

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)
April 8, 2021, 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 recording of these proceedings will be kept for review.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson A. Perry called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Pledge of Allegiance

2. ROLL CALL

Leah Kruse called roll.

Chairperson: A. Perry
Vice Chair: Jay Carmona
Treasurer: Vanessa Stephens
Board Members: Angelo Petrini – Absent
Ron Gallagher
Corrado DeGasperis

L. Kruse noted there was a quorum present.

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

3. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE FIRST 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.

Austin Osborne, Storey County Manager, stated that Storey County has been hosting local task force meetings to put together a "reopening plan" for businesses and that the plan will be ready by May 1st, 2021. A. Osborne said that the plan will be presented to the governor's office in hopes of it being approved. D. Dotson said that once the plan is approved, it will fall on the merchants and the VCTC to follow any new sets of rules.

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

- 8 April 2021

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R. Gallagher made the motion to approve the agenda for 8 April 2021.

Second – J. Carmona

Approved – Unanimously

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

A. 11 March 2021

J. Carmona made the motion to approve the minutes for 11 March 2021.

Second – C. DeGasperi

Approved – Unanimously

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

- *Tourism Tax Report*
- *Transient Lodging Tax Report*

D. Dotson shared the Tourism Tax Report and stated that the number is still ahead of budget, but down compared to last year and the year before. D. Dotson stated that the Tourism Tax numbers are still expected to meet the projected budgeted amount.

D. Dotson shared the Transient Lodging Tax Report numbers have been consistently going up and next month should show an even bigger increase. D. Dotson stated that the Transient Lodging Tax Report is expected to meet the projected budgeted amount.

A. Perry asked D. Dotson if he had an update regarding the proposed speaker system on C Street. D. Dotson answered that the county has a larger plan in the works and that now does not seem like a good time to add the speakers to the VCTC budget.

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

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies Inc., shared the March 2021 marketing report and highlights include celebrating Women's History Month with 5 new videos, continuing Women on the Comstock and Everyone is a Local at Night and Hispanic billboard advertising, digital radio advertising, and more Everyone is a Local at Night advertising.

Regina Flores, RAD Strategies shared some social media updates and the highlight included significant social media engagement growth.

D. Dotson asked R. Flores which page on the Virginia City website most people spent their time on. R. Flores stated that there is a lot of variety in where people ended up, but notable was the stay a spell section and the event section. D. Dotson was happy to hear that lodging was a website destination as all the marketing efforts should lend themselves to overnight stays.

D. Dotson stated that no marketing dollars were spent on the Oyster Fry this year and it appears as though people are very anxious to get back out into the world, but that does not mean that money will not be spent on future events.

D. Dotson shared that Everyone is a Local at Night is going as expected and that he knows that traffic to the event will increase as the weather warms up and as more people learn about it.

Janice Oberding, Virginia City merchant, asked R. Flores to clarify what a mention on Twitter is. R. Flores explained that it is the actual handle of the profile.

8. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF THE CHILI ON THE COMSTOCK BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$32,300

N. Horning said that Chili on the Comstock event will take place May 22nd and 23rd and will have 20 to 25 cooks sign up ahead of time, but that several more may show up day of. N. Horning stated that this is the first ICS (International Chili Society) cookoff to be held in a year and a half. N. Horning stated that these factors will really determine how the event will be structured in terms of social distancing, etc. N. Horning said there will be options for a craft beer tour and chili tastings. N. Horning stated that there will be three hubs in Virginia City in which the tastings will take place so that people can be separated. N. Horning shared that the budget is similar to last year's. D. Dotson stated that with the event being spread out around town, there is a transportation portion in the budget.

Nora Stefu, Fourth Ward School and Museum Director, asked if the parking lot at the Fourth Ward School and Museum is going to be used during the Chili event. N. Horning stated that there is enough room for the merchants in town and due to the age range and mobility of a lot of the cooks, they will not extend chili tastings past the Jerky Company. N. Stefu said that she understood and that there is an open invitation to use the Fourth Ward School and Museum for events.

