

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

November 10, 2022 10:00 a.m.

Storey County Courthouse
26 South B 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Rebecca Clark called roll.

Chairperson: A. Perry
Vice Chair: Jay Carmona
Board Members: Angelo Petrini – tardy
Ron Gallagher
Paul Hoyle

R. Clark noted there was a quorum present.

Others: Linda Ritter, Interim Tourism Director
Rebecca Clark, Administrative Assistant
Leah Kruse, Business & Development Manager

3. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

There was no public comment.

4. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR THE NOVEMBER 10, 2022, MEETING

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the agenda for the November 10 meeting.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – P. Hoyle

Approved – Unanimously

5. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE OCTOBER 13, 2022, MEETING

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the minutes for the October 13 meeting.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – P. Hoyle

Approved – Unanimously

6. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT FOR PYROTEHNIKS AND SERVICES WITH PYROGUYS, INC. FOR TWO FIREWORKS SHOWS FOR CHRISTMAS ON THE COMSTOCK.

L. Ritter commented on the video camera only showing the Judge's chair and desk in the Zoom feed. Staff was actively working on getting it corrected.

She continued with the contract for fireworks that would take place December 3rd and 10th.

** There was a pause as the system rebooted. Sound was lost. **

First – R. Gallagher

Second – P. Hoyle

Approved – Unanimously

7. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF THE BELIEVE AGAIN CHRISTMAS SHOPPING GIVEAWAY AS PART OF CHRISTMAS ON THE COMSTOCK.

L. Ritter explained how the Shopping Giveaway had happened in the past, which was to give a ticket for every \$5 spent. The prizes were two (2) five-hundred-dollar (\$500) shopping sprees. The concern is how to track that the money was spent in town.

L. Ritter suggested raising the ticket entry to \$10 and offering ten (10) \$100 cash prizes instead. The hope for this would be that the money would be spent in town.

R. Clark read a comment received on Zoom by Melody Hoover, who suggested offering a voucher that is only good in Virginia City. L. Ritter responded that we have no tools or instruments to track the spending.

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the Believe Again Christmas Shopping Giveaway.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – A. Petrini

Approved – Unanimously

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

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies, has been working on Christmas on the Comstock creative and calendar.

A. Demuth shared the billboard advertisements, website traffic, and digital outreach numbers. Hauntober received 74 pieces of coverage from various entities.

9. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT FOR SERVICES WITH RAD STRATEGIES, INC. FOR MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICES.

L. Ritter presented an updated RAD Strategies, Inc. Contract, which had not been reviewed since 2015. It is a one-year contract, with a 30-day termination clause for either party. The contract includes scope of work, analytics, and public relations. They are asking \$4,150 a month, a \$650 increase.

P. Hoyle asked if this increase had been budgeted for, which L. Ritter assured him it had.

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the contract for services with RAD Strategies, Inc.

First – P. Hoyle

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

10. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF A PROPOSAL TO RETRIEVE ALL VCTC CREATIVE CONTENT HELD BY RAD STRATEGIES, INC. FOR A TOTAL COST OF \$5,500.

L. Ritter, upon becoming Interim Director, discovered a lot of the VCTC content (including graphics, photos, and videos) were not stored on the VCTC's system. Due to the large backlog, this request would take considerable staff time from RAD Strategies, Inc. They asked for a \$5,500 administrative fee.

P. Hoyle confirmed that the content is owned by VCTC, despite being on RAD's servers.

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve paying RAD Strategies, Inc \$5,500 for the transfer of assets.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – A. Petrini

Approved – Unanimously

11. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF A REVISED ORGANIZATION CHART FOR THE VCTC REFLECTIVE OF CURRENT STAFFING, CONTRACTORS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

L. Ritter shared the revised chart, which has the marketing position removed. With the relationship with RAD Strategies, L. Ritter does not feel it is necessary to have an internal marketing position. The responsibilities that had previously fallen under this position have since been delegated to Leah Kruse.

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the revised organization chart for the VCTC.

First – P. Hoyle

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

12. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPOINTMENT OF LEAH KRUSE TO SERVE AS ACTING TOURISM DIRECTOR EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 15, 2022.

L. Ritter nominated Leah Kruse to be the acting director until a permanent one can be hired. She expressed her enjoyment of holding this position and iterated how fun it is!

Chairperson A. Perry asked Leah Kruse if she would like to take on this temporary position. L. Kruse assured the Board that she was up for the task. Chairperson Perry thanked Linda for her efforts.

P. Hoyle seconded his appreciation for Linda's efforts. Mr. Hoyle asked if there was someone who would be able to backfill her responsibilities. Ms. Ritter indicated that she does intend to stay involved in some of the administrative duties, and that with it being past "event season", things have slowed down a bit.

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the appointment of Leah Kruse to serve as acting tourism director effective November 15.

First – P. Hoyle

Second – R. Gallagher

Approved – Unanimously

13. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE

L. Kruse stated that she enjoyed working with Linda Ritter and is sad to see her leave. She then shared the November and December calendar. Friday, November 11th is the Veteran's Day Parade, with 43 entries, followed by the Veteran's Day Comedy Show at Piper's.

