

## White Pine County Tourism and Recreation Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** February 25, 2020  
**Time:** 4 p.m.  
**Location:** Bristlecone Convention Center – White Pine Room

**Members Present:** Caroline McIntosh, Chairman  
Marietta Henry, Vice-Chairman  
Ian Bullis, Treasurer  
Kurt Carson, Board Member

**Staff Present:** Kyle Horvath  
James Beecher  
Errol Porter

**Member Absent:** Bryane Goeringer, Secretary

**Public Present:** Tim Bunch, Maureen Otzelberger, Mark Bassett

Chairman McIntosh called to order the meeting of the White Pine County Tourism and Recreation Board on February 25, 2020 at 4pm in the White Pine Room at the Bristlecone Convention Center. Chairman McIntosh led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- I. **Public Comment:** Kyle said he had in his possession written public comments submitted by George Chachas. James Beecher said it is his position that public comment can be just added to the record. The written public comment would be given to the note taker and made a part of the record; then if the Board or the public requested a copy, they would have one. Kyle said that looking at the document, everything that George normally talks about is pushed through but there are three things that are relevant to agenda items. The first one is talking about Agenda Item II. 8 – The Twenty-Eight Day Rule. He feels that it needs to stay in place and modified so that the tax ceases to be collected once the twenty-eight days have been reached. No one should have to wait nine months to request a refund as is required now. The second one is there is nothing in the packet regarding putting back in the walkway in the Convention Center parking lot. There is nothing regarding the meeting of the minimum ADA standards and putting a cold patch over the trench that was dug into the road; sudden drop will affect vehicle alignment or possibly cause tire damage. City code policy is not being followed. The last item was there was nothing in the agenda packet regarding Agenda Item II. 6, which is the strategic plan, for the public to view. Kyle said that was not ready yet; there are copies for the public on the table. The written comments were submitted and will be made part of the record.

## II. **New Business:**

### **1. Approval of Agenda, Including Removal of Agenda Items-Chairman**

**McIntosh:** Chairman McIntosh asked if there were any changes or removals. She said hearing none, we will move on.

### **2. Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion:** Member Henry moved to approve minutes of January 28, 2020 4pm.

**Motion seconded:** Member Carson. **Motion carried.**

**3. Review of the Financial Report:** Kyle gave amounts collected for the month of January for the hotel/motel properties, for the RV parks/campgrounds and the breakdown for WPCT&R, railroad, City of Ely, and golf course. He then spoke to the budget. He said we have not done the budget augmentation or submitted to the State yet because we did not get the public notice in in time. When you look down at the bottom you will see the \$5,359.72 of deficit. We have not moved the \$150,000 over yet to account for that. We will do our tentative budget planning at the next Board meeting. Everything else is right where it needs to be from a budget standpoint. The Room Tax Comparison Report shows that even with the Fire and Ice not having as much snow and the Rotary Ice Fishing Derby being cancelled, we still pretty much pushed through exactly where we were at last year. He thanked the hotel/motel properties for being creative when confronted with the cancellations. A lot of the property owners offered fifty percent off room rates so the people would still come to Ely. Chairman McIntosh asked if the eight-year comparison is relevant now. Kyle said it is not; it will be removed from the packet.

### **4. Ratify Bills:**

**Motion:** Member Henry moved to ratify bills in the amount of \$76,339.33, check nos. 24513 through 24588, excluding check no. 24526 to Bath Lumber.

**Motion seconded:** Member Bullis. **Motion carried.**

**5. Approval to Pay Bill to Bath Lumber:** Chairman McIntosh advised she will abstain from this item due to her interest in Bath Lumber.

**Motion:** Member Henry moved to pay \$1,405.31 to Bath Lumber, check no. 24526.

**Motion seconded:** Member Carson. **Motion carried with Chairman McIntosh abstaining from vote.**

**6. Strategic Plan 2020:** Kