

**Cayuga County Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes from April 2, 2024  
Via Zoom

**Present:** Erin Katzker, Sallee Ten Eyck, Erin McElhinney, Kate Grindstaff, Doug Dello Stritto, Amanda Hennessey, Ahna Wilson, Sara Douglass, Andrea Seamans, Kirsten Gosch, Brian DiBernardo, Jenny Haines, Chuck Mason, Nancy Gable, Kristen Lunkenheimer-Slocum, Melody Smith Johnson, Kari Terwilliger, Aileen McNabb-Coleman

**Staff:** Karen Kuhl, Dawn Lubaszewski, Ash Murray, Lynne Sweet

**Absent:**

**Excused:**

**Presiding Officer:** E. Katzker

**Secretary:** E. McElhinney

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am by E. Katzker

**I. Approval of March 2024 BOD Minutes**

No corrections.

**A motion to approve the March minutes was made by K. Terwilliger, seconded by A. Seamans. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.**

**II. Treasurer's Report (D. Dello Stritto)**

The numbers do not reflect the most current income. All expenditures are in line.

**A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by S. Douglas, seconded by K. Grindstaff. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.**

**III. Committee Reports**

- a) **Executive (E. Katzker):** Nothing to report.
- b) **Education (K. Gosch):** Nothing to report.
- c) **Advocacy & Outreach (K. Grindstaff):** Nothing to report.
- d) **Audit & Finance (S. Ten Eyck):** The committee will meet May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to review the audit, which will be presented at the May 7<sup>th</sup> board meeting.
- e) **Planning:** No report.
- f) **Human Resources (A. Seamans):** New board members and a new slate of officers will be ready for the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- g) **Conflict of Interest (E. McElhinney):** Nothing to report.

**A motion to approve the Committee Reports was made by E. McElhinney, seconded by A. Hennessey. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.**

**IV. Group Sales and Marketing Report (C. Dunlap):**

Report Submitted. Claire is currently at E-Tourism Conference in Las Vegas monitoring a panel.

**V. Public Relations Report (A. Murray):**

Kenneth Miles visited Cayuga County on assignment for the Trenton Journal to visit Harriet Tubman and equal rights sites. Tour Cayuga is working with Seneca County and the International Food & Wine Travel Writers Association to plan a group FAM before the association's annual conference in Corning, NY. Break the Ice Media drafted and sent out successful pitches, coordinated with visiting writers, and provided a monthly blog post. An upcoming press release regarding the Erie Canal Sweep and Cayuga County's canal communities will be sent out this week. The Citizen published an article written by PR Manager Ash Murray surrounding Women's History Month, and pitches were sent out to I Love NY and other outlets. In March, Cayuga County received 80 placements across local and national publications, and Ash Murray will be attending NOMADNESS Fest in September.

**VI. Director's Report (K. Kuhl):**

The STR report is back, as we were able to work out a partnership with FLRTC. We'll consider this a trial year and see how it goes for 2024. Both occupancy and revenue are up from last year. The audit will be complete and presented to the BOD at the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. We received the Q1 check from Cayuga County. The Culinary video series is underway, with 3 completed but not yet launched. The Historical Figures Poster Series features Emily Howland, Harriet Tubman, William Seward, Henry Wells, and Ted Case. The solar eclipse is Monday, April 8. Eclipse glasses and posters provided by the CCCVB have been in very big demand. The DEI Harriet Tubman Events Grant applications are due April 15<sup>th</sup>. Sustainability research with our partners continues. The new travel guide is here and ready for distribution.

M. Smith-Johnson expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak in Rochester for the VIC February event with over 150 participants.

A. Seamans complimented the Historical Figures Poster Series.

**A motion to approve Public Relations, Group Sales and Marketing, and the Executive Director's Reports was made by E. McElhinney, seconded by A. Seamans. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.**

**E. Katzker welcomed Aileen McNabb as a new member of the Board of Directors representing the county legislature.**

**VII. Unfinished Business: No unfinished business.**

**VIII. New Business:**

D. Dello Stritto referenced the article that came out in The Citizen on April 1<sup>st</sup> stating that the City of Auburn will be asking the County Legislature for half of the bed tax generated from the municipality to go the city instead of Cayuga County Tourism office. A board discussion followed where K. Kuhl asked C. Mason to explain the situation to the Board, as he allowed this to come as a surprise to the entire Board of Directors and its Executive Director. C. Mason explained that he had been transparent as to the city's financial needs and their pursuit of additional occupancy tax on the city properties. K. Kuhl

expanded that the current discussion isn't the additional occupancy tax, but the proclamation to request half of the current occupancy tax collected, which directly impacts the budget of the Tourism Office. C. Mason expressed his belief that the Tourism Office can continue to operate with 75% of the occupancy tax collected. D. Dello Stritto proposed that the Finance Committee research the impact of the large loss of funding.

On Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Auburn City Council will vote to pass a resolution to make the request to the Cayuga County Legislature that 50% of the occupancy tax from the properties within the municipality of Auburn go to the City of Auburn. It was suggested that the Chairperson draft a letter on behalf of the (vast) majority of the Board of Directors stating opposition to the proposal. C. Mason expressed the need for it to be made clear in the letter that the Board's opposition isn't unanimous. D. Dello Stritto stated that there should be a vote of the Board of Directors, for the record.

**E. Katzker called for a vote:** support or opposition for the Chair of the Board to attend City of Auburn council meeting on behalf of the Cayuga County Board of Directors and make a public statement in opposition of the resolution which states: *"Mayor and City Council request of the members of the Cayuga County Legislature that they make whatever changes necessary to allow for Cayuga County Hotel Room Occupancy Tax revenues collected within the municipal boundaries of the City of Auburn to be shared evenly between the City of Auburn and Cayuga County"*

**Two were in opposition. Two abstained. Fourteen were in support.**

The Chairperson will draft a letter expressing opposition to the proposal to present to the City of Auburn council meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as well as the legislature meeting on April 23, 2024. The finance committee will conduct a study on the impact a funding reduction of this magnitude would have on Cayuga County Tourism and will present at the Cayuga County Legislature meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The question of whether there is a conflict of interest on C. Mason's part was raised. Also raised was the question whether C. Mason, as a member of the CCCVB Board of Directors, had an obligation to disclose the information to the rest of the board Before information became public. C. Mason disagreed, stating that it was his opinion that he had no obligation to disclose the intention of the city to ask the county legislature for the 50% of the municipality occupancy tax to the CCCVB Board of Directors. He also expressed his opinion that there is no conflict of interest.

Note: This discussion is in relation to the renewal of the Local Law that funds the Cayuga County Tourism Office. The local law is renewed every three years. It will be renewed in 2024 and again in 2027.

#### **VIII. Announcements:**

- A. Seamans: The Heritage Park clean sweep is April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- E. Katzker: The Rev Theatre Co. is adding the Glenn Miller Orchestra to its season, with 2 shows on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

- E. McElhinney: The Inns of Aurora needs staff, both front line and management. Any leads would be appreciated.
- D. Dello Stritto: The Sterling Nature Center official opening and ribbon cutting date will soon be announced.
- A. Hennessy: Sold out for eclipse at Hilton Garden Inn. Easter Brunch was sold out, and Mother's Day brunch is coming up.
- M. Smith Johnson: The Easter brunch with vision boarding was a great success. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, Believe Bakery will be at Melody's, and a cookie decorating class is also coming up.
- C. Mason: The Falcon Park Eclipse Event is going to be a big event; a lot of interest has been expressed. Also, the Holland Stadium event will be very well attended.
- C. Mason: The proposed lakefront hotel project will not be within the municipality of Auburn.

**A motion to adjourn was made by S. Douglas, seconded by K. Terwilliger at 10:10 a.m. All were in favor.**

**Approved by E. McElhinney,**

**Recorded by Lynne Sweet**