia City to come up with ways to boost occupancy rates in Storey County. She explained this originated from a discussion at a VCTC board meeting in 2014 where the issue of decreasing room nights spent in Virginia City. She states in retrospect, the economy had bottomed out at that time, but now we need to look at this and ask if these are still relevant or are there new issues. She explained she facilitated several meetings with different hotel owners to bring this presentation together at that time. She provided several graphs and information showing the decrease in room nights spent. She states there is data to support the idea that multiple room nights translate into higher sales and therefore higher tax revenue for Storey County. She states the question asked was who are we as a town and what do we want to be. She states the VCTC at that time was set up to meet the objective of a seasonal town. She states the town needs to decide whether they want to be a day trip or an overnight destination town. She states at the time, the VCTC was meeting that objective of promoting a weekend or day trip type of town. She explained that if Virginia City wanted to be more of a destination, the advertising and promotion needed to change. She states if we are going to be a seven day per week and year round town, something within the town needs to change. She states the town needs to decide whether they are targeting singles, families or the bar crawl crowd. She states the participants in the meetings that took place believed that if they are to change Virginia City into an overnight destination, they needed to make sure they did the right things right and their main

focus was the history of Virginia City. She states no one can beat Virginia City when it comes to our history. She states that history should be marketed worldwide. She states they spoke about having an event every weekend during November and December and changing the look of the town to mimic an old time Christmas town. She states if it is done for a longer period of time, it will bring more people up here regardless of the snow. She states this is all stuff that was discussed at that time. She states that today, we are reaching out through FAMS and other programs. She asks if going forward there are more opportunities to reach out to programs like FAMS. She states the second point brought up, in popular culture, Bonanza is our popular culture history. She acknowledges it is not real history, but it is part of the popular culture history here. Jim Clark contributed a lot to the research she did regarding the Bonanza. She states if we are talking about making Virginia City a year round destination, having that stuff here, would meet the expectation of the visitors coming here.

Lee Nashold states he was indirectly involved in some of the Bonanza idea. He states it involved building a Bonanza house since the buildings in Tahoe do not exist anymore. He states this will be something that the community would have to take on. He asks what do people ask for when they get here, "Where is the Ponderosa?" They don't understand it was never here and they want to see it. He states that they equate the Bonanza with Virginia City. He states the proposal was to actually build a Bonanza house, and he thought it should go a bit further and not be built to scale, but larger. He states it should be built larger and then turned into a Bed and Breakfast and people would stand in line to stay there. He states make it a functional property not just a set.

R. Gallagher states that there is no argument that Bonanza has been getting people to Virginia City since the 1930's, however, there is also no argument that it has any historical relevance to Virginia City either.

N. Barde states the idea is that the town needs to offer things at night and for families at night, to become a year round destination. She states in addition to having the Bonanza here, there need to be other recreation elements added at night. She states at the time this was done, we did not have several of the shops we have now. She states we have done well on getting people here, but now we need to keep them here. She explained that now that we have a catalogue of the businesses that are here, we need to do a gap analysis to figure out what is missing. She states if Bonanza is part of that, it should be added to what is missing to make this a destination. She states when those have been identified, we need to then recruit people to come here and open those businesses. She states we need businesses that can come in and build and maintain bike trails or zip lines or things that will bring people here and keep them here. She states the question still remains though, who are we as a town.

A. Petrini states going back to the Bonanza era, and prior, the Clays bought the Territorial Enterprise and that is what began with Virginia City expanding into the public area. He states that newspaper started going out across the country. He believes that is what started the ball rolling for tourism here and then was followed by the Bonanza show in the 1960's. He states that show was going into every home in America every week. He states that he personally was working with the Ponderosa and helping to promote Virginia City. He states he believes the merchants are creating some of the problem as well. He states the merchants are closing their doors at 5:00 in the evening which is like telling people we are closed, go home. He states there used to be a lot of live entertainment at different places in town. He asks why would people come here and stay when there is nothing for them to do. He states people come up for a few hours and then go back to where they are staying to have dinner and their nightlife. He states we have about six hours of business during each day and that is it.

N. Barde states that is the chicken and egg question, are the businesses closed because there is no one in town or is there no one in town because the businesses aren't opened.

A. Petrini states businesses are closing now with people still on the streets. He states at 5:00 p.m. people are closing up and it is pushing people to go home since everything is closing.

D. Dotson states there is a small issue with Hot August Nights and asks if we can move to K. Demuth's presentation so she can jump out and handle the issues with the event on C Street.

