#### VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

January 10, 2019 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**

Chairman Ron Gallagher called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

#### Pledge of Allegiance

#### 1. ROLL CALL

Leah Kruse called roll.

Chairperson:
Vice Chair:
Corrado DeGasperis
Vanessa Stephens
Angelo Petrini

Lance Gilman A. Perry

L. Kruse noted there was a quorum present.

Others: Deny Dotson, Director

Katie Demuth, Tourism & Marketing Manager

Leah Kruse, Administrative Specialist

Whitney Brunson, Special Events Coordinator

## 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.

L. Gilman made the motion to approve the agenda.

Second – C. DeGasperis

Approved - Unanimously

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

A. 13 December 2018

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2018 meeting.

Second – L. Gilman

Approved - Unanimously

### 4. CHAIRMAN GALLAGHER BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: NOMINATION OF OFFICERS FOR 2019

- A. CHAIR / VICE CHAIR / SECRETARY / TREASURER
- A. Perry nominated Corrado DeGasperis to be Chair.

Second – L. Gilman Approved – Unanimously

R. Gallagher nominated Lance Gilman to be Vice Chair

Second – C. DeGasperis Approved – Unanimously

A. Perry nominated Leah Kruse to be Secretary

Second – L. Gilman Approved – Unanimously

L. Gilman nominated Vanessa Stephens to be Treasurer

Second – C. DeGasperis Approved – Unanimously

R. Gallagher thanked the board for their work and passed the duties of the Chair on to C. DeGasperis. C. DeGasperis thanked R. Gallagher for his leadership and depth of knowledge.

### 5. CHAIRMAN DEGASPERIS 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.

Elaine Barkdull-Spencer, General Manager V & T Railway, gave a brief overview of the last season. E. Barkdull-Spencer stated that the impact on Virginia City included 6500 visitors over their regular season. E. Barkdull-Spencer shared that the V & T Railway is working with the VCTC and local hoteliers in possibly creating packages for visitor's overnight stays. E. Barkdull-Spencer would like to promote more event trains (i.e. Camel Races). E. Barkdull-Spencer also stated that she would like to see a sticker program implemented in which train passengers would wear stickers and receive perks from merchants in town. E. Barkdull-Spencer said that the V & T is designating a group sales person this year who will be working with Katie Demuth. E. Barkdull-Spencer shared that the V & T did not receive any complaints whatsoever regarding passenger experiences this past season.

Steven Saylor, executive director of the Comstock Foundation, shared that the foundation has started putting together a steering committee for a new Donovan Mill Museum and Visitor Center. S. Saylor also stated that they are working on more oral histories as they already have four large groups coming this summer to tour and they are getting a group of docents together to help with the tours.

Alexia Sober, Storey County resident, shared that there will be a clothing swap for the ladies in the Comstock on \_\_\_\_\_ March 10, 2019. A. Sober stated that Canvas Café would be sponsoring a "for donation" mimosa bar and that the proceeds would be sent to the Senior Center. A. Sober also stated that she hoped that the Christmas tree lighting and countdown to the New Year would continue each year.

D. Dotson stated that he would like to acknowledge the fact that all three sitting Storey County Commissioners were currently in attendance and that he appreciated their support.

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

- A. Tourism Tax Report
- B. Transient Lodging Tax Report
- D. Dotson presented the Tourism Tax report and stated that the numbers are still strong (up a little more than 5k over the same month last year) and that the numbers are about 17k over last year so things are well on track to hit approved budget numbers. Nicole Barde, Storey County resident, requested that the tourism tax values be plotted on a graph so that any trends can be made apparent.
- D. Dotson stated that Transient Lodging was reporting strongly as well. C. DeGasperis stated that the numbers are definitely being driven by TRI room nights.
- D. Dotson shared that VCTC is beginning to work on the 2019/2020 budget and that he will continue to share old and new budget numbers as they become available.

### 7. CHAIRMAN DEGASPERIS BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATES

Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, Inc. shared that on January 10, 2019, all of the events for the year would be sent out at 10:00 am via e-blast, press release, social media, and on the website. R. Dotson also stated that event cards are also available going forward. R. Dotson said that RAD Strategies put together a merchant toolkit that will be emailed out and also available on the website and in the merchant Facebook group.

- R. Dotson shared that during the last month (December 2018), the top five pages that people visited on the Virginia City website were events, Christmas, webcam, hotels/motels and that she wants to continue driving focus to those. R. Dotson shared some PR highlights that included the mining competition coming to town, a Channel 2 News piece on the Christmas lights in Virginia City, and some articles on Piper's. R. Dotson shared that Facebook and Instagram interactions are doing really well on shared posts.
- A. Sober asked if merchants would be able to add their events to the website's events calendar. R. Dotson answered that this was never a part of the plan, but that they will be able to utilize that function on the app once it has been updated with that functionality.

### 8. CHAIRMAN DEGASPERIS BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENT UPDATES

Neil Horning, Liquid Blue Events, requested approval of the Devil Made Me Do It Saloon Crawl budget in the amount of \$3200.00.

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the budget for the Devil Made Me Do It Saloon Crawl in the amount of \$3200.00.

Second – A. Perry

Approved - Unanimously

- N. Horning requested approval of the Father Daughter Day & Dance budget in the amount of \$9,700.00.
- C. DeGasperis asked if there is an expected doubling of the amount of money made on this event since there would be two dances this year (instead of just one). N. Horning stated that they expect to see an increase, but not necessarily double the amount from last year. N. Barde asked how many people are returning and what the demographic of the attendees looks like. N. Horning stated that they do not have that information on paper, but they can visually see that many people are repeat attendees and that many of the attendees come from off the hill.
- A. Perry made the motion to approve the budget for the Father Daughter Day & Dance budget in the amount of \$9,700.00.

Second – L. Gilman

Approved - Unanimously

- N. Horning also requested approval of the budget for the Rocky Mountain Oyster Festival budget in the amount of \$39,500.00. N. Horning stated that they will be ordering more fries and more cooks for this year's events.
- R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the budget for the Rocky Mountain Oyster Festival budget in the amount of \$39,500.00.

Second – A. Perry

Approved - Unanimously

- D. Dotson discussed some significant changes to the special event calendar which include: The International Collegiate Mining Games (which are being treated as a major event), the Grand Prix (which will be a true Grand Prix this year), the Wild West Fest at the fairgrounds, a women's only car show, a huge cattle drive and potential concert included in the rodeo activities, a rock drilling contest that was moved to Labor Day weekend, Hot Camel Nights, and a hill climb.
- D. Dotson stated that the biggest focus for 2019 will be Christmas on the Comstock. D. Dotson shared that the current Christmas Bonanza concept is to have three full weekends of Christmas activities for people to attend with lots of activities that people can choose. D. Dotson also shared that his focus will be on increasing Christmas lights and decorations around town.
- C. DeGasperis asked if there would be integration with V & T Railway on events on the calendar. D. Dotson said that only the short-line train events are integrated on the events calendar.
- A. Sober asked if the VCTC is planning on working with the community on these events. D. Dotson said that he wants everyone in town to be included, but communication needs to take place prior to the events.

A. Perry asked how events make it onto the events calendar. D. Dotson stated that notification ahead of time is necessary for the event to be marketed and that the size of the event is crucial in deciding if the event makes it on to the calendar. D. Dotson also stated that it is very difficult to get information by January for events that take place later in the year. A. Perry stated that there is value in promoting smaller events that can bring in more locals. D. Dotson said that the short-term answer to all of the concerns regarding marketing events is to post the smaller/local events on the website. A. Perry stated that knowing what the criteria is for being included on the calendar of events is crucial and once a merchant is aware, it is on them to make sure that they get the information to the proper place by the deadline.

## 9. CHAIRMAN DEGASPERIS BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: COMMUNITY COALITION UPDATE

A. Sober presented information on the Storey County Community Coalition. A. Sober presented handout that included a new mission statement for the Storey County Community Coalition and stated that they now have membership options for the coalition. A. Sober said that she hopes that these details prove the seriousness of the coalition and hopes to continue involvement and communication with VCTC.

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

- K. Demuth shared that groups are down 11% from last year, but if bus groups are pulled out of the numbers, group visitors were actually up by 400.
- K. Demuth stated that she will be attending the American Bus Association conference in January in which she already has twenty confirmed appointments.
- K. Demuth shared that an overhaul on the Comstock Adventure Pass is being worked on and more information about this program will come soon. K Demuth said that pre-purchased tickets are being looked into, as many visitors are interested in that and request them when calling the Visitor Center.
- K. Demuth said that there are new products in the Visitor Center for sale that include stickers, shirts, baskets, and prints from local photographer, Liz Huntington.

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

- W. Brunson shared that private events have been a major revenue generator for Piper's.
- W. Brunson mentioned some upcoming events, which included a singer-songwriter event, a burlesque show, the Father Daughter Dance, Roseanne Cash's fundraiser, and a new Piper's Players show in the spring.
- W. Brunson stated that tours are still being done even during the offseason and that scheduled tours will continue again beginning in April.
- C. DeGasperis asked if Piper's budget was included in the VCTC budget or if it was separate. D. Dotson stated that Piper's has a separate budget.

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

- D. Dotson shared that he is working on a master plan for the fairgrounds and that the majority of that property is now officially owned by Storey County.
- D. Dotson stated that he has been working with an architect regarding the Black and Howell property.
- D. Dotson shared that he is working on possibly bringing a large convention into town in 2020, but is unwilling to discuss much at this time as nothing has been confirmed.
- L. Kruse shared some correspondence that was sent to the VCTC.
- L. Kruse stated that the next meeting is Thursday, February 14, 2019.

# 13. CHAIRMAN DEGASPERIS BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: ADJOURNMENT OF COMMISSION BOARD MEETING

Chairman DeGasperis adjourned the meeting at 10:45 am.

