

# VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

November 14, 2019 9:00 a.m.

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

## MEETING MINUTES

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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.

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

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### CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Lance Gilman called the meeting to order at 9:05 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  
Ron Gallagher  
A. Perry

L. Kruse noted there was a quorum present.

**Others:** Deny Dotson, Director - Absent  
Katie Demuth, Tourism & Marketing Manager  
Leah Kruse, Administrative Specialist

#### 2. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN 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 – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

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

- 10 October 2019

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the minutes.

Second – A. Perry

Approved – Unanimously

#### **4. VICE CHAIR L. 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.*

Judy Cohen, Storey County merchant, stated that traffic during the weekdays has dropped significantly and that everyone, as a group, should work together to find a way to draw people into town during the week and not just on the weekends. A. Petrini asked J. Cohen if she felt this year has been slower than previous years. J. Cohen answered that every year seems to be slower than years prior. J. Cohen shared that she feels part of the decrease in tourists in town has to do with the lack of casinos in Virginia City and the amount of employees/business owners who park directly on C Street. A. Petrini asked J. Cohen if her business was doing well during big celebrations. J. Cohen said that large crowds in her business are hit or miss on big celebration weekends, but that she is more concerned as to how to get people into town on weekdays. A. Petrini again asked if this decrease in people is a new development and J. Cohen answered that it appears to be declining mostly in the last four years. A. Petrini stated that in years past, the county would hand out flyers asking merchants and their employees not to park on C Street. K. Demuth stated that the flyers have not been handed out in quite a while, but that it is a constant conversation that is had with the merchants and that it is not something that can be enforced by the VCTC or other merchants.

A. Petrini stated that he walked the boardwalk a couple of months ago and that he counted thirty-four gift shops on C Street which leads him to believe that competition may be a major factor in the decrease in business. A. Petrini asked if anyone else has noticed a big decline in people and Jeff Wood, Comstock History Center, stated that he too has seen a decline in the museum and that the entire summer and fall he has seen a large decrease in people visiting. L. Gilman stated that he would like to see a poll completed that asks merchants what they have experienced in terms of sales, etc. L. Gilman said that there are not enough restaurants open in the evening to support people coming up during the week.

Ralph Ewing, Silent Riders, asked if traffic counts could be completed. L. Gilman stated that though traffic counts may be an option, it is hard to work with the state at the moment as C Street is still a State Highway. K. Demuth said that NDOT does provide periodic traffic counts. K. Demuth also shared that the Visitor Center uses a clicker to count visitors and the data can be compiled to show increases and decreases in visitorship. K. Demuth also shared that sales this year over last year have gone up significantly. L. Gilman reiterated that he would like to see a survey at the next VCTC Board Meeting. Joe Stehle, Storey County merchant, stated that every person who drives through town is an opportunity. A. Perry suggested pushing a "no parking on C Street" flyer on the Facebook merchant page. A. Perry also stated that a Chamber of Commerce may be able to bridge the gaps that are evident between merchants and the VCTC.

#### **5. VICE CHAIR L. DEGASPERIS BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATE**

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

K. Demuth shared the Tourism Tax Report and stated that sales are still up and the VCTC is almost halfway to its total budget.

K. Demuth shared the Transient Lodging Tax Report and stated that lodging tax dollars are down a bit, but room nights are up. L. Gilman shared that there will be a Marriott and a Hampton Inn in the TRI area within one year. K. Demuth said that some marketing dollars are used down in TRI to produce brochures and discount cards for visitors to bring up to Virginia City.

N. Barde stated that it appears that merchants are noticing revenue declining year-over-year and that a survey is necessary to see if that assumption is correct.

J. Wood asked K. Demuth if September is typically the best/busiest month to look at lodging numbers. K. Demuth stated that the numbers do reflect that and that although they are a bit down month-over-month, they are up from last year.

#### **6. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATES**

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies, shared numerous marketing updates that included the fact that Christmas on the Comstock advertising will begin shortly, Virginia City has been included in a show called 100 Days, Drinks, Destinations, and Dishes, and that social media followers continue to grow on all platforms.

A. Perry asked if Liz Huntington is credited on all of her pictures that RAD Strategies uses. A. Demuth answered that RAD Strategies has a contract with her to use the Christmas/Snowy picture and she is credited on all of her work.

J. Cohen asked who is in charge of the maps that are given out at the Visitor Center. K. Demuth stated that the VCTC is. J. Cohen stated that she believes merchants should be given some of the maps to hand out to visitors. K. Demuth shared that the maps that the Visitor Center shares are very pricey. L. Gilman stated that the board would take the request under advisement.

