

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY HOTEL MOTEL TAX BOARD
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2021
CENTURY CENTER – BENDIX ARENA
8:30 A.M.

Members Present

John Anthony	Mark McDonnell	Paul Phair	Gary West
Greg Downes	Jenny McNeil	Scott Rieth	Ron Zeltwanger
Kurt Janowsky	Dan Parker	Carmen Piasecki	

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by President Anthony. He welcomed City of South Bend Common Council members Rachel Tomas-Morgan, Karen White, Sheila Niezgodski and Sharon McBride. Mary Ellen Smith conducted roll call of board members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Anthony entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2021, meeting. Kurt Janowsky moved to accept; Jenny McNeil seconded, and motion carried.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Ron Zeltwanger reviewed the Q3 Financial Report. The 1-1-21 cash balance was \$4,242,389.67; with receipts of \$2,541,172.38; and disbursements of 2,763,526.19; leaving a 9-30-21 balance of \$402,0035.86. The balance yet to be disbursed is \$1,610,057.94. The Mishawaka Sports Complex Fund ended Q3 with a cash balance of \$999,449.49 and the Potawatomi Zoo Capital Fund ended with a cash balance of \$666,632.78. Discussion followed that hotel rates have held strong in the area with low demand in early 2021 due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Anthony gave an overview of the Tourism Capital Investment Fund draft. The criteria requirements are dictated by statute. The St. Joseph County Council requested that the criteria be modeled after the Evansville program. Discussion followed about the following changes: Applications are due by May 31st of each year and should be emailed to the Executive Director of Visit South Bend Mishawaka. The review committee will consist of seven people: four Hotel Motel Tax Board members (one from South Bend, Mishawaka, St. Joseph County and the hotel-motel industry), one member of the St. Joseph County Council, one from the hospitality/hotel industry, and the Executive Director of Visit South Bend Mishawaka. Mark McDonnell motioned to accept the Tourism Capital Investment Fund with the changes; Greg Downes seconded, and motion carried.

AGENCY REPORTS

CENTURY CENTER

Jeff Jarnecke reviewed the revenue and expenses through 9-30-21 which showed a deficit operation in 2021. Indications are that 2022 should be in the black. The venue is not fully staffed yet to keep expenses lower. Current projects include new water heaters, improvements to Suites 16 and 18, additional esports equipment and dedicated bandwidth, reimaging operational spaces/kitchen, airborne mitigation technology and customer experience/POS equipment. Regional and national level events continue to be held in the Bendix Esports Arena driving economic impact, hotel room nights and visitors to South Bend. A title sponsorship has been secured and the tagline “Powered by Xfinity” will be added for the \$40,000 sponsorship fee. Staff are talking with other possible sponsors. The participants of the CENC Midwest Invitational were awestruck by the experience. Eight events are scheduled through June 2023.

MORRIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

More than 2,100 tickets were sold for the national Broadway show Rent held 9-3-21. From 6-28-22 to 9-30-22 the Morris will be dark for building improvements including new concrete floor, seating, HVAC, lighting, and fixtures by Ameresco, Tango Design, Frost Engineering. Irwin Seating needs 8-10 weeks lead for the seating fabric. The new seats will be 1" wider with cup holders and have 3" more space in each row. A trough will be added under the floor to hold cables from the stage to the sound booth.

The Morris 100 fundraising continues. More than \$16,700,000 has been secured. The Common Council will discuss appropriation of funding and approval of bond financing in December. The projects will go out to bid December/January via the Board of Public Works. The 100th anniversary celebration in 2022 will include social media channels (Morris Moments and Humans of the Morris), new usher attire, Equity in the Arts program, and special events (large outside concerts and ticketed theater event.)

MISHAWAKA SPORTS COMPLEX

Ken Prince gave an update on the Mishawaka Sports Complex. Discussions about adding ice are taking place with Notre Dame and the Ice Box. The challenge is filling the ice on non-tournament days. Mayor Wood has committed to build the largest sports complex possible and the next step is to finalize the size of the project. The plan is to go to bid in 2022. Drivers will approach the facility via a traffic roundabout. Naming rights are being discussed.

POTAWATOMI ZOO

Josh Sisk announced that 2021 has been a record-breaking year for the zoo. The number of visitors is expected to exceed 250,000 representing 8,700 households. This year is the first year of tracking visitor zip codes. There were 32,269 out-of-state visitors (from a total of 188,567 visitors) including Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico and 21 other countries. Over 10,000 visitors attended "Zoo Boo." The "Gift of Lights" starts the weekend of 11-26-21.

The new giraffes will arrive in two weeks. Planning continues with a zoo architect on the \$3.5 million bear exhibit and lodge theme concession stands.

A discussion followed on a way to track hotel room nights booked by visitors to the zoo. The zoo is trying to move online and then the question could be asked; however, many visitors do not want to go online.

VISIT SOUTH BEND MISHAWAKA

Rob DeCleene reported that there are 5,026 hotel rooms in St. Joseph County. The LaQuinta Inn & Suites on 933 North in Roseland recently opened. The Four Winds Hotel recently celebrated the top 23rd story built which will make the hotel the second tallest building in South Bend and push the number of hotels in the county to 5,400.

Meetings are slow to come back. The military vehicles are returning in June 2022. Hockey Time is back starting 9-23-21. The 2022 Motor Cross of Nations will be held at Redbud. A new "Only in the Bend" parks pass to view public art had 723 signups and 684 check-ins. Video shoots by J2 Marketing have been created for a new destination showcase. A new website was launched 8-26-21. Web data is benchmarking with 2019.

SB14 was passed and was enacted 10/1/21 to increase the Innkeeper's Tax from 6% to 8%. Lastly, everyone was invited to attend the annual Industry Partner Holiday Luncheon 12-2-21 at Gillespie Conference Center.

NEW BUSINESS

FUTURE HYBRID MEETING FORMAT

Jeff Jarnecke spoke on the ability for the board to meet in a hybrid format to allow members to attend meetings online provided that they must be seen and heard. A roll call must be taken for action items. There must be 50% of board members meeting in person. It is up to the board to create a policy. Language would need to be drafted. Carmen Piasecki will work with the St. Joseph County Council to draft a policy to present to the board. A suggestion was made to include a requirement that board members must attend two meetings each year in person. Whether this would apply to committee meetings would need to be clarified with the County Council.

MORRIS PROJECT FINANCING RESOLUTION

POTAWATOMI ZOO PROJECT FINANCING RESOLUTION

Randy Rompola of Barnes & Thornburg reviewed resolutions for the Morris and Potawatomi Zoo projects financing. The resolution would go to the Common Council for the first reading and then a final reading. These are in an effort to secure lower interest rates, will be backed by the Redevelopment Commission and will allow bond funds for the projects. The zoo financing would be for 20 years and the Morris financing would be for 25 years.

Todd Samuelson of Baker & Tilly stated that demand for municipal bonds is high. There tends to be a rush at the end of the year so funds are available to invest at the first of the year. Discussion followed that Mishawaka would be expected to do a financing resolution. A suggestion was made to add language in the resolutions that "the bonds are not to exceed the fund balance." Greg Downes made a motion to accept the resolutions with the additional wording that "the bonds are not to exceed the fund balance;" motion seconded by Dan Parker; and motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

MORRIS 100 CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Greg Downes thanked the South Bend Common Council for the unanimous support of the Morris 100 Campaign.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, John Anthony adjourned the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

JA:mes