National Tour Associations (NTA) will be in town Sunday, November 13th with approximately 43 people. A docent will ride on a bus with them from Reno to Virginia City, followed by a guided tour of the town.

The Film Nevada Day was successful! A film company is interested in filming in town.

In December, the Grinch Made Me Do It Saloon Crawl will take place on Saturday, December 3rd. Parade of Lights and fireworks will also happen on the 3rd as well as the 10th.

The Storey County Christmas Party will be on Friday, December 16th at Piper's.

Chairperson A. Perry confirmed that the calendar shown is strictly for VCTC events, not inclusive to all events taking place in town. She suggested changing the title to "VCTC Calendar", to avoid confusion.

P. Hoyle asked about the merchant decorating contest. L. Kruse intends to get the rules out to the merchants sometime this month. The prize is still to be determined. Last year's prizes were different tiers of marketing at various events.

P. Hoyle emphasized the importance of merchant participation and making the prize worth the effort.

L. Ritter asked if the Board felt marketing (i.e., Facebook post) was an appropriate prize. P. Hoyle felt something more tangible, perhaps a cash prize, would be more enticing.

Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, confirmed that prizes included marketing and sponsorship at the Camel Races.

Chairperson A. Perry felt the winner being a sponsor at next year's Christmas on the Comstock seemed fitting, since the winner has the "Christmas Spirit".

R. Clark read Alexia Sober's comment on Zoom. Alexia suggested a cash prize to help pay for decorations, as well as marketing. Melody Hoover also commented on Zoom. She offered to do an article on the winner.

14. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PRESENTATION OF POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE CONTRACT FOR SERVICES WITH LIQUID BLUE EVENTS.

L. Ritter asked the Board for input regarding the Liquid Blue contract. The contract is currently an incentive-based contract. A question she posed was whether events should be self-supported.

Under the current agreement, Liquid Blue manages all parts of the event – planning, organization, implementation, and financial. The only thing Liquid Blue does not manage is the marketing. Since it is in their best interest to have the event successful, L. Ritter questioned whether it should be their responsibility to market as they see fit.

L. Ritter shared the challenges of people calling the Visitor Center directly for event questions that they may not have the answers to. It makes more sense for the event to have their own website so people can contact the event organizer directly.

Chairperson A. Perry felt it was important to clarify which events Liquid Blue manages and to clarify that other event organizers provide their own marketing. Liquid Blue events are Devil Made Me Do It Saloon Crawl; the Father Daughter Dance; Oyster Fry; Chili Cook-Off; Camel Races; Outhouse Races; Hunt for the Spirits; and the Grinch Saloon Crawl.

This contract is for one year.

Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, shared the history and evolution of marketing for these events. What started as print and radio advertising has since changed to digital. She went on to say that because of the branding looking similar to how the VCTC advertises, people assume it is the town putting on these events. R. Dotson felt having the branding fall under the "VCTC umbrella" from a visual standpoint makes for one consistent brand.

Jess Horning, Liquid Blue Events, has been working with Linda on the contract. He wants hours broken down more clearly to show where time is being spent. Liquid Blue would also like to revisit how communication with the ticket buyers is handled and would like to handle that internally.

Chairperson A. Perry shared that the VCTC staff is working on the paperwork for the Special Events process.

15. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

There was no report.

16. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: UPDATES FROM TOURISM SUPPORTING NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Nora Stefu, Historic Fourth Ward School Museum, shared that the season of the museum officially closed on October 31st, however, they extended their season until December 12th. The museum will be open from Friday to Monday 11 am – 3 pm until then. N. Stefu shared the success of the Halloween Ball. The event was sold out with 100 tickets. On Friday, November 11th, the Fourth Ward will be hosting their third Swing Dancing Event.

N. Stefu also shared that the museum will now be available to view virtually on their website and social media pages. N. Stefu spoke of financials. 2019 was the museum's highest grossing year. For 2022, the goal was to reach 70% and the museum accomplished this.

Chairperson A. Perry, St. Mary's Art Center, spoke of the success of the children's Halloween Event and the Women Investigating Ghost Sightings. The next Canvas and Cocktails event is on the 17th, in honor of Alice, a late staff member of St. Mary's Art Center. The next event is the 8th Annual Holiday Fair, on December 3rd and 4th.

17. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATES

L. Ritter shared the positive financials for tourism tax, sales tax, and county lodging tax.

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

L. Ritter then shared the occupancy rate, Virginia City's lodging tax, food and drinks sales, retail sales, traffic counts, and event traffic counts. There was a technical glitch while trying to obtain the website analytics, so November will be reported at the next meeting. L. Ritter went on to share that the Visitor Center welcomed 4,721 visitors during October. 1,787 attraction tickets were sold in October. The Ponderosa Mine Tour was the top selling attraction.

R. Clark stated the next meeting will be held December 8th at 10 am.

19. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PUBLIC COMMENT

Alexia Sober, Chamber of Commerce, would like to schedule regular updates. The Chamber just obtained their PO Box. They are working on opening their bank account and strategic planning. The Chamber may have a possible Director in the works.

P. Hoyle commented on the Halloween parade and its earlier start time. L. Kruse responded that the VCTC moved the parade time earlier to accommodate other events, but it will not be as early next year.

20. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 11:34 PM.

DRAFT