

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY HOTEL MOTEL TAX BOARD
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025
CENTURY CENTER, RECITAL HALL
8:30 A.M.

Members Present

John Anthony	Paul Phair
Becky Fletcher	Gary West
Mark McDonnell	Kyle Willis
Jenny McNeil	

Members Absent

Carmen Piasecki
Rob DeCleene
Ron Zeltwanger
Micki Kidder

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 a.m. by President Anthony. Casey Krempec conducted roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

President John Anthony entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the 11/7/24 meeting. Jenny McNeil motioned to approve, Gary west seconded, and motion carried.

TREASURERS REPORT

President Anthony presented the cash balance started the year at \$6.6 million and brought in just under \$6.3 million and spent a little over \$6.5 million which was as budgeted. We ended the year with \$6,347,912.24. The total collections coming into this month are \$6.3 million, which is about 1.3% below the prior year. That's the second highest ever, and we'll move on to 2025 with great optimism.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have a pretty good start because we had a playoff game in December so being we are cashed based, the collections from the 12/20/24 game will not be reflected in Q4, they will be put into Q1 of 2025. We've had a big head start this year. Looking forward to 7 home games this fall as well. President Anthony, Jeff Jarnecke and Jeff Rea visited the newly renovated Ice Box.

AGENCY REPORTS

VISIT SOUTH BEND MISHAWAKA

Jeff Jarnecke, Executive Director, reported 2024 numbers. Occupancy is up 2%, the select 15 hotels are up 60%. The demand side of rentals is 924,000, but there's a footnote, as we've talked about short-term rentals that are not included in that number such as VRBO and Air BnB with a record demand coming in on the private residence side as well. ADR remains strong as well, in 2016, 2017, and 2018, those were the last times we saw record numbers in terms of occupancy. The highest ADR on record this past year at \$133 per room night. To start 2025, we're up 30% in occupancy, so we're around 50% coming out of January, which is 30 points better than we were last January. A lot of that is attributable to the construction in New Carlisle. GM and AWS projects are generating about 8000 hotel room nights, with both erecting steel here in another couple weeks as well. We also expect construction to take a better part of probably 7 years out there before AWS part is satisfied along the way, and so we expect 4000-5000 construction workers every day with the vast majority of them from out of town.

In-Keepers taxed for their stays as well as sales tax, so a record number in 2024 it should be about 322,000 total hotel room nights. That equates to about 100,000 bookings along the way. With peak of about 1400 private residences in St Joseph County that were available for rent, especially during the football season. We averaged something closer to about 1100 homes on any given night. Within St. Joseph County, that are available for rent. The guests that are coming in are booking about 90 days in advance, so it's very intentional that they're coming to St. Joseph County. We're really seeing those homes that are three or five plus bedrooms and that are taking the lion's

share of the bookings. Then with an average of about \$357 in terms of ADR in what they're seeing. 25% of our gross revenues within the city are from short-term rentals.

Tourism master plan - We delivered the final report closer to June or July. But it took some time to do some consensus around this ultimately what ended up being the final plan. 228 pages in full. But highlighting the top 4 goals of enhancing visitor experience, improving resident quality of life, fostering economic growth and encouraging investment. Four primary initiatives that we're going to follow to accomplish those goals include development of festivals within St. Joseph County, additional investment in the youth sports tourism, Greater collaboration with the University of Notre Dame and amplification in support of our existing attractions. We are starting an ambassador program with a local brand influencer as well and will update on that further.

Tourism Capital Investment Fund - Applications are due in just a couple of weeks on March 2nd. We'll bring it back to the May meeting with any recommendations

I was proud to announce the selected new software solution called Arrivalist. Essentially, they track the visitors that come to our area based on cell phone pings with geofencing and other data points. We'll be able to share some detailed information. So more to come on that, it's really a sophisticated solution that were proud to onboard and use here soon.

annual report –showing success in St Joseph county, especially with the Indiana dinosaur museum, the link trail, the Mishawaka fieldhouse, we are grateful for the stakeholders and the county and leadership of the tax board.

