

## **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

### **Galena Country Tourism**

Tues., Feb 26, 2019 3p.m.

GGMI Admin Office

101 Bouthillier St., Galena IL, 61036

- I. Call to Order: Rose Noble by Colin Sanderson at 3:01 p.m.
- II. Attending: Merri Sevey, Birgit Radin, Mark Van Osdol, Katie Burcham, Raechelle Ahmed, Nikki Peebles, Bill Bingham, Colin, Sanderson, Nancy Shady, and Bobby Hahn
- III. No Citizen Comment
- IV. Board of Director concerns-

Murphy asked about the 1% hotel/motel tax increase to county properties for emergency services and infrastructure. Noble explained that Rep. Andrew Chesney is pushing a bill that allows an amendment for a 1% increase on hotel/motel tax on County properties outside of municipalities. Currently the bill lies in the Rules House awaiting approval and if approved it then goes back to the County to vote and instate. Noble had spoken with County Board Chair, Scott Toot, and County Administrator, Dan Reimer. Toot had informed her that the County Board Legislative Committee, chaired by John Lang, requested that rep. Chesney push this bill. Noble told Toot she will be talking to properties that will be required to collect the additional 1%. Currently the County has a 5% tax and state is 6% for a total of 11% hotel/motel tax, with the proposed increase the total tax will be 12% added to each night stay for County properties. Murphy says he supports what needs to be done to help the County EMS but does not believe the money is there from that tax and was he offended about John Lang's comment stating that Eagle Ridge, Chestnut Mountain, and tourism is a "burden" on the community. Murphy states that the \$80,000 Chestnut donates each year to the River Ridge School system through its taxes along with other properties is due to tourism and tourism has a great impact on its community. Van Osdol agrees with Murphy in supporting the county EMS, but he's in favor of the tax to promote tourism. Noble notes that this is happening throughout the nation but usually it goes back into tourism related for expenses other than tourism promotions. She noted we will have to wait to see what happens if it passes through the Rules House and what is the next step. Sanderson asks if there is anything that can be done to stop the bill from passing? Noble stated that Lang is on the newly appointed County Board DMO Committee and they will be meeting with them soon to discuss all options. She wants to see what their objective is and talk in person to have a better understanding. She also notes that the County members are elected officials and if people aren't happy they can reach out to their districts. Noble said that if there is any progress, this topic will be on agenda for the next board meeting in March.

Murphy also wanted to compliment the staff on the new visitors guide and wants to make sure we communicate the importance of this piece is to get visitors here and this is not to replace the Galenian. He wants to make sure that as a Board we support the piece and what it's meant to be. Sanderson agreed and said he recently received the L.A. visitor's guide and believes theirs doesn't

compare to our new guide. Van Osdol also agrees with Murphy and believes it works well with the Galenian. He commended the staff on the job well done. Radin voiced her concern and irritation with what and who were in the new guide. She was very unhappy with the small mention of the Goldmoor Inn and told the Board she brought this up to Noble. Radin was looking for more substance when it came to her property specifically. She was not happy with Noble's explanation of the theme and story rotation for the guide and had expressed her concern to Noble in emails and in a one-on-one. Radin also mentions she brought up her concern in the last Marketing Committee meeting. She doesn't believe there is enough opportunity to do a rotation for a piece that is in publication for a year. Radin asked if the guide could be changed seasonally, so that there is more exposure to properties. Noble points out that the printed guide is only one component of entire marketing plan and that the digital aspect of marketing is the large portion of our budget. Noble reminded the Board that the extensive digital promotions plan, approved with the budget and planning at the beginning of the fiscal, is in a constant rotation with representation of the multiple businesses, themes and features through storytelling, photography. Noble noted that there is content constantly being built through due to the fact that we have multiple projects accomplishing the request made. Sanderson also stated that the Marketing Committee discussed and agreed. He noted that the Committee discussed changing out cover pages seasonally before printing and sending out guides as they are requested. Noble agreed that this is an option and liked the idea. She will be looking into that for the next issue. Noble showed the board the digital guide hub on the website that has new content created constantly and being updated and added to storytelling features throughout the year. Murphy stated he liked the idea of changing covers based on the season and reminded the Board that ads are being created and tagged to social media campaigns to get visitors to see our digital guide throughout the year.

