



Noble County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

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Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Monday, September 16, 2024 Annie Oakley Natural Perfumery, Ligonier, IN

Board Members present: Andi Barrand, Matt Dice, Kate Emmert (virtual), Darcy Fish, Pattie Gatman (virtual), Kristen Johnson, Tiffany Parker, Katie Schaller, Cyndi Schlemmer, Heather Steele

Staff: Grace Caswell

Members absent: Tiffanie Gudakunst

President Heather Steele called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm

Partner Site host, Renee Gabet, welcomed the board and told the origin story of Annie Oakley Natural Perfumery. She was first exposed to natural perfumes at the age of 8. As a young, single mother, she started making and selling jewelry at craft shows and eventually western shows. Renee created the first cowgirl fragrance in the world and her perfume business grew from there. The factory was opened to tourism in 2008. Becky Berke presented a demonstration of top, middle and base notes in one of their popular home & body sprays. It was pointed out that a special fragrance, Wisteria, is only available at Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site.

Approval of Consent Board Minutes and Financials: Heather invited everyone to look over the minutes. Tiffany P. made a motion to approve, Darcy seconded, motion carried. Heather then invited everyone to review the financials. Grace pointed out that these were through August 31. Innkeepers' tax collections jumped in July and then were surpassed in August, but the funds are received two months afterwards. Katie S. made a motion to approve, Matt seconded, motion carried.

Admin Update: Alexis submitted her report with extensive data. Website engagement is up, with our events page second only to our home page. Requests for visitor guides are also up. Interest appears to be growing about the Tombstone Trail. The new guidebook is for sale online and at GSP, Midwest Windmill Museum, Ligonier Visitor Center, and will soon be available at Butterfly Alley. Alexis and Tara Streb are working together on ShopNoble baskets to be sold in November and December. Two of the titles are "Experience Noble" and "Beers and Birdies". Alexis has been accepted to the Engage Noble Leadership Academy. We have seen some increase of interest from Pennsylvania which may translate to tourism due to the two railways coming soon through Indiana.

Committee Reports

- HR/Governance: As everyone is aware, the internship was terminated and hours at the visitor bureau office have been adjusted due to the staffing change. Upcoming blog on Solo Travel.
- Program Purpose: Grace, Tiffany P. and Cyndi met on August 19. Two partners applied for fall grants even though we did not advertise any grants due to a budget shortfall. The committee decided to award a \$250 sponsorship to Merry Lea for their Enchanted Forest popcorn machine and to NIBGA to sponsor a portion of their advertising. Grace asked the committee to look at the marketing budget to see how we might adjust it. A bulletin board sign will be added to the pocket park side of the building (½ cost with EDC). The Visit Noble County office will only be open on Saturdays when there are pop up events.

- Finance: The committee has gone over the budget with Butler CPA to clean up redundancy and other issues to clean it up, checked accounts at the bank, and gone over all financials. The innkeepers tax may go up from 5% to 8%. This would still be less than surrounding states, but more competitive. A move to 8% would mean an increase in income of one-third to our budget. The increase would be a good thing for residents because it saves on their taxes if more money comes from outside the county. A question was asked about cities adding a tax. A municipality can designate a Tourism Improvement District and can collect the tax that would be given to a nonprofit, often a Main Street organization, tourism center, etc.

Director's Report:

Innkeepers Tax Collection: A new record was set in July of \$17,233.97 and then August surpassed that record with \$17,627.78.

New Additions in Lodging: Big Lake Island Retreat in Albion now operating and Comfort Inn and Suites in Kendallville set to open October 21.

Board and Staff Updates: Kate Emmert will be joining the Short-Term Rental Host/Manager Panel at ITA 2025 and will be organizing a Noble County Lodging meet-and-greet in February and again in the fall.

Grace briefly touched on several other points in her report, including an update on the Investment Trust Fund request for the geofencing tool (See full typed report for more details.) Matt asked about whether there is a state visitors bureau and what they can do for us. Grace explained that IDDC (Indiana Destination Development Corporation) pays for surveys and reports. Tracking tools cannot be shared because they are proprietary to the licensee.

Grace asked the board to look over the estimated budget.

Grace has a goal to get a proper nature center built at Chain O'Lakes.

Good of the Corporation: Cyndi gave a short report on the Noble Ramble. About half of the food came from out of the county, but it was a very nice event. Also one location was outside the county. There was some local extension of stays, by attendance at farmers markets and Harry Stuff Brewery.

Sower House has been leased and will open in October as a shop and tea room. They have plans to fix up the upper level for an airbnb. Kristen's daughter has some pottery there for sale.

Matt announced a Homesteading Conference sponsored by the Purdue Extension that will be taking place at the CLC around November 1.

The Noble County Parks Board Summit will be held on October 23 at Chain O'Lakes State Park at Stanley Schoolhouse.

The next meeting will be a commission and board meeting held at Chain O'Lakes State Park at the Stanley Schoolhouse on November 11 at 4 pm.

Adjournment: Andi made a motion to adjourn, Kristen seconded, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:19 pm.

Submitted by Cyndi Schlemmer, Secretary
September 30, 2024

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