POTAWATOMI ZOO

Josh Sisk, Executive Director, reported they had a great 2024, another record-breaking year. The zoo had 360,000 visitors, when you look back at 2010, they had 180k. So, they've been able to track zip codes for just admission tickets, this is the sample size of over 290,000 people that bought admission tickets and it was over 3900 unique ZIP codes, which is substantial because it was every state across in the country. We don't know if People are coming here staying in hotels just to go to the zoo, but we know that when people are coming here, they utilize the zoo and hopefully that means extended stays with more to do in our region extending that stay. We have some non-USA visitors, a lot from Canada. Out of that 290k, 127k were outside of St. Joe County and then out of the 290,000, not the 127k - over 35% were out of the regions, which are the three counties, Elkhart, Marshall and St. Joe. We've gone from about a \$3 million operation to almost an \$8 million operation in the last six years. We brought in about \$783,000 in our 5 events and these are what we consider kind of our fundraisers: Eat and Drink Brew at the Zoo, Gift of Lights and Zoo Boo and then corporate picnics and education. In 365 days, they did 443 presentations. We have two cars, we go out to programs, we go out to schools. Our education department saw about 80,000 kids, community members, even just going out to nursing homes.

The number of animals is more than ever at 510 individuals, with 135 species. It's been remarkable in the zoo community as an accredited zoo, there's only 250 zoos across the country and we all work together for species survival. With the new upgrades and the new respect, we're getting in the community, we've really been able to be part of the sustainability of these species, which is living up to our mission.

Update on Big Cat Track. We were awarded \$1,000,000 from Read Grant for Big Cat tracks. This is the new first expansion of the zoo. If you haven't heard about it, it goes into two acres of the park. It's kind of the final phase of our initial master plan, but it gets all the big cats out of the big cages and into modern habitat. That was important from the accreditation standpoint. We're a little behind what we thought, it's been kind of extraordinary over the last seven years when you think

about four major capital campaigns raising over \$21 million, we sometimes feel like we were behind but typically, a project would be in fundraising for a couple years, maybe in design and maybe four years later, you get a project. But we need we need people back because that's what's kept this momentum going. We know that if we can keep going with this project, we can be a 450-500k person zoo who once we get to where we want to be, the budget for this project is about 5 and a half million we've raised about two million from donations, we have the \$1,000,000 Readi grant, so we're still about \$2.5 million off from this project. Unfortunately, it's kind of delaying groundbreaking a little bit. We're not quite where we need to be to do that, so we're going to be working this year to continue fundraising. We also, with the Readi grant, there were some kind of misunderstandings on the fact that we need a 20% public match for \$1,000,000. So, we're going to be working on that this year too. That's about \$1 million of the \$5.5 million.

We have 10 individuals coming in from China starting the lantern festival. It's basically life-size, animals, everything from elephants to giraffes, all made from lanterns. It's going to be over 63 displays in the zoo. It's called zoo Luminate. It's going to start March 19th and it's going to run for 10 weeks, Wednesday through Sunday, and it's a nighttime event, so it runs from 6:00 to about 10:30 at night. We're expecting anywhere from 50k to 60,000 additional visitors this year for this event, and they're coming in today. We also just finished our 2025 commercial, which is going to start airing, excited about that.

MISHAWAKA SPORTS FIELDHOUSE

Nick Kleva, Director of Events, Marketing and Sponsorship, reported that in our tournament season, since Jan 1st, we've hosted 13 tournaments and events, A majority being volleyball and a couple Basketball tournaments in there. We had a cheer event on February 1st, which was kind of a unique event. Then we had a baseball scouting testing day and a soccer tournament. We welcome through those tournaments 851 teams, 109 that have come from outside the county or what we consider traveling teams. Those tournaments brought in about 30,000 attendees, That's both athlete's and spectators. Between January 8th and January 17th, we had 15,000 people through the Mishawaka fieldhouse doors, that included some practices throughout the week, but also kind of sandwiched between two bigger tournament weekends. Just between those 13 events that we hosted so far were estimating about 624 room nights.

Updates on our clubs that we have in House, NIVA volleyball being the largest one with tryout season with 183 teams, which is about 1800 participants.

Five-star basketball they just completed their second season, about 270 players, and then they have their trials right now for their AAU travel teams.

Pickleball has been booming, we have 840 people that have come through the doors that are in our database that either are a member and just play dropping or within a specific club. We've offered two pickleball one on one classes with 25 players and have already had more signups. On Fridays we started adult nights, those average about 45 players every night.