C. DeGasperis made the motion to approve the Chili on the Comstock budget in the amount of \$32,300.

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

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

N. Horning shared that the Oyster Fry was a success, and they did not hear any negative comments from attendees. N. Horning stated that in the future, when things are more back to "normal", they will keep the same format from this year (moving groups around town).

N. Horning shared that the Father-Daughter Dance will consist of three sold out dances. Christine Verrier, Liquid Blue Events, stated that there are more merchants and restaurants involved in the Father-Daughter Dance than in years prior. D. Dotson said that due to the demand for tickets, it may make sense to make the event over two days next year.

D. Dotson said that the 2021-2022 event calendar will be digital only as things could change.

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

K. Demuth shared that a couple of groups are scheduled to come in April and four groups are scheduled for May. K. Demuth stated that there is potential for larger groups in town once the freight depot is completed. K. Demuth shared that the Visitor Center is getting busier thanks to spring break. K. Demuth stated that CAP contracts are being updated. K. Demuth reminded everyone that Rural Roundup is a free virtual event this year and that Virginia City is hosting it in April of 2022. K. Demuth shared that she is the contact for Everyone is a Local at Night.

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

Whitney Brunson, Piper's Opera House, shared that the monthly events are continuing as well as several weddings. W. Brunson reminded everyone that masks are still required at the Opera House and that capacity is still at 50%. W. Brunson said there is a new company, Amplified Entertainment, taking over as DJ for Bingo nights. W. Brunson shared that Murder Mystery tickets are selling well. W. Brunson said that tours are still available when no other events are taking place at Piper's.

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

- *Director's Report: Cemetery Gin/Black & Howell*
- *Next VCTC Meeting*

D. Dotson shared that a lot was purchased in 2012 to build a new Visitor Center. D. Dotson said that the plan was to start building in 2020, but COVID did not allow for that to happen. D. Dotson shared that the new plan was to start construction on the new Visitor Center this year, but the Virginia City school district can build a new facility next to the high school which would leave vacant buildings in town. D. Dotson shared that this may be a chance for some shifts in where businesses are located, including the Visitor Center. D. Dotson stated that, however, this project may take over five years. D. Dotson said that there is a possible tourism related grant available that would allow the building of a new Visitor Center that could potentially be an option in 2022. D. Dotson asked the board's thoughts on these options. R. Gallagher stated that Virginia City has been waiting a long time for a viable Visitor Center and he feels that we should move forward with the grant option as the timing is right rather than wait several years. C. DeGasperis asked how the grant gets funded. D. Dotson answered that the county would take the lead on it. J. Carmona said he wished there were a more definitive timeline for the school to move and due to the possible extended timeline, he is no longer opposed to building a new Visitor Center. D. Dotson stated that the money in the budget for design, will not be spent until more is known about the grant. A. Perry suggested the possibility of a staged approach to the building of a new Visitor Center if the funding does not become available all at once. R. Gallagher agreed that that approach is fine. J. Carmona reiterated that he fully supports moving ahead with a new building as the school option may take too much time.

D. Dotson said that he has been speaking to three different distilleries and two of them are very interested in taking over the production of Cemetery Gin. Once he has more information, he would like to bring it back to the board for review/approval.

D. Dotson shared that the V&T Railway has new board members and that there is an RFP out for an administrative type of position. D. Dotson said there will probably not be a long-line train for quite a while, but maybe some event trains.

C. DeGasperis shared that there are new proprietors of the Gold Hill Hotel, Jill and Tony, and they are very excited to be a part of the community.

N. Stefu invited any local businesses in the area to bring brochures to the Fourth Ward School and Museum for the public to pick up.

L. Kruse shared that the next VCTC Board Meeting will occur at 10:00 am Thursday, April 8, 2021, via Zoom.

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

Chairperson A. Perry adjourned the meeting at 11:37 am.