#### **7. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENT UPDATES**

Jess Horning, Liquid Blue Events, asked the board to approve the budget for Christmas on the Comstock in the amount of \$26,500.00. J. Horning stated that the event is not built for revenue, but instead is built to bring the community together and to bring business to the Virginia City merchants. A. Perry asked if the only transportation in town would be the sleigh rides. K. Demuth stated that school buses will be used and a small fee will be paid to them. K. Demuth stated that the marketing budget for the event has been tripled this year so that the marketing pieces can be pushed out to reflect that this is a community event. A. Perry stated that she is supportive of the budget as it makes the entire event family-friendly, but she would like to see buses bringing people to Saint Mary's Art Center and the Cemetery. J. Wood asked if the sleigh was horse-drawn. Christine Verrier, Liquid Blue Events, stated that the sleigh will be able to operate in snow and on dry roads. N. Barde asked if there would be a direct effort to market this event to the large companies in TRI. L. Gilman shared that there is a plan for a message board in the area, but that would not be in place for quite some time. K. Demuth stated that there is no specific marketing plan for TRI regarding Christmas on the Comstock, but that several stacks of brochures would be distributed as needed. Melody Hoover, Storey County business owner, suggested marketing the event to the State of Nevada employees. Clay Mitchell, Storey County resident, stated that the Christmas on the Comstock event further progresses the idea that Virginia City is not just a seasonal destination.

A. Perry made the motion to approve the Christmas on the Comstock Budget in the amount of \$26,500.00.

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

K. Demuth shared that the 2020 event calendar should be completed and ready to distribute by the January board meeting. L. Gilman stated that he thinks it is important that the board see the event calendar as soon as possible. N. Barde asked how many merchants were at the meeting to discuss the event calendar. K. Demuth shared that one merchant was present. N. Barde asked if it would be possible to share a draft of the event calendar on the Facebook merchant page. K. Demuth stated that she did not see in issue with presenting a draft copy.

#### **8. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: COMSTOCK CEMETERY FOUNDATION AUDIO TOUR PRESENTATION**

Candace Wheeler, Comstock Cemetery Foundation, an audio tour presentation that developed from the need to tell the story of the Cemetery in Virginia City. C. Wheeler stated that the audio tour may have use in other businesses and shared the process on how to set up an audio tour, which is free aside from the cost of a microphone.

#### **9. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: GROUPS, FAMS, TRADE SHOWS, AND VISITOR CENTER UPDATE**

K. Demuth shared that groups are at 4,089 through the end of December, which is a large jump from the previous year. K. Demuth stated that over the winter, she plans to reach out to bus companies that have come out previously in order to keep Virginia City fresh in their minds. K. Demuth said that she will be attending two tour operator conferences in the next few months and hopes to bring even more bus groups to town after those meetings. K. Demuth shared that FAMS coming to town have slowed down and that they will resume around April of 2020. K. Demuth reminded everyone that the Visitor Center is still under construction. K. Demuth asked for volunteers to help put up Christmas lights at the rest stop on November 18, 2020 at 10:00 am. K. Demuth shared that preparation for Rural Roundup is still ongoing.

#### **10. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE UPDATE**

Whitney Brunson, Piper's Opera House, shared that the Austin Lounge Lizards concert brought approximately 130 people in to town on a Wednesday in October. W. Brunson stated that the Statehood Ball was a success with approximately 100 people in attendance. W. Brunson said that Fright Night on Halloween was a great success. W. Brunson stated that tickets are on sale for the upcoming A Comstock Christmas Carol plays and for the Roaring 20s New Year's Eve Party. W. Brunson thanked Candace and Charles Pitts, owners of Sugarloaf Mountain Motel for their

generous donation of new curtains for the windows inside Piper's Opera House.

N. Barde asked why the other non-profits are not giving monthly presentations to the board, as it seems Piper's has an advantage over other non-profits in town. L. Gilman thanked N. Barde for the comments and stated that the board would look at the suggestion.

#### **11. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: STAFF REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE & FUTURE MEETINGS**

Jim Webster, Silverland Inn and Suites, invited merchants to bring any information they have to Silverland to be shared with visitors.

R. Ewing shared that after just over one year in operation, the Silent Riders are up to just over 50 members and they may be able to be present at more events in town.

J. Stehle thanked the VCTC for purchasing a large Christmas tree to be used at the Christmas tree lighting event on December 6, 2019. J. Stehle also thanked the owners of Forever Christmas for offering to purchase the tree wholesale. J. Stehle stated that he is looking for donations of non-breakable ornaments for the tree.

L. Gilman thanked everyone for a being at the meeting and that he was very happy with the attendance.

A. Petrini asked if the board would be ok with VCTC putting out information on all of the advertising that occurs in the area. L. Gilman stated that the information can be shared at the next board meeting. A. Demuth said that the information is readily available to the public. L. Gilman stated that it might be a good idea to look at the dissemination pattern of the information provided to the merchants.

K. Demuth shared that the freight depot purchase will now increase the parking area by 232 parking spots and there may be bus and RV parking located there as well.

L. Kruse shared that the next meeting is Thursday, December 12, 2019 at 9:00 am.

L. Gilman stated that someone from VCTC should reach out to the Reno Air Races to borrow their people movers for the events in Virginia City.

#### **12. VICE CHAIR L. GILMAN BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: ADJOURNMENT OF COMMISSION BOARD MEETING**

Vice Chair L. Gilman adjourned the meeting at 11:00 am.