

Minutes of the Hotel-Motel Tax Board of Managers February 18, 2026 Meeting

Vice President Micki Kidder called the meeting to order at 8:30 am noting that John Anthony was out of the country during today's meeting.

Micki welcomed everyone to our first meeting of 2026 and asked for the board's pleasure on approving the November 25, 2025, minutes. There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes. With no discussion, the motion carried.

Paul Phair presented the treasurer's report on behalf of Ron Zeltwanger, who was unable to attend the meeting. Paul noted FY25 was a record revenue year. The board started the year with \$6.34 million. The board brought in about \$8.13 million this year and spent about \$6.1 million, so there is a cash balance at the end of the year of \$8.3 million. The \$8.13 million in revenue was a record year. It's a record year by a significant margin, which was really bolstered by the third and fourth quarters. Paul noted a budget for 2026 of \$8.081M, so the board is starting in a very strong position from a financial standpoint. The Mishawaka Fieldhouse started cash balance at the beginning of 2025 with just over \$1,000,000 and had receipts of \$1.62 million, disbursements of \$480,000, and a cash balance at the end of 2025 of \$2.23 million. The zoo started the year with \$1.189 million, total receipts of \$813,000 in 2025, disbursements of \$383,000, and a cash balance at the end of the year of \$1.62 million. The Morris started the year at \$1.035 million, total receipts of \$813,000, and disbursements of \$380,000. They ended 2025 with \$1.46 million. The Tourism Capital Investment Fund had a starting cash balance in 2025 of \$2.57 million, total receipts of \$1.62 million, disbursements of \$2.5 million, so it finished the year with a cash balance of \$1.69 million going.

Micki presented the President's report. Micki highlighted the 2025 record year. She underscored the importance of the \$13 million in innkeepers tax noting that every quarter was up year-over-year. ADR of \$136.02 was an increase of 2% year over year,

which is very strong for St. Joseph County, and occupancy was up 14% year over year at a consistent 60%. There were also 350,000 nights coming from short-term rentals, which was strong, and an increase of 27% year-over-year. Micki noted that the New Carlisle construction projects drove approximately 115,000 room nights, which is impressive. She also noted that seven home football games didn't hurt either along with one concert at Notre Dame Stadium. She cited the TCIF deployment and thanked everyone who has really contributed beautifully to that. Regarding the tourism capital investment fund, she noted that a small group will receive grant proposals and deploy those grants. John Anthony will serve on that committee for 2026 along with Kurt Janowsky, Ron Zeltwanger, Wesley Clark with Embassy Suites and Joe Thomas with St. Joseph County Council, and herself. She also thanked Paul for his leadership in the last couple of years.

Micki continued to work through the agenda, moving to the agency reports and called on Jeff Jarnecke.

Jeff Jarnecke, executive director of Visit South Bend Mishawaka, started his report by commenting on the Century Center. He noted the deficit operation of about \$600,000 from FY25 noting that the operation failed to deliver upon expectations, but with VSBM's management as of January 1, 2026, they will work to counteract the past losses. He also noted the Century Center contributed around 6,000 hotel room nights in 2025 according to their tracking software called Arrivalist. The current budget called for around \$3.5M in revenue and slightly more in expense resulting in an anticipated deficit operation of \$57,000. He referenced upcoming discussions and a future board presentation around the longer-term investment strategy into the Century Center. Jarnecke then commented on the successes within St. Joseph County in 2025. Occupancy eclipsed more than 1,000,000 in hotel demand, which was the first time ever and a record. He highlighted that it was especially important where the rest of the state was down around 1% on occupancy, St. Joseph County was up 14%. He noted LaPorte County and Elkhart County were up as well, not nearly to the same level. The projects in New Carlisle are continuing, and he expects AWS to continue to deliver at a lesser rate than they did this past year. Synergy Cells, which is the GM component, is slowing down. Jarnecke concluded by offering a special thank you and small gift to the board for their vision, leadership, and support. Discussion ensued and Jarnecke responded to several questions from the board.

