

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

April 18, 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

Vice Chairman Lance Gilman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. ROLL CALL

Leah Kruse called roll.

Chairperson: Corrado DeGasperi – Absent
Vice Chair: Lance Gilman
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens
Board Members: Angelo Petrini – Absent
Ron Gallagher
A. Perry

L. Gilman 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. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the agenda.

Second – A. Perry

Approved – Unanimously

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

A. 14 March 2019

A. Perry made the motion to approve the minutes.

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

4. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN 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.

Joe Curtis, Storey County Emergency Management Director, presented an update on the Union Street process. J. Curtis stated that the whole process and investigation into the Delta explosion is a lengthy process. J. Curtis said that a structural engineer came up with the insurance company and looked at the north brick wall and the front of the building. J. Curtis shared that the engineer said that they were concerned about the stability of the wall, but they were not worried that it was in danger of immediately collapsing. J. Curtis shared that the insurance company said that the wall needs to be walled off and the street closed. J. Curtis then stated that the county procured a structural engineer to look at the situation and they will support the wall in a way that will be effective and still keep half of Union Street open. J. Curtis stated that they will place barricades to keep people away from the side of the building. L. Gilman asked if the open section of the road will be one-way. J. Curtis stated that yes; it would be a one-way street. L. Gilman asked how long it would be for the Delta rehab to take place. J. Curtis shared that the best estimate is two years, but that it was completely between the business owners and the insurance companies. Alexia Sober, Storey County resident, asked if there was any concern with the motorcycles from the Grand Prix affecting the building. J. Curtis stated that there are no concerns.

5. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATE

A. Tourism Tax Report

B. Transient Lodging Tax Report

D. Dotson reported that there was another unexplained anomaly in regards to the Tourism Tax Report – there are no answers as to why the total is so high.

D. Dotson shared the February Transient Lodging Tax Report and stated that the numbers are up and strong and that the TRI property kept the numbers high.

6. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL FOR STAFF TO MOVE FORWARD WITH SALE OF THE VISITOR CENTER LOCATED IN THE CRYSTAL BAR AND WITH REPLACEMENT OF THE VISITOR CENTER

D. Dotson shared the appraisal document, which states that the building was appraised at \$385,000. D. Dotson stated that the property could be put up for sale at an auction or a regular real estate sale, but that the county would take the lead on selling the property. D. Dotson said that if it does go forward as an auction, he would like to promote it so that as many people as possible could know about it. L. Gilman asked if a budget has been established in order to build a new visitor center. D. Dotson stated that there was a bid a while back, but the biggest issue with that bid was the demolition at the build site. D. Dotson shared that since the bid was received, Public Works acquired some large equipment that they were able to use to complete the demolition process on their own. L. Gilman asked if there would be a lease back. D. Dotson said that was the plan and that a lease back has been budgeted. L. Gilman asked if there would be a general fund request and D. Dotson stated that there would not be. D. Dotson explained that the sale and purchase of a new building has been budgeted and that the Storey County Comptroller has some ideas on how to purchase the property with a low-interest loan along with some other ideas. L. Gilman asked if there was a timeline for the project. D. Dotson stated that there is no timeline, but that the timing is right and if the Crystal receives a fair price it is time to move on this project. L. Gilman stated that there are some major capitalization projects in the works for Storey County and that he is happy to hear that there is no rush on this project.

R. Gallagher stated that he is very interested in going forward with this project because, in his opinion, we are not giving tourists the first impression of Virginia City that they should be receiving and a new Visitor Center would help.

A. Perry asked if there was any worry regarding selling the property too soon. D. Dotson answered that there is no reason to lock in a timeline. L. Gilman clarified that the approval of the board is just the first step in the process of the

sale and the building of a new Visitor Center.

A. Sober asked where the money to build a new Visitor Center would come from. D. Dotson answered that it would come from the sale of the current building and a loan. A. Sober asked how the loan would be paid back. R. Gallagher stated that the VCTC is self-funded and that room tax and sales tax will, hopefully, continue to grow.

Judy Cohen, Storey County business owner, stated that she does not approve of the building of a new Visitor Center and that she does not understand why anyone would want tourists to spend more time in a Visitor Center instead of exploring. R. Gallagher answered that it would benefit tourists, as they would be able to explore the town in a better way. J. Cohen stated that the same information the Visitor Center gives out comes from the employees in the businesses as well and that she does not feel that the building of a copy of a historic building is a good idea.

D. Dotson shared a video of a Visitor Center in Barcelona that he would like to see a new Visitor Center modeled off of.

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve VCTC staff to move forward with the a plan for sale of the Visitor Center located in the Crystal Bar and with replacement of the Visitor Center and to bring that plan back to the board.

Second – A. Perry

Approved – Unanimously

7. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL TO DONATE STORAGE TRAILER TO THE NEVADA COMMISSION FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE V&T RAILWAY

D. Dotson shared that approximately five years ago, the VCTC purchased a storage container to use at the Fairgrounds, but with the recent purchase of the shop and other outbuildings, there is no need to keep the container. D. Dotson stated that the V&T is in need of storage and will gladly accept the storage container. L. Gilman asked if the unit is moveable and D. Dotson stated that it was.

A. Perry made the motion to approve the donation of a storage trailer to the Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the V&T Railway.

