

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Galena Country Tourism

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

GGMI Admin Office

101 Bouthillier St., Galena IL, 61036

- I. Call to Order: Chair, Colin Sanderson. 3:03 p.m.
- II. Attending: Colin Sanderson, Bobby Hahn, Bill Bingham, Raechelle Ahmed, Birgit Radin, Katie Burcham, Nikki Peebles. Other, Rose Noble.
Absent: Mark Van Osdol, Mike Murphy, Nancy Shady, and Merri Sevey
- III. Citizen Comment - None
- IV. Old Business/Board of director concerns - None
- V. Consent Agenda – Peebles, Radin 2nd, carried.
- VI. New Business – None
- VII. CEO Report –

The finance committee did not meet for a March meeting, instead Noble sent out the packet to the finance committee to review. The City of Galena numbers were included in the packet, January showed great numbers, best so far. Winter activities were heavily promoted. Peebles asked about the crew working on the pipeline and if the impact of them being here can be measured as previously done with the railroad workers. Noble thinks it would be beneficial. Noble has reached out was told they will be here for a while, at least until fall, GCT dropped off welcome bags for the crew. Peebles has heard that hotels have been telling the workers they need to find other places to stay since it is almost busy season and the hotels have been providing them a discount in which they will no longer want to give. Peebles also mentioned some workers looking for short term rental housing, Ahmed said she would have a place to possibly rent out soon. Hahn said that the camp ground turned them down for space to stay. Sanderson said this project will be long and could go 14 months. Ahmed pointed out that these workers do typically leave for the weekends and wonders why some places wouldn't accommodate them Sun.-Thurs. and have great occupancy numbers. Noble mentioned that the County's numbers are up 16% to begin the year.

Noble mentions that social media had another great month. Highest reach for social media this fiscal year was with Facebook at 1.4 million with 100K+ followers. Blog reads had a great month with 10k readers. This is something the GCT staff has been working on, creating a new blog every week. The blog mentions different themes, businesses, and itineraries in which people can find information and use to plan their trip. The content created also helps the site's Google rating.

Videos have been posted on Youtube as another way to reach out to travelers. Noble showed the board the Wine, Beer, & Spirits video. She explained that the content is some they've created but have also

taken content from travelers as well with their permission. She also showed a spring events video which has shown good engagement from viewers. Noble explains that video is king and will continue to build the platform.

Noble says that they've begun sending segmented emails. They currently have 37K opt in email addresses for consumer emails. This program was revamped in 2014, old emails have been stripped and they are currently building it back up and will send out segmented emails to interested travelers. Every month a consumer newsletter is sent out to consumers and different segments are tagged with different themes, which ever theme they decide to click on they will get future emails tagged with that theme or topic. So far, they have sent out pet friendly, weddings, outdoor adventures, and haunted segmented mailings.

Earned media has officially surpassed last year's numbers (157) with 159 earned media pieces so far in this fiscal year. GCT has had many reached out to them for info to be featured in accolades such as...

- 51 affordable discoveries across America
- Presidential homes in IL
- Top 10 Labor getaways
- Best things to do in IL
- Spooky restaurants
- Most quant town in every state

Galena was featured on WTTW, the were not paid to come but GCT did provide some content and info. Other outlets have picked up the show but they also included Galena on a page called "Chicago on Vacation". Also featured in "Apartment Therapy" in their travel article.

Noble has started a campaign taking pictures and testimonies from online travelers, using their words and creating ads with them. Making sure to keep it county-wide and not just focus on Galena. It will be called the user-generated campaign.

GCT was nominated best CVB outside of Chicagoland area, a title won last year.

Staff has been prepping the bulk mailings for the guide and designed a colorful prepaid envelope with a call out to the website.

Noble attended Lobby Day with ICCVB which aligned with the bureaus communications plan to make sure that our legislatures and officials are kept informed on what is being done and how much money is being put back into the local economy due to tourism. She also met with Rep. Chesney and Senator Stewart to discuss the area. Chesney was approached by ICCVB Lobbyist and encouraged not to move forward with his 1% tax amendment bill. Chesney took to their concerns and will make an amendment to only include JoDaviess County in the bill and allowing it to go to a constituent voted referendum.

Noble is scheduled to attend a meeting with the newly created county tourism DMO adhoc committee and has invited a few board members (Sevey, Peebles, Sanderson, Bingham, Shady, & Van Osdol) to attend with her. They will talk about tax amendment, contract negotiations, and discuss tourism and explain to them that tourism is not a burden on the community. They will hopefully discuss Airbnb tax collection issues. She wants the county to understand that this is a two-party contract, both City of Galena and the county. The City does not without funds from hotel tax collected and she would like the

county to be mindful of that. Noble has reached out to the County Admin concerning reporting and would like to see cohesive reporting as well as monitoring and collecting. The reporting received from the county is limited and cumbersome. Noble is looking forward to the meeting and would like to have everyone on the same page and get contract negotiations started early.

Radin asked about the vote for the 1% tax, Noble explained that Chesney can write it so that the County board can vote to approve and instate or can vote to approve but it will then go on the ballot for citizens to vote on next April, 2020.

Noble explains that she has be reworking the sales position since Allen has left. She has extended an offer to Justin Helle and he will start April 1st. He is very knowledgeable about the Tri-state area. He is scheduled to attend the upcoming Circle Wisconsin event with the staff next month.

Circle Wisconsin will be here April 7th and will be downtown Galena for a reception at the DeSoto House and then sent to explore Main St. Noble has reached out to Main St. stores and ask that they stay open late that evening for the Circle WI guests, 26 stores confirmed they will stay open late. There will be 10 chances for guests to win various gifts. Downtown businesses were given 1 of 3 incentives to stay open late:

1. Business listed in a booklet that will be given to Circle WI attendees
2. GGMI will purchase an item from their store to put in a basket for a giveaway
3. Store will be a drop off point for business cards to enter in giveaways

Peebles asked if these booklets can also be given to hotels in the area so that other people outside of Circle WI can also be aware of the extended hours for downtown. Noble said she will send that information out. Noble also mentioned that Galena Cellars, the Brewery, Massbach Ridge Winery and Blaum Bros will be doing complimentary tastings.

With no further business Peebles motions to adjourn, Bingham 2nd, carries at 3:41 p.m.