Nick Kleva, Mishawaka Fieldhouse vice president, gave an update as to the recent events and efforts at the facility. In nine tournaments, they welcomed 737 teams, about 22,000 attendees, and an estimated with 550 room nights. Some of those were regional tournaments and other ones were just rec tournaments that they hosted on one day. The multisport camp has been a proven success. They hosted one in the summer months with about 60 this past summer and offered one in the wintertime when kids were off school during the holiday. They are now hosting two different weeks this coming summer, so it's a unique model for us. Kleva noted that NIVA volleyball is the largest contributor to the facility with about 184 teams and just under 1800 players. They are practicing Monday through Friday, 5:00 to 10:00 PM and hosting tournaments on the weekends. Five Star Basketball just had their winter teams wrap up with six teams. They are going to move into their spring summer AAU team where they're planning to have 20 teams with about 180 players that will be practicing. Pickleball again continues to be a success, especially this time of year. Canes baseball and softball teams are ramping up to get into their seasons with about 26 teams. The Adidas basketball circuit tournaments are approaching. The first one is in March and is a junior event. There are two in May and then the big one is July with the girls' live period. He expects around 2,000 room nights being generated. Some discussion ensued and Kleva responded to the board's questions.

Dezha Moore, chief of venues and promotions for Venues, Parks & Arts, reported on efforts at the Morris. She noted that the Morris had a very strong quarter in Q4. For the overall year end, the Morris had revenue of \$2.2 million that includes, though the city, a subsidy of \$540,000. Expenses for 2025 were \$1.7M; however, if the city subsidy and previous year's show revenue are removed, the Morris had a deficit of \$463,000. Moore reported that work was on-going to focus on the budget and new revenue streams. She thanked Navarre Hospitality for their work within the Morris. She cited that, on average, most Morris shows leave about 1,000 seats and tickets on the on the table. She noted the celebration of the Raclin Murphy Encore Center's opening. She noted they are offering a box service for those who have the seats in any of our boxes where guest will be able to scan a QR code on their armrests and the Navarre Hospitality staff will serve them their products directly to their seats. She shared that during our dark period last year they implemented a community survey with both current audiences and new audiences via an e-mail segment campaign and

a Facebook poll campaign. Moore acknowledged the Equity in the Arts program, which is in its second year.

Josh Sisk, executive director of the Potawatomi Zoo, presented the annual review of 2025. He noted they had a record-breaking year with visitation, an all-time record, of 409,453 guests, compared to about 360,000 last year. The Luminate event put them at a level that they thought they could not achieve and way into the future. They did track zip codes with St. Joseph County at 52%, Elkhart County at 32%, Marshall County at 3.4%. There were more than 3,100 unique zip codes coming to the zoo and that was about 248,000 ticket sales. Zoo Luminate had 80,000 visitors with 60% from St. Joseph County and 23% from outside the region. The Zoo had guests from all 50 states, three US territories in 10 countries, Indiana accounted for 205,000 guests; Michigan 32,000; Illinois 2,000; and Ohio 1,200. Sisk reported on Big Cat Tracks noting that they raised about \$4.4 million. It is about a \$6 million project. They have about 71 donations over the \$3,000 level and 13 of them over \$100,000. Education programs had 350 outreach programs, including 30 programs with 30,000 participants. He noted that the Zoo had a lot of significant births this past year, especially with their greater kudu. They are the antelope that are in Africa. The Zoo donated over \$20,000 to field conservation. Sisk reported that income in 2015 was \$3.277 million and in 2025, it was \$9.9 million. Gift shop sales were previously \$213,000 and now are \$1,000,000. Concessions used to be \$250,000 and they achieved \$1.5 million last year.

Micki then moved to old business, noting there was none.

She then transitioned to new business. She introduced Anastasia from the City of South Bend staff who is assisting the board during this meeting. Micki also noted that roll call was missing so she asked for that to occur. Gary West, Micki Kidder, Paul Phair, Jenny McNeil, Mark McDonnell, Carmen Piasecki, Kyle Willis, and Kurt Janowsky were all present.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 am.