

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

March 14, 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 Corrado DeGasperis called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. ROLL CALL

Leah Kruse called roll.

Chairperson: Corrado DeGasperis
Vice Chair: Lance Gilman
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens
Board Members: Angelo Petrini
Ron Gallagher
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 DEGASPERIS 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. D. Dotson noted that all agenda items would be presented, but there may be different presenters due to illness and scheduling conflicts.

Second – A. Petrini

Approved – Unanimously

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

A. 14 February 2019

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the minutes. A. Perry requested that the section of the minutes that mentions private tours needs to say Big 4 private tours.

Second – L. Gilman

Approved – Unanimously

4. 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.

Judy Cohen, Storey County business owner, stated that the sales tax form on the website is incorrect. K. Demuth said that she would update the link.

J. Cohen requested that a lost and found be set up in town. K. Demuth shared that there is a lost and found in the Visitors Center and that the link to it is on the website.

C. DeGasperis asked if there was an update on the Delta explosion. D. Dotson stated that it is under investigation, but the city is open for business and the business is working on finding alternate venues for events that have been booked there.

J. Cohen asked if it was dangerous for the Grand Prix to take place on C Street. D. Dotson shared that the county is formalizing a safety plan and that the northbound lane will have fencing and the motorcycles will be slowed down on C Street. D. Dotson mentioned that that the event will be unique to the area and a true Grand Prix event. D. Dotson said that there will still be pits that will contain gas, etc., and that parking will be still be down at the fairgrounds. A. Perry asked where people would be crossing the street. D. Dotson said that there would be flaggers on both ends that will stop people/racers. Candace Pitts, Storey County business owner, stated that she has received many questions about the Grand Prix and that the Sugarloaf already has rooms booked for the event. J. Cohen asked where people would park. D. Dotson stated that it would be first come first serve as usual.

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

K. Demuth shared that RAD has been focusing on print advertising and currently there is an ad in the Reno Tahoe Travel Guide, which is distributed in Reno Tahoe guest rooms and is seen by approximately 20,000 guests. K. Demuth shared the new 2019 Travel Nevada Visitor's Guide and a few of the pages that feature Virginia City.

K. Demuth said that new snipes were developed for the billboards and that these new ones will be used during slower times of the year and when there are no current events.

K. Demuth shared that the social media advertising is still growing and that more and more people are opening the links posted online.

K. Demuth shared that a docent will be doing a television interview regarding the Oyster Fry. D. Dotson said that more docents would be out doing interviews in the future to keep the branding of the city the same.

K. Demuth shared that Nevada Magazine did an article on the Grand Prix.

K. Demuth stated that a fix is in the works for the webcam, but even with the webcam not working, there has been an increase of 7.3% in visitors to the site. A. Petrini asked how the 7.3% was calculated. K. Demuth said that Google analytics was utilized to track unique visitors. A. Perry asked who is considered a unique visitor. K. Demuth explained that a unique visitor is someone who has cleared out his or her browsing history, cache, etc. L. Gilman stated that the website is very popular.

L. Gilman shared that he will be joining the RCVA (Reno Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority) advisory board and he is planning on bring even more attention to Virginia City and TRI. K. Demuth shared that with the new budget, more attention will be given to TRI.

Nicole Barde, Storey County resident, asked if there was an opportunity for a second webcam in town and that the merchants may be interested in helping with the cost of a second one. D. Dotson responded that it could be done, but there is a cost associated with a webcam and finding property to place one on will be difficult. K. Demuth stated that webcams take up a lot of bandwidth and require a lot of server space and that can get expensive.

N. Barde asked if family packages were available to companies (Google, Tesla, and Switch). K. Demuth said that the VCTC does not currently work directly with those companies, but she does work with them if they reach out. N. Barde said that she feels it is time that the VCTC starts reaching out directly. L. Gilman said that the corporate groups in TRI are evolving and it is very much the time to start reaching out to them.

K. Demuth shared that eblasts sent out on February 7, 2019 achieved a 17.45% open rate and that the typical open rate in the tourism industry is 8%. K. Demuth stated that there are monthly visitor eblasts, merchant eblasts, and board reports.

N. Barde asked when the RAD workshop would take place. Katie answered that it will be April 17 from 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

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

D. Dotson shared a document with information on a successful Father-Daughter Dance, a snapshot of ticket sales from a year ago to date (which shows that most ticket sales are up from a year ago), and a quick announcement that there will be a band available for the rodeo.

D. Dotson said that the mining competition is coming along nicely and that there will be a lot of activity in the coming week as the fairgrounds get prepared for the event.

