

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Galena Country Tourism (GCT)

Tues., February 19, 2019, 3 p.m.

GGMI Admin Office

101 Bouthillier St., Galena IL 61036

The Finance Committee met to review monthly financial reports. Attending were Collin Sanderson, Birgit Radin, Katie Burcham, and CEO Rose Noble

Absent: Nikki Peebles

The committee reviewed January financials. Digital marketing is under budget for January. Noble notes that we will have a better projection for next fiscal year's budget since using QuickBooks (QB) online for the past year. The print promotion is over budget for the month due to the mini mags because they budgeted to pay the bill in a different month.

Looking at fringe benefits and retirement contributions, Noble believes they are separated out in QB due to payroll being entered. Noble would like to have fringe benefits to show what is being paid under one category such as insurance and retirement.

Radin questioned dues and subscriptions and why budgeted \$200 and spent \$2100, Noble confirmed it is the subscription for the Adobe Creative Suite and wasn't budgeted for January but was worked into the FY'19 budget. Adobe Creative Suite is used for in-house design and layout amongst other useful tools.

Sanderson asked if we had heard back from the County yet in regards to tax collection for VRBO's and Air B&B's. Noble has yet to hear from the County but did meet with the GCT Strategic Planning Committee where they discussed what kind of reporting they will request from the County. Noble noted the City provides a easy-to-dissect list of type of lodging along with what is collected and they also provide a RevPar/Occupancy report which is extremely useful. This is something we would like to see from the County. Sanderson notes that Air B&B's and VRBO's are popping up everywhere and wants to know how the County is keeping track of them. He says there are two questions: "How many VRBO's/Air B&B's" and "Is the County collecting taxes from the property or is VRBO/Air B&B collecting taxes and sending to county?" Noble has reached out to Rockford City Rep. to see how they developed their ordinances. The City of Rockford worked with Air B&B to start the tax-collection process, she followed up again to learn how their processes works. She has yet to hear a response. The goal is to have VRBO and Air B&B along with other platforms to require tax added to stay and then send to the County which would ensure that taxes are being collected. Noble will ask these questions at the next County Tourism Committee meeting.

Radin noted that County lodging tax is down from last year. But take into consideration that some County properties pay quarterly so that number isn't always a true representation until the end of the fiscal year.

YTD out of the \$1.9 mil budget \$1.2 mil has been spent. Contingency monies remain untouched. Expenditures are looking good, \$700k of the \$978k marketing budget has been spent. Most of the grant money has been received. The opportunistic line item is large but will be spent towards the end of the fiscal year with another Midwest Living insert and along with other opportunities. The insert will be purchased this fiscal year and published next fiscal year in the July/Aug. issue.

Sanderson asked about earned media, Noble notes they will schedule travel writers for spring. She also notes they are not tracking the media attention Jail Hill is receiving as our own, but looking at it for interest and traffic purposes. It has been published on 200 news outlets with 21 mil views so far.

Looking at the tax collection reports and RevPar reports from the City would be nice to have same reports from the County to better track tax collection. Noble does share the City reports with anyone who requests since it is a public document and stakeholders do ask for this info. Noble did attend the Jan. County Board Meeting and is waiting to meet with the newly appointed Tourism Committee in hopes of discussing tax collection process along with their annual contract review.

Sales tax report: sales tax collection is up for the County. Noble notes that Apple River has a newer business being added to the Thriving Thistle that plans to focus on wellness. This will hopefully draw more sales tax to Apple River.

Without further business Sanderson motions to adjourn, Radin seconds at 3:53 p.m.