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

K. Demuth provided the closing numbers for the 4th of July event, stating they made about \$700 from the donation jars that were placed around town, and everything else remained the same. The event overall cost the VCTC about \$7,000. She states all of the expenses have either been paid out or calculated into this total. Next she provided an update on groups and FAMS. She states groups are at about 2,200 for the year, which is about 900 shy of the total for last year. She believes we will see those additional 900 people over the coming weeks to match last year's totals. She asked that if any merchants have deals going on, to let her know so she can provide that information to the groups and to RAD to be included in our marketing. She states she has done some follow-up on groups who have visited without her knowing to try to build those relationships and get them more organized for when they come back again. She states she would like to work with more merchants and restaurants to partner for groups. She states she has had coupons that get handed out to groups from other merchants in the past and it has worked out well. She shared the yelp reviews online and explained how to handle the site for merchants. She states VCTC is sitting at four and a half stars but the most recent review was from February 2018. She suggested merchants keep updated on those sites since visitors and people who are traveling use those as a reference for which businesses to visit. She states in the last fiscal year, there have been about 60,000 people through the door of the visitor center. She states that is not including everyone, there are some who get missed

when it is busy, but that is a general overall idea of how many people we have in and out. She stated, on average, they see about \$5 for every one of those visitors and about half of them make a ticket purchase for one or more of the attractions in town. She states she believes that is an opportunity and we should be working on what we offer.

A. Petrini asks how those are calculated.

K. Demuth states it is just a little clicker, so there is definitely human error, but this is just an estimate.

10. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENT UPDATE

D. Dotson explained Liquid Blue Events had a previously scheduled event that conflicted with being here today, so he will be providing the update on events today. He provided an observation on Hot August Nights, stating it was very successful and everyone was very happy with the outcome on how this has gone. He states there is a three-year deal for Hot August Nights in place now. He stated some of the issues he has seen are the restrooms, which are not spread out enough and the restaurant issues, which are not enough or waits that are too long.

W. Brunson asks if providing a map with just restaurants would help.

D. Dotson states he believes the issue is more that there are not enough restaurants for people.

A. Sober states that on the Thursday night, none of the restaurants knew that all of the coordinators were already staying in town. She states she opened at 5:00 a.m. in the morning because we had made arrangements with them before. She states when they came in on Friday morning, they were asking why everyone wasn't opened on Thursday night for dinner. She states that on Friday night, they were opened, but empty because no one was looking around. She states she likes W. Brunson's idea of handing out a map of all the restaurants for these events. She states the few people they did have come by Saturday morning, did not know the restaurants existed.

D. Dotson states that all of the five or six thousand Hot August Nights participants got a brochure with all of the restaurants in Virginia City listed in it.

A. Sober states that's great, but there seemed to still be a lot of questions.

D. Dotson states the businesses should put some booths out on the street during big events.

R. Gallagher states that will be the beauty of having the merchant group and working together.

A. Sober states she believes it is a lack of information and understanding for merchants. She states the merchants do not understand what the legal situation is sometimes. She states many of the merchants are operating under the assumption that they will have to pay up to \$500 for a booth, as well as, offsite licensing for offsite food. She states not everyone is fully aware of what is required for that. She states she would like that to be a conversation so that all of the merchants are clear on the requirements. She asks if an information packet can be put together in writing, she will distribute it to the merchants.

R. Gallagher states that could be part of the conversation when everyone sits down and figures out the best approach to taking care of our visitors.

D. Dotson states they keep track year over year as needed. He states sometimes the comparisons of events are sometimes not apples to apples due to changes. He provided the ticket sales at this time for the rodeo. He states it shows about 147 tickets for Saturday and about the same for Sunday. He states the big difference they have seen in the ticket sales, is that people are more planning to pay day of rather than buying online. He states traditionally, the Hispanic community does not typically purchase online, they are primarily a walk up and pay group. He states there is a lot of interaction on social media and there is a lot of buzz happening regarding the rodeo right now. He states the food, beer and venue side of the event has been changed to fit their needs a little more.

He states Camels is a bit more apples to apples. He states the seating has been changed a bit to remove the VIP seating. He states the stadium seating has all been changed to general admission seating. He states they are doing well with the ticket sales right now. He states the Saturday sales are looking great, but the Sunday tickets are slightly lower, but still on target.

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

W. Brunson provided an update on Piper's Opera House. She states the Mid-Summer Nights Dream had great ticket sales and also great sponsorship throughout town. She states she and Piper's Players were very happy with the turnout. She shared some photos that were taken by Melody Hoover. She states the sets and everything overall turned out great.

N. Barde states she loves the entire presentation. She enjoys the entire look and feel of the presentation.

A. Perry stated the dancing fairies were one of her favorite parts of the production. She states they were having a little party and it was adorable.

W. Brunson stated the lady who produced this is a dance instructor and she included dance anywhere she could. She states coming up will be Athena McIntyre and she will be performing with another gal from Nashville. She states the auditions for the Nightmare production will be coming up. She provided information on some of the other groups scheduled for banquets at Piper's and the dates. She states there are still tickets available for all for the events scheduled at this point. She states that the tours of Piper's have been successful. She states since opening for tours, she

has adjusted the way she is doing tours. She states since July 7, 2018 she has collected over \$1,000 for tours at Piper's. She states there have been about 500 visitors in Piper's in the last month. She states there is a new registration book upstairs at Piper's which is a great way to see where everyone is from and also capture email addresses.

A. Perry states the registration book is also great for grants as it will show the number of people in and out of Piper's.

W. Brunson provided some information about some of the wedding scheduled in the next several weeks. She states in 2019, the wedding revenue is about \$15,000 and she states she is already booking into 2020.

12. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: STAFF CORRESPONDENCE & FUTURE MEETINGS

D. Dotson provided a Director's Report detailing things that he has been doing. He spoke about the things required by the Hot August Nights event and positioning the Cemetery Gin wagon at the site in Reno. He spoke about giving an update to the County Commission twice per month and meeting with the County Manager once per month. He states he works on newsletters and eblasts that go out each month and handing things out on C Street. He states these are things that are done all the time. He states every bit of paperwork for every single event goes through his desk.

A. Sober asks if his presentation can be forwarded to him.

D. Dotson states he can or it is available on the website. He continued with his presentation. He states he is still working on the Black & Howell property which he has gotten a structural report on, and hopes to start working on building a new visitor center at some point. He stated he is working on an appraisal for the fairgrounds and looking into the possibility of the county purchasing that at some point. He states he works with the RSCVA and TravelNevada which are large organizations he tries to stay close to. He states the relationships with these groups have really paid off over the years. He spoke about a video that was recorded and will be presented to the state legislature. He states he is the chairman of the V&T Railway Commission. He states that has slowed down now that E. Spencer is on board. He states the Reno Tahoe Territory is a marketing co-op group that he participates in for the regional area. He states there is a European visitor experience. He states he needed to check out when he left. He states the climate here at the time dictated it. He states he hiked one hundred and ten miles on the French and Swiss Alps. He shared photos and information about the places they visited. He talked about the tourism industry in the areas he visited and how they did things and compared the way they function to the way VCTC functions. He states VCTC currently does about \$210,000 in revenue in regard to ticket sales. He states he believes they can do better. He states he would like to redo the maps and states he does not like the current map. He states it does not matter where you go in the world, you will not find a map that has every business on it. He states the map will have references of places to eat and attractions and museums. He states that is what their map was designed to do. He states Carson City Visitor's Bureau does printing and he is looking to make a deal with them for printing. He states he is excited about what is ahead.

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

T. Dubois states the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 13, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the Virginia City Conference Center.

14. 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.

C. DeGasperis states he believes there is a portfolio of advertising that is growing and getting better. He states he has a notion that visitation to Reno is growing and there isn't a correlative increase in Virginia City. He states that we need to direct the heard. He states that when he tells people he is for Virginia City, he gets one of two responses, either people know what he's talking about and love it, or they have no idea what he's talking about. He states there is never anything in the middle. He states the notion of always evaluating the allocation and looking at the pool of money we spend, needs to be progressive. He states it should not be we are doing this and its done, it should be more looking at it and saying can we do better or more. He states he believes that from 2008 to 2010 the economy was dead, but now it is booming again and we have to find a way to grab them and pull them in. He states the visual piece needs to be there pull people in. He states there isn't a policy that we don't want overnight stay, there isn't a policy saying merchants don't want to be opened. He states it is the chicken and the egg situation where if we don't have more overnight, the hospitality piece is dead because it is not sustainable. He states any attention given to increasing the hospitality he is supportive of.

N. Barde states if a gap analysis is done in regard to businesses needed here and then we go out and recruit those businesses. She states we could figure out whether they need financing or some other type of assistance to get those businesses here to increase the business at night. She states you could do a movie night at Piper's which would provide family things to do here at night.

A. Sober states information is so important coming from everyone. She states from the merchant's perspective; the

county does not want employees to work at night so there is not a lot of support from the county for night time things. She states the merchants can try to get those things together but it might be worth talking to the VCTC and moving into some more nighttime events. She states some of the pub crawl events could be moved more into the nighttime which could get more people staying here.

Lee Nashold stated he had a family in his store the other day and purchased a package for Virginia City and they were very disappointed. He states they expressed all of their complaints and he felt sorry for them. He states there needs to be a recommitment from business owners and whether they are going to take their business seriously. He states we have to give the people we are trying to pull in something to be pulled in for.

S. Moore states they hear a lot that for events, the hotels raise the prices and no one wants to stay here. She states they can do everything they possibly can do on the marketing side, but if people come up here and have a bad experience, they don't want to come back.

N. Barde states other places have reinvented themselves when they are much larger than Virginia City and needed a much heavier lift. She states Virginia City is very small and very nimble. She states it is not necessarily going to be easier, but it can be done. She states Lauren at the Red Dog has built a phenomenal venue for evening entertainment that can easily transition between family stuff and adult entertainment.

Breck Greninger states they are the last business on the South end of C Street. She states people are always asking why people are closed and where everyone is. She states they are the first business to open in the morning and the last business to close in the afternoon.

R. Gallagher states these will be specific topics of conversations for the round table discussions. He states if we take them on one at a time, the next few months can be highly productive. He said the philosophical intent is great, but the pragmatic application needs to follow.

A. Sober states they have built great momentum at the moment and believes we should get on the ball and go forward so we don't lose it.

A. Perry proposes that we schedule the roundtable. She states she enjoyed hearing the director's report and thanked Deny for the relationships he has built and the research done while vacationing. She states she appreciates the way he did it and him sharing it.

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

D. Dotson adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.