Canes baseball, they have baseball and softball teams, about 250 players. PBR professional report combine, largest in Indiana, with 72 players and 22 being outside the county.

Then finally our turf, we had Zach Ganzberg join our team in November. He's had two sections of programs for three to eight-year olds, with 77 participants. He has a big focus on home school kids. During the non-peak hours the facilities we've had roughly 100 students each week come through the doors. Like I mentioned, our soccer league is 28 teams with adult, high school and youth and then partnerships with IUSB, Bethel, St Mary's, St. Joe and Penn high school, various baseball teams, soccer teams, practice teams, lacrosse teams all practicing as well.

March to December is shaping up to be a great one, 19 events and counting again as we call the season January until the end of May. We're looking at some basketball high school programming, high school leagues, high school shootouts, etc. We have board basketball tournaments in July, also a

Hotel Motel Tax Board Minutes

11/7/24

Pg. 4

card show we're hosting in August. We locked down a date for the 2nd annual Mishawaka Midwest open which will be at the end of October, with prizes up to \$30k which is up from \$20k last year. Our goal is 600 players this year, we were just north of 400 last year. We'll look into offer summer camps, specifically sports specific ones, but also a multi sport camp. We ran a short version of that in December, with about 20 kids for two days for volleyball, basketball, pickleball, and soccer activities for a couple hours. We're looking to do maybe a little longer one in June, but then also offer specific sport camps as well. We have 7 confirmed sponsors. Hopefully, next time you're there you can see a lot more life and a lot more sponsorship.

CENTURY CENTER

Dezha Moore, General Manager of Venues, reported that for Century Center capital, our revenue sat at \$41706 with expenses at \$223k. Reasons for that are ongoing projects such as skywalk restroom fixture upgrades, chill system, cooling reproduction, etc.

Century Center operations revenue sat at \$4.5 mil with expenses at \$ 4.9 mil, which was a net loss of \$393k. Our expense budget had a savings of \$406k and utilities and maintenance stayed below budget as well. In 2024, we generated 16,386 room nights. Projection in 2025 of 17,296. For the last 90 days we have secured the Indiana Prosecuting Assc. and the Indiana Criminal Justice Assc. PlacerAI Data shows in 2024, prior to an event, 8.9% came from Doubletree 7.8% came from the Courtyard as well as 1.3% from the Aloft South Bend. Post event you see 6.7% went back to Doubletree, 4.6% went to the Courtyard and 0.7% went to Aloft.

MORRIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Moore reported that for the Morris in 2024, we generated 4191 hotel room nights. PlacerAI Data, prior to the event at the Morris, 3.7% came from the DoubleTree, 1.4% came from the Aloft also, post-show you see 2.7% went to the Doubletree, 1.6% went to the Aloft and 1% to the Courtyard. We saw revenue of \$7.7 mil with expenses of \$1.4 mil in our Capital Fund. \$6.2 mil in private donations. Steel beams are going up and the Steel Signing ceremony is scheduled for March 13th. We also have a couple of other improvements such as our updated digital audio system. Operations revenue sat at \$1.2 mil with our expenses at \$1.5 mil. We saw a net loss of \$307,000. This is due to our Broadway season not opening in the fall like usual, they didn't start their season until Jan 2025 which is very unusual. Previous years, in 2024, our ticket sales revenue, which is the amount of money the production company makes, that was \$2.9 million. The revenue ticket fee is the amount we keep from the ticket sales; we kept about \$467,000. The total numbers of tickets sold per year, for 2024 we saw 75,560 tickets sold.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

President Anthony stated the TCIF committee last year was deferred, awards pushed back. The committee members who made that choice last year have all agreed to serve again. Wesley Clark (Embassy Suites), Joe Thomas (County Council) Jeff Jarnecke (Visit SB/Mish), and from the board, Paul Phair, Micki Kidder, Ron Zeltwanger and John Anthony will make up the TCIF Committee. They will meet in April and report back in May.

ADJOURNMENT

President Anthony announced the May meeting will be held at the newly renovated Ice Box on 5/29/25. Mark McDonnell motioned to adjourn, and Jenny McNeil seconded. Motion carried and meeting was adjourned at 9:46am.

JA:CLK