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

8. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL FOR STAFF TO SIGN AGREEMENT TO GRANT AND CONVEY THE VIRGINIA CITY GRAND PRIX A TEMPORARY, NONEXCLUSIVE EASEMENT AND RIGHT-OF-WAY OVER AND ACROSS THE PROPOSED ACCESS ROUTE ON THE SILVERLAND PROPERTY

D. Dotson stated that this unique request is at the advice of the district attorney. D. Dotson said that the request is to grant the Grand Prix access to a piece of property that is owned by the county, temporarily, and with all liability placed underneath the Grand Prix's special event insurance property.

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the temporary non-exclusive easement right to be signed by VCTC staff.

Second – A. Perry

Approved – Unanimously

9. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATES

Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, shared some videos being used to advertise Virginia City by using storytelling.

R. Dotson stated that March was museum month and that Travel Nevada developed a feature called March Museum Madness in which online visitor's liked different museums in the area and were entered to win a contest.

D. Dotson shared the invitation that was handed out at 2019's Rural Roundup that announced Virginia City's hosting of the 2020 Rural Roundup.

R. Dotson also shared that event social outreach is doing well as there are a lot of clicks on ticket links, Facebook and Instagram postings have been very story-driven and they are now using the story features to put event information out, they are running grant-funded Facebook ads, and there docents have been helping with television interviews.

R. Dotson shared a video that was created by a Mackay Mucker regarding the Mining Competition.

R. Dotson stated that the webcam is back up and running with a subscribe now section in which people must enter their email address to utilize the webcam feature.

R. Dotson said that there are almost 10k followers on Instagram and that she hopes to reach that number by the weekend.

10. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENT UPDATES

Jess Horning, Liquid Blue Events, presented the final budget numbers for the Devil Made Me Do It, which finished under budget with an event surplus.

J. Horning presented the final budget numbers for the Father-Daughter Day/Dance and the even surplus was better than it has ever been at \$6,900.

J. Horning discussed the Oyster Fry and shared that they broke every record with this event and that even the VIB tickets sold out. J. Horning also shared a video that Dolan Auto Group made that advertises the Oyster Fry.

D. Dotson shared that the attendees loved the Mining Competition and that there were some donations made to help manage the mud on boots that came into town.

D. Dotson shared that a portion of C Street will be closed for three days during the Grand Prix. D. Dotson also shared that the racers will start out going northbound instead of southbound as they have in the past, this will allow them to race on a small portion of C Street, and this will create more opportunity for watching the race from town.

Jeff Wood, Comstock History Center, asked if the remainder of E Street (after the cordoned off section) would be open to the public. D. Dotson stated that it would be open to the public and that parking in town is first come, first served. J. Wood also asked if there will be more portable toilets this year and D. Dotson stated that there will be more available.

A. Sober asked if RVs parking at the fairgrounds would have to pay to park. D. Dotson stated that they did, but he was unsure what the Grand Prix (who is leasing the property for the event) would be charging.

J. Horning provided an update on Chili on the Comstock, which included the canceling of the saloon crawl and the addition of a run to make it more family friendly and a craft beer tasting. J. Horning also stated that the pre-sale tickets for the event were selling well. A. Sober asked what food vendors would be present at this event. J. Horning answered that they are unsure now who is participating, but that there is another meeting for discussion of this.

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

D. Dotson shared that Katie Demuth has received an award from the Reno-Tahoe Territory acknowledging her work in the region in the tourism industry.

K. Demuth shared that groups are still up over last year.

K. Demuth stated that some Miss USA contestants will be in the area to capture some footage of contestants around town.

A. Perry asked how merchants can help with the familiarization tours. K. Demuth answered that knowing how to reach out to businesses is imperative. A. Perry also asked if someone would reach out to businesses that would typically be closed when a group comes up and D. Dotson answered that they would be contacted as long as there is a way to contact the business owners/employees.

K. Demuth shared how to find the merchant Facebook page.

K. Demuth said that Comstock Adventure Passes are up and available to the public. K. Demuth shared that there is a History, Family, Winter, Haunted, and Silver and Gold Pass. K. Demuth said that the themes help push tourists into specific areas around town.

K. Demuth shared that there are new hats in the Visitor Center that are selling well and that the map has been cleaned off.

12. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE UPDATE

W. Brunson shared that there will be country dancing at Piper's and that there will be no fee to attend.

W. Brunson said that For Love of a Comstock Girl ticket sales are going well and that there are two dinner shows as well as regular shows.

W. Brunson shared that on May 26 there will be a benefit concert (for veterans) at Piper's.

W. Brunson said that the pianos at Piper's have been tuned, that the upright piano that is kept backstage is actually over 100 years old, and that they will most likely be using it at the upcoming Roseanne Cash concert.

13. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: COMMUNITY COALITION UPDATE

A. Sober shared that the coalition has been doing a lot of internal work that includes attempting to understand the VCTC budget, a website that supports the merchants, and attempting to gauge what business levels look like during events. A. Sober also stated that there was not a lot of merchant involvement during the Father-Daughter Day/Dance and that the Oyster Fry was a success.

14. VICE CHAIRMAN GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: STAFF REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE & FUTURE MEETINGS

D. Dotson stated that he has been formally appointed to the Travel Nevada marketing committee.

L. Kruse stated that the next meeting is Thursday, May 9, 2019 at 9:00 am.

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

Vice Chairman Gilman adjourned the meeting at 11:06 am.