ST. JOSEPH COUNTY HOTEL MOTEL TAX BOARD

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

Century Center 120 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Blvd., South Bend, IN 46601

8:30 A.M.

Members Present	Members Absent
John Anthony Rob Decleene Micki Kidder Kurt Janowsky Mark McDonnell Jenny McNeil Paul Phair Carmen Piasecki Gary West Kyle Willis Ron Zeltwanger	

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by President John Anthony. Darius Garner conducted roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

President John Anthony entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2026, meeting. There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes. With no discussion, the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT, Ron Zeltwanger

Summary:

Ron noted that the Hotel Motel budget began the year with $8.3 million. By March 31, the fund had received just under $1.5 million in receipts and made approximately $2.5 million in disbursements, leaving a balance of $7.4 million. About $5.5 million remains to be disbursed from this year's budget. Ron also noted approximately $1.625 million in prior-year TCIS commitments. The Hill Street yard project includes a $750,000 commitment from 2025 that has not yet been disbursed. Dog Lake Social near the Fieldhouse also has a $750,000 commitment that remains on hold. Norman Park Miracle League has a $250,000 commitment, of which $125,000 has been disbursed. Some projects included in the $1.625 million commitment may or may not move forward; that remains to be determined. Ron noted that the Mishawaka Fieldhouse is short for a July invoice and is requesting an additional $200,000 from its fund—not from the Hotel Motel budget—as an advance. Ron asked the board to approve the request. Ron also noted that, from Quarter 2 of 2025 through Quarter 1 of 2026, the board received slightly more than $8 million in Hotel Motel tax fund receipts. After three years of steady annual receipts around $6 million, the current year is tracking above $8 million, showing an upward trend.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, John Anthony

Summary:

John first started off by stating that the President's Report will be brief. John thanked Micki Kidder, Gary West, Rob DeCleene, and Ron Zeltwanger for the work they are about to do on the Allocation Committee and for being part of that committee. He stated that he was excited for the encore performance of Kyle Willis and Gary West who will be the Nominating Committee. He thanked them both for again agreeing to be part of that committee.

TOURISM CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND REPORT, Micki Kidder

Summary:

Micki stated that the Tourism Capital Investment Committee has met to review the proposals for 2026. This is the 5th year the committee has been receiving proposals. The committee has distributed $4 million. This includes the Icebox, Indiana Dinosaur Museum, Indiana Invaders, George Wilson Park, and Leeper Park. This year the committee received 11 requests totaling $9.8 million. The budget for TCIF this year is $2 million. The recommendation of the committee is to distribute $750 thousand with $500 thousand to Indiana Invaders for facility updates. With an additional $250 thousand to the City of South Bend for Howard Park. These funds will be for the Howard Park Bandshell. Micki stated that both projects will drive up the numbers of rooms rented and tourism.

There was a motion from Micki Kidder for board approval of the fund allocations recommended by the Tourism Capital Investment Committee. It was seconded by Jenny McNeil with the motion carrying.

POTAWATOMI ZOO, Josh Sisk

Summary:

Josh started off by really highlighting that daily admission is up from last year. There was an 18.2% in daily admission year to date from last night. While also noting that Luminate had a 5.34% increase in admission year to date from last year. Josh stated that the daily admission is what really has their attention, because that is not shared revenue unlike Luminate's admission revenue.

The theme for this year's Luminate is Under The Sea. A question from the board, "Was this the same group that brought in Luminate last year?" Josh stated that it was the same group that they partnered with last called Tianyu Arts & Culture. Josh shared that they are struggling a bit this year. A lot of the VISAs got denied this year. Last year they had 20 people come set up and this year were only 6, but they got it done.

The board wanted to know a bit more about what Josh was alluding to about Luminate's revenue. Josh stated that it is a shared revenue with a 50/50 split. That is why Luminate's admission price is $22.00. The split does not include concessions or merchandise. Josh emphasized that it is a great deal for them, with the board agreeing.

With Luminate, Josh shared that the Zoo's team is working nonstop with longer days. He gave kudos to the team for championing through as everyone is excited about the work. Josh shared that the lights have no adverse effect on the animals. They have had to adjust the music a bit, but other than that, there are no issues with the animals surrounding Luminate.

