

# **Metro Tourism and Convention Commission Minutes**

**January 12, 2021**

Commissioners in Attendance: Howard Kittell, Mark Hayes, Leesa LeClaire (via Zoom), Sherry Franklin, Hank Adam Locklin (via Zoom), Nealy Glenn (via Zoom), Mary Jo Wiggins (via Zoom), Fletcher Foster

NCVC Staff in Attendance: Butch Spyridon, Deana Ivey, Andrea Arnold, Adrienne Siemers, Jeff Mefford, Marie Sueing, and Sean McGuire

Sherry Franklin called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

Franklin recognized guests Nate Rau and Mary Jo Wiggins.

**Kittell made a motion to accept the minutes from the September meeting; Mark Hayes seconded; motion passed.**

Medford was recognized to give the financial report. There was \$8.5 million collected in hotel/motel tax which is a 73% reduction from this same period in 2019. Through the first 5 months of the fiscal year there has been \$3 million funded through the CVC's contract. Of the \$3.1M coming from outside of the contract, \$2.4M is coming from the state's CARES funding. The CVC did a scaled down version of New Year's Eve. The event was completely funded by sponsorships and there was no Metro contract money spent on it. There were no adjustments noted in the recent audit that was done and that was discussed at the last meeting.

**Motion made to approve the financial report by LeClaire and seconded by Sanders; motion passed.**

Spyridon noted after the financial report that the state's money has had an enormous benefit and allowed the CVC to fund some marketing and creative materials that otherwise would not have been able to have been. Spyridon also noted that with the recent federal CARES legislation the CVC will be applying for a \$1.3M PPE loan. Spyridon notes the CVC is solvent and is heading into the spring in decent shape.

Spyridon was recognized to give a broader overview of CVC operations. Spyridon mentioned that the state money was used to create a new TV spot. The plan was to air the ad during the Music City Bowl, but with the game being cancelled that was not possible. The next thought was to air it at The Grammys, but that has also been postponed. As such, staff is still looking for the right time to air the spot. Spyridon mentioned there will be a virtual client breakfast tomorrow morning (Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>) to continue the tradition of this annual event.

Spyridon noted that this was the first year that the New Year's Eve Celebration made money. He notes that Ivey is serving on a hospitality industry task force looking for ways to have events in a safe manner.

Spyridon noted that average hotel occupancies have gone down since the pandemic peak in the mid-30's. The hope is that March will be the month that things start to pick up.

Spyridon recognized Ivey. Ivey mentions the "Dream Now, Visit Later" campaign to try to draw visitors and keep Nashville top of mind. They were a popular Christmas present and staff is also doing a Valentine's Day promo. Ivey handed out a sheet highlighting PR efforts and stories that have been pitched to media.

Spyridon recognized Sueing. Sueing said they are staying in contact with community members and are helping the MLK Day celebration transition to a virtual event. The National Museum of African American Music will have their ribbon cutting on MLK Day.

Spyridon recognized Siemers. Siemers said there was month-over-month room growth this month. Her staff is working hard to rebook groups that had cancelled last year due to the pandemic.

Spyridon mentioned the World Cup 2026 bid and that staff continues to work on this monumental effort and that it is the most onerous thing staff has ever tried to tackle. There has been great support from local partners as well as local universities, Nashville SC and the Titans.

Spyridon mentioned that Arnold applied for an EDA grant and that the CVC is on the short list of getting an award. It will be pure marketing money and would be invaluable. Staff awaits a decision from Washington on this.

Spyridon mentioned that staff immediately went to work after the Christmas Day bombing to help in the relief effort as well as raised money for a reward. The FBI and MNPD are still investigating and will await the outcome of that investigation to see if the reward is given out. Staff has also been distributing \$500 gift cards in relief to the community in the same manner that was done in the wake of the tornado.

Spyridon noted that staff is still marketing although it has been in fits and spurts. He mentioned that we are in better shape to recover than other markets and that staff is ready to go. The vaccine and the visitor research tell him that Nashville's prospects are good. It will not be like flipping on a light switch but will be a more gradual recovery.

Hayes asked what the status of CMA Fest in terms of timing is and whether other festivals are moving into that space. Spyridon said prospects are good for holding the event at the normal time in June with many sponsors keeping their dollars in place and not pulling it after the event was cancelled in 2020.

Foster mentioned we will have the TV component of the ACMs and they will be in Nashville again in April. Spyridon mentioned we don't know what the venues are yet

and if audience members will be permitted. Foster mentioned what was done this year was amazing in terms of showcasing Nashville. Foster also mentioned that there may be a small component of the Grammys will be held in Nashville.

Hayes asked if there is anything that the hospitality community can do to help with vaccine distribution. Spyridon mentioned he has a meeting with Dr. Jahangar and the interim head of the health department this week and he will ask about that.

Kittell asked if there was anything that needs to be done in terms of counteracting the negative impact of the bombing as well as the role of a Nashvillian in the Capitol riot that is getting press. Spyridon mentioned that there was a lot of people relatively speaking here for New Year's Eve. There are efforts to highlight the historic aspects of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and make it a positive story of Nashville recovery. Southern Living was planning to do a piece on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue but pulled it after the bombing. They have since reconsidered and plan to do the piece.

Sanders mentioned that it is amazing to see how well Australia where he currently is located is handling COVID. He also mentioned that after the last pandemic, the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, was followed by the Roaring 20's. He thanked Butch and staff for supporting the Fisk Jubilee Singers who are currently up for a Grammy.

Franklin said she knows that Nashville is top of mind with respect to people and customers and they can't wait to come back to Nashville.

Franklin recognized Spyridon to give a contract renewal update. Spyridon said the current contract expires June 30. He said the CVC never makes the assumption that it will get the contract renewal. Metro suggested that a one-year contract extension is done while also working on the RFP for the full five-year contract. The extension has gone through the committee process and the first two readings at the Metro Council.

Spyridon recognized Wiggins for any additional comments. She said Metro wants to quickly get into the RFP once the extension is approved next Tuesday (Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>). She said she wants to make sure everyone relevant at the CVC gets procurement training because there will be an evaluation panel for the RFP. She mentioned she wanted to get updated rules and policy for the commission and also noted that the commission will be helping to form the scope of the RFP. Wiggins stated that Metro wants to ensure that everything that needs to be included in the contract is included and thus this process is important. Wiggins will send Franklin, Arnold and Spyridon potential dates for the whole commission to do procurement training.

**Franklin asked for a motion to adjourn. Kittell made the motion to adjourn; Foster seconded; motion passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:49PM.