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

N. Barde asked how information could be shared regarding ongoing/yearlong activities. N. Barde stated that the Community Coalition would prefer both paper and online information. K. Demuth stated that all of the information that the group is looking for is currently available at the Visitors Center. C. Pitts stated that people check into her motel after-hours and want to go out in the morning and having a piece of paper with the current things to do would be helpful. A. Perry stated that the merchant's page is a critical piece that is can be very useful, but only if the merchants update it regularly. A. Perry also stated that the website is great to give to visitors, but if the merchant site is not updated or if the website is not updated they are not as useful. A. Perry said that attending a coalition meeting might solve many of the communication issues. R. Gallagher stated that fascinating information can be put out, but only if the people behind the counters in town know it.

N. Barde asked when the last merchant tour occurred. K. Demuth stated that the VCTC attempted to host one last year, but only five people showed up. K. Demuth shared that the Visitors Center has a one-sheet that she can put on the merchant page and that anyone can print it.

D. Dotson shared that it may be a good idea to offer a standing deal in which any merchant can come to the Visitor Center and get comped tickets to locations in order to learn about things in town.

N. Barde stated that the Community Coalition would like to know when buses are arriving. K. Demuth shared that she will be posting about groups and buses that she is aware of on the merchant's page and that she will be more proactive in reaching out to the bus companies.

8. 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 trending well, RSCVA sent two people up to do a site tour, and that she received some interest from RSCVA contacts. K. Demuth said that she has received some interest in several bus tours later in the year and she will work on better ways to get that information out to everyone.

K. Demuth asked that the merchants submit a standing coupon to her that she can give out to any group that comes up.

K. Demuth shared that there will be a parade (St. Patrick's Day) on Saturday and the lineup will occur on C Street from the blue house back. K. Demuth stated that the parade is at noon and she will be sending out the lineup later today.

K. Demuth announced that the State Historic Preservation Office will be starting a conference up again that will be at the tail end of Rural Roundup so there will be people in town a bit longer after Rural Roundup.

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

W. Brunson shared a very favorable review from a couple who had their wedding at Piper's.

W. Brunson shared upcoming events that will be held at Piper's including a choir festival, a 601 St. Patrick's Day dance, a performance by Roseanne Cash on May, and the West Coast Songwriter's Showcase. W. Brunson also mentioned that tickets for the newest play at Piper's would be on sale on April 1, 2019.

W. Brunson stated that tours are still available Thursday through Sunday and there will be more regular scheduled tours beginning in April.

W. Brunson shared that there is a band booked for a 1920's themed New Year's Party.

D. Dotson said that Piper's has been working on setting up an MOU with the county to change Piper's into a true non-profit.

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

- A. *Tourism Tax Report*
- B. *Transient Lodging Tax Report*
- C. *2019-20 Tentative Budget*

D. Dotson shared the most recent Transient Lodging Tax Report that is still tracking well above last year's numbers. A. Petrini asked L. Gilman if he knew of any new lodging businesses building in the TRI area. L. Gilman said that there are things in the works, but nothing has been finalized yet.

D. Dotson shared the Tourism Tax numbers and it shows a large drop-off, but it was due to an unexpected deposit from the State of Nevada last year (2018). N. Barde asked if the numbers on the report are strictly from Virginia City. D. Dotson said they were and N. Barde shared that there is proof that the county is not recession proof.

D. Dotson reviewed a multi-page tentative budget report and highlights included the budget building process that the staff uses, the purchase of the fairgrounds and the Black & Howell building and how those will change the 2019-20 budget, high-level highlights of events that brought a lot of revenue in, and the fact that Christmas on the Comstock will be the most focused on event in 2019. D. Dotson also shared that the 2019-20 Cemetery Gin budget line only includes revenue on Cemetery Gin, as there is a better supply set aside as compared to last year. D. Dotson stated that there is room in the budget for the sale and lease back of the Crystal Bar. A. Perry asked if there was a way to see last year's numbers next to this year's numbers. D. Dotson stated that he usually presents the budget that way, but with the new system, he wanted to present it in a way that utilized the new system. D. Dotson said that he would share a comparative after the board meeting. N. Barde asked how long Liquid Blue Events and RAD Strategies contracts are and D. Dotson answered that they were three years long. N. Barde asked if there would be an agenda item regarding the sale of the Crystal Bar. D. Dotson stated that yes, it would be discussed in more detail as the sale and building of a new visitor center becomes more tangible. A. Perry shared a Facebook post that a merchant shared on the merchant page, which asked why VCTC would build a new visitor center when the "real deal" was right across the street. A. Petrini asked if the comptroller had reviewed the budget yet and D. Dotson stated that he had.

C. DeGasperi made the motion to approve the 2019-20 tentative budget.

Second – L. Gilman

Approved – Unanimously

N. Barde suggested giving a report to the coalition regarding the budget and things that have been done that the coalition has asked for. R. Gallagher stated that there was a good overview at this meeting, but only one person from the coalition came to the meeting. N. Barde stated that she would take the information from the meeting to the coalition, but she would still like to see a report that can be given to them.

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

L. Kruse stated that the next meeting is Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 9:00 am, which is one week later than normal due to the 2019 Rural Roundup.

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

Chairman DeGasperis adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.

DRAFT