Josh shared that Big Cat Tracks is coming along with its timeline of completion on track. The ribbon cutting for Big Cat Tracks is still scheduled for October with a soft opening happening at the end of the season. The PR and marketing for next year will be focused on Big Cat Tracks.

The board questioned if the Zoo's parking has been solved, with Josh stating that it has not been fully resolved yet. The city is working on an expansion project on Kid's Kingdom which will help with parking for the zoo in the long run. There have been upwards of 3k people who have showed up for Luminate, and fortunately the community and neighbors don't see it as a bad thing. So the hopes to make street parking available for the zoo, because that is helping making the parking hurdle work.

MISHAWAKA FIELDHOUSE, Tony Stearns/Nick Kleva

Summary:

The team wanted to highlight that they just wrapped up their largest basketball tournament to date, the Addias Basketball Tournament. It was the 3SSB Live Event. It was a Friday – Sunday tournament. The tournament brought in over 120 teams, about 150 games, and 300 D1 college coaches. This was one of four stops for this tournament, so it was a big thing for Mishawaka Fieldhouse to be one of the stops.

The year-to-date numbers were shared. There were 20 tournaments with 15 of them being volleyball, 4 basketball, and 1 futsal. The fieldhouse has seen over 2,000 teams with 750 being out of town. Upwards of 60,000 unique attendees and 4,500 plus rooms nights from the various tournaments. It was stated that in comparison to last year's number, the fieldhouse is up in every category.

Looking ahead at the fieldhouse, they are moving out of tournament season into camp season. Going into June and July, there will be a camp almost every week, with some weeks having multiple camps running at the fieldhouse.

Partnership with OSMC was something the fieldhouse really wanted to highlight. At the end of the July a football clinic with Ian Book will be hosted. OSMC also opened a recovery lounge with into the MS space. The lounge has really taken off within the last couple of months.

There will be a girls 3SSB tournament coming with 108 team and 413 games.

The board asked about parking. And it was stated that volleyball games will be spaced out to help remedy the parking issue. The volleyball tournaments are where they have seen the biggest challenges when it comes to parking.

MORRIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, Dezha Moore

Summary:

Dezha started off by sharing that year-to-date the Morris saw $379,350 in revenue, $450,067 in expenses, leaving a net deficit of $70.715. She shared that there is a plan to bring in more revenue dollars to combat and the deficit.

The Quarter 1 breakdown:

Palais Royale	EVENTS YTD 31	ATTENDANCE 5,342	Q1 2026 ROOM NIGHTS 233	2026 Y/E PROJECTED ROOM NIGHTS 2,122
Morris Performing Arts Center	EVENTS YTD 34 EVENTS YTD W/ Raclin Murphy Encore Center and EIA 62	ATTENDANCE 18,750	Q1 2026 ROOM NIGHTS 290	2026 Y/E PROJECTED ROOM NIGHTS 1,500

Dezha stated that looking ahead there will be marketing campaigns to promote the Raclin Murphy Encore Center as a premier rental venue. There will be more aggressive marketing strategies to boost ticket sales.

Dezha wanted to highlight that The Grinch wil be rehearsing at the Morris for 11 days generating an additional $25k in revenue and she is estimating that will generate about 26 extra room rentals per day for The Grinch’s crew.

Dezha shared the upcoming touring and Broadway shows, single night shows, and the recurring and community events hosted at the Morris, and Raclin Murphy Encore Center.

Dezha wanted to welcome the new staff members at the Morris; Fernando Briones, MPAC-Operations Manager; Noah Laramore, VPA- Marketing Manager (Venues Liaison); Lathaniel Heisey, MPAC- Assistant Director of Ticket Sales & Strategy; and Darius Garner, MPAC-Administrative Assistant.

The board wanted to know the comparison from last year to this year when it came to show and regional draw. Dezha stated that this year the Morris has done 12 self-promoted shows in comparison to last year's 1 self-promoted show.

The board wanted to know if the Raclin Murphy Encore Center has been getting bookings. Dezha stated that the space has been booked well, even through word of mouth. The campaign just started to push it as a rental space. That has gone well, and the space has welcomed organizations to book the space for meetings, luncheons, while still using the space as an atrium for show nights at the Morris.

