

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)
May 14, 2020 10:00 am
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
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

Chairperson A. Perry called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. ROLL CALL

Leah Kruse called roll.

Chairperson: A. Perry
Vice Chair: J. Carmona – arrived late
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens
Board Members: Angelo Petrini
Ron Gallagher
Corrado DeGasperi

L. Kruse noted there was a quorum present.

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

2. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY 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.

No public comment.

3. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A. 14 May 2020

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C. DeGasperi made the motion to approve the agenda.

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

4. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. 9 April 2020

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the minutes.

Second – C. DeGasperi

Approved – Unanimously

5. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATE

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

D. Dotson shared that the Tourism Tax numbers from February were in line with the rest of the year, but that the next few months will likely be below last year's numbers due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

D. Dotson said that Transient Lodging numbers are pretty average for this time of year, but as with the Tourism Tax report, expect next month to be very low.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 FINAL BUDGET

D. Dotson reviewed the final version of the 2020-21 budget. D. Dotson shared that several revenue items were set to a significantly lower amount than previous years in response to the COVID-19 shutdown. D. Dotson shared that the VCTC went through every line item in the budget and dropped them 20% to 40% and those changes would bring the projected revenue to \$1,270,000.00.

D. Dotson shared that the addition of a part-time employee and a transportation piece are on hold indefinitely and those numbers are now no longer included in the expenses. D. Dotson stated that the town-wide Wi-Fi project is also on hold. D. Dotson said that, based on the Comptroller and the County Manager's suggestions, some money from a rainy day fund (in the amount of \$100,000) was added back into the budget and these funds will be used for events. D. Dotson stated that online advertising, public relations, and special events have all received some money from that rainy day fund. D. Dotson shared that, moving forward, advertising will be locally based.

A. Perry commented that a great deal of thought has been put into how to reduce the budget and a lot of strategic ideas have been implemented as a way to dip into the ending fund balance in order to counter the COVID-19 crisis. A. Perry shared that she feels the \$100,000 that has been earmarked to potentially be spent is appropriate in this critical time.

C. DeGasperis commented that he appreciates the flexibility that has been built into the new budget. C. DeGasperis asked if submitting a budget with a deficit is "allowed" by the county. D. Dotson stated that, in the past, the county has requested a balanced budget, but that, yes, it is allowed and that he has spoken to the county commissioners, etc. and that everyone is in agreement with the budget as is.

R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the revised VCTC fiscal year 2020-2021 final budget.

Second – C. DeGasperis

Approved – Unanimously

7. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATES

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies, shared an April 2020 marketing report and the highlights included sharing the Rise video that has been shared on social media, new articles that mention Virginia City and the economic outlook for town, how Eblasts have changed by focusing more on virtual messaging, and social media engagement has gone up.

A. Perry asked for clarification on what "general marketing that doesn't drive tourism" is. Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, stated that they are working on just pushing the branding of Virginia City and not the tourism aspect. R. Dotson also stated that now is the time to educate people and those are the types of marketing they will be sharing.

A. Perry shared that the political campaigning is generating chatter that people may not come to Virginia City. C. DeGasperis stated that looking at Virginia City's market is required and that education what is safe is vital. J. Carmona asked for clarification on A. Perry's statement that people are not coming to Virginia City due to campaign signs. A. Perry answered that the chatter she has heard/seen is centered around the national presidential candidates and not the local races at all. A. Perry asked that those who place political signs in or around their businesses recognize how it can be perceived by the general public. J. Carmona stated that customers can go to stores that do not support candidates that they are not supportive of.

Nicole Barde, Storey County resident, stated that she felt that the "enjoy your freedoms" statement on the electronic board when you enter town feels political. A. Perry said she was not sure who would speak to that as it is not a VCTC sign. D. Dotson stated that it is a county sign and that the message was approved by the emergency management team. N. Barde stated that the messaging may need to be reconsidered as it makes the town seem to lean in a certain political direction.

N. Barde asked how inviting people up for a Memorial Day cruise is in line with the current messaging that discourages inviting people into town. D. Dotson stated that he refused to not honor fallen soldiers and that there are a lot of controls in place to encourage social distancing.

Scott Jolcover, Storey County business owner, commented that he just watched the Rise video and that it was outstanding and that he was looking forward to the Memorial Day cruise.

8. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENT UPDATES

Jess Horning and Neil Horning, Liquid Blue Events, presented a special event update and the highlights include that people seem to really be paying more attention to events now and social media engagement re: the events are way up and that they are still in a holding pattern as live events are still on hold.

D. Dotson shared that the VCTC is working diligently on a new event calendar. D. Dotson stated that 4th of July is still on the table and a final decision will be made shortly.

N. Barde asked if Hot August Nights was still occurring. D. Dotson stated that as of right now it was.

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

K. Demuth shared that groups are canceling and postponing and that she didn't have any groups scheduled to come to town until mid-July. K. Demuth said that FAMS are also on hold as they tend to focus on sales. K. Demuth shared that the Visitor Center opened over the weekend with strict social distancing policies in place. K. Demuth asked that businesses be aware of the status of handwashing stations outside their businesses and if supplies are low, to please let her know.

A. Petrini asked what the plan is to keep visitors on the boardwalk 6 feet apart once things get busy again. J. Carmona answered that the Sheriff's department stated that they will have some volunteer's out encouraging 6-foot distancing.

10. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PIPER'S OPERA HOUSE UPDATE

K. Demuth shared that Piper's has been busy working on cleaning out the building and that they will be opening this coming weekend for tours with strict social distancing policies in place.

D. Dotson said that Piper's, unfortunately, is going to be fairly quiet for a bit as it is more of an event location and that the county will be keeping a close eye on the revenue stream from Piper's.

11. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: STAFF REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE & FUTURE MEETINGS

D. Dotson asked the board if 10:00 am works better for the meetings. A. Perry stated she has no preference in the time, but that it needs to be consistent. R. Gallagher stated that he has no preference. A. Petrini and C. DeGasperis and J. Carmona also stated that they have no preference. D. Dotson stated that the meeting would be at 10:00 am moving forward.

L. Kruse stated that the next VCTC Board Meeting will occur at 10:00 am Thursday, June 11, 2020 as a Zoom meeting.

12. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: ADJOURNMENT OF COMMISSION BOARD MEETING

Chairperson A. Perry adjourned the meeting at 11:47 am.