V. Consent agenda: Motion to approve, Sevey, Murphy 2<sup>nd</sup>, carried.

VI. New Business – Strategic Planning Committee report

Van Osdol, chair of Strategic Planning Committee, gave an overview on their meeting and the Communications Plan prepared by Noble. The goal of this plan is to stay in contact with the County and City Administrators such as the mayors of Galena and Elizabeth. Also, meeting with village presidents and keeping a good repour with County Board and Galena City Council as well as state legislatures. He explained that it is important to have regular outreach meetings presented by the CEO, he praised Noble's speaking efforts and interest in County-wide communication. The Committee has prioritized actions and shown in their report what is being done, what needs improvement, and things that need to be done. Van Osdol states that it is important to invite our legislatures to our events, show them what we are doing and what an impact tourism has on economic development. Radin asked if the report can be sent to board members and Noble assured that she will send out a final report once it is completed. Noble will send to Van Osdol, for one more review before sending to the Board. Noble noted that she has created a timeline that runs through 2020 in this plan. She says this plan will be used to hold the CEO and the Board accountable to make sure that certain goals are being made. Sanderson wants to make sure the County knows that Noble is doing what she needs to be doing as long as the Board. Van Osdol noted that previously accountability wasn't there and this plan will get us there. Sanderson agreed.

VII. CEO Report – Rose Noble

Recent trade shows, Travel & Adventure and the Wedding Trade show at Rosemont, were very successful. During the Travel & Adventure show they ran out of promotional materials on Saturday, Noble brought more to them on Sunday. There were almost 500 signups for the giveaway. It was a great show to represent Galena, and people were very receptive to the area. We are registered to be in it next year as well. The previous weekend was the Bridal Show at Rosemont, collected 150 emails that were shared with partners that attended the event. Noble noted that in previous years Visit Galena didn't hit the wedding market hard enough but will be doing more marketing in this area moving forward. Also, she has signed up for next year and will partner with Eagle Ridge, Chestnut, and Goldmoor if they decide to also attend.

Fallon's marketing report discusses the new mini-mags which highlight certain themes, history, outdoors, haunted, golf, and Winter. The idea is to hand these out to visitors when they visit the Welcome center. Noble noted that they are having a hard time getting businesses to supply rack cards or keep them stocked in the Welcome Center. Some aren't making rack cards any longer. The goal is to provide the mini-mags as an additional source of information for the visitor to have. They can be inserted in the guides before mailed out. There is one more theme coming for Interesting Places in the County.

Noble showed some of the magazines that Galena is mentioned in such as Travel Illinois, March issue. Also mentioned in Dubuque business times and the Julien's Journal. AAA Midwest Traveler was a nice earned media piece as well. Midwest Living was a paid media feature, a full-page ad as well as an editorial page, it is a big lead generator. Emails and address are collected through the ad program and have received some of them already, and we will be sending them our new visitors guide. NW Quarterly featured Galena again. Noble says they'll continue to work with the State to be mentioned in their news releases. This also includes constantly keeping the Enjoy Illinois portal website updated with current information. Noble notes stakeholders probably aren't aware of this service done via GCT but this will be relayed through the new Communications Plan. Every business on VisitGalena.org is on EnjoyIllinois.com which GCT monitors and keeps updated. Noble mentions that the State will not talk about an event or specific experience unless it has a listing on their EnjoyIllinois site. (All main Galena Country events are added by GCT onto EnjoyIllinois as well.)

Noble states that the feedback from the guide has been great. She does monitor and keep track of responses so they can grow the guide for the future. Noble also pointed out that the HUSH report wrote an extremely nice opinion piece on the guide, talking it up to be the "best guide ever seen."

Noble pointed out that this year's total interactions have already surpassed last year's. So far totals interactions are 10.5 million and last year was 9 million total interactions. December alone had 2.5 million total interactions. The digital presence is huge and growing. The last two months had 84k visitors to the website and will continue to grow that number. Also had 2,831 visitors serviced through the welcome center which shows that we still have a need for the Welcome Center. Noble points out that they are not tracking Jail Hill Inn's earned media as their own but are tracking how many he is receiving since it does highlight Galena. Noble shared this information with Matthew Carroll and he also shared it with his followers. Noble mentioned she is thrilled for Jail Hill and the exposure their new accolade brings to Galena is amazing.

Chocolate, Java, and Champagne stroll was successful all tickets sold out. Peebles said they would like to expand it to a 2-day event next year with the same amount of tickets (250) but will spread tickets

throughout the 2 days to keep foot traffic somewhat under control. Peebles did say people requested more liquor/wine but that would be a licensing issue that they will have to work on. The weather also worked in favor of the event. Noble mentioned that GDBA is talking about doing a wine walk during Nouveau weekend.

Lastly, Noble stated that they are working with Circle Wisconsin group. There are 225 people signed up and will be holding a welcome reception at the Desoto House. The event will house 40 tour operators that have signed up and staying at Eagle Ridge from April 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>. During the reception event downtown, they will encourage the group to stroll up and down Main street to see what there is to offer and hopefully businesses will stay open later for this event. Noble will send out info to business owners. Sanderson stressed that it is important to show these operators what we have to offer since they will be the ones hopefully bringing groups here.

Van Osdol did ask Hahn when they plan to have a reveal for the new trail and Hahn said sometime closer to Memorial Day. Hahn said its open but have not had an opening ceremony yet, waiting for better weather.

VIII. Motion to adjourn, Van Osdol, Peebles 2<sup>nd</sup>, carried.