VISIT SOUTH BEND MISHAWAKA/CENTURY CENTER, Jeff Jarnecke

Summary:

Jeff started off by saying that with Visit South Bend Mishawka on the St. Joseph side, occupancy is down 6.5%. He noted that it is a strong year in comparison to years in the past.

The partnership with the City of South Bend and Leeper park. The ribbon cutting for the new tennis courts, with tennis driving about 3,000 hotel nights per year. Jeff shared the Byer's Softball Complex ribbon cutting will happen and events there will drive 7,000 to 9,000 hotel nights in a year.

Jeff stated that with the controllables and non-controllables he is hopeful that the gap will close concerning the lower occupancy rates.

Jeff stated that there is concern about losing hotels rooms to Elkhart during the Microsoft project because of lower rates in Elkhart. Rates in St. Joseph are higher and the surrounding areas with lower rates allow for the construction workers and builder's per diem to stretch.

The concert weekend saw 93% occupancy. Jeff stated that without the concert the occupancy would have been closer to 65%.

Jeff wanted to turn focus to the Century Center, and stated that he hopes everyone has seen the improvements to the building. Whether it was the landscaping out front, to the fragrance in the building to the soft goods around the building.

Jeff shared that the projected budgeted show the Century Center having about a $56K deficit for the year. That number is now looking like a $100K deficit. The purchases of $100k in salt and snow removal for the winter months were the driving factor behind the rise in the deficit. To close that gap, more local programing and events will be scheduled. Looking significantly close the gap if not break even for the year.

To close out the presentations from the agencies, President John Anthony thanked everyone who presented. He then stated that he was a big fan of the new pacing that was implemented at the meeting. He wants to keep the same pacing and framework for the meeting moving forward. It allows for questions to be asked and answered while getting the high value information needed from each agency.

OLD BUSINESS

Summary:

There was no old business to report on.

NEW BUSINESS

Summary:

The board is moving into the allocation season. So with that the board invited Jeff Jarnecke back to present. Jeff stated that it was time to have the conversation around the Century Center and the future of the building as we approach the 50th anniversary of the building.

The building's square footage is 225,000 with about a $15.7 million economic impact, and last year drove about 6K in hotel room nights. A building of this size and location should really be driving hotel rooms at the 20K – 25K range. Keeping in mind that the building itself was not built to be a convention center 50 years ago. Its original purpose was to be a civic building. With the need to change to become a convention center, the building itself did not change. It not changing, brought about a lot of challenges from operations to the brick aesthetics of the building.

Jeff wanted to share with the board the options regarding what to do with the building. The options range from a complete demolition of the building to a significant investment of upwards to $100 million plus into the building.

To start off with the demolition of the building will leave 11 acres downtown to be repurposed for something other than a convention center. We are struggling with competing with other convention centers in the area.

The next option is to maintain the status quo. It would be a $1.45 million operating subsidy ask from the board. The board has been contributing anywhere between $500K - $800k annually for capital expenses associated with the center.

The third option would be a moderate investment. That would be a $20 million - $30 million project updating the entire building with an in-fill of Great Hall. With this, there would be conversations about the Museum of Art and Jefferson St. connecting back.

Lastly is the significant investment which would be $100 million plus project. This would be updating the entire building and adding more square footage by expanding. Including a hotel to this would not include the initial budget but an addition to this project.

The question if the current building was demolished, where would the need for a civic center be fulfilled? It is a decision that the community would need to come together on. The Civic Center Board, Hote-Motel Tax Boar, and the City of South Bend. The building is right now heavily used as a Civic Center and the absence of it would leave a hole in the city and community.

The current business the building is doing right now is predominantly local. There is some out-of-town business, but for the center as it is now, it is more local and some regional driving the business.

Everyone agrees that the conversation around the future of the Century Center is needed. Especially with the 50th anniversary coming up. It will take a lot of conversation and everyone coming together. The City of South Bend, The Civic Center Board of Managers, and the Hotel-Motel Tax Board of Managers. With the board entering a budget cycle, these conversations and meetings need to happen for allocation purposes.

The board has agreed that the status quo option is not the viable option for long term.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion to adjourn, it was seconded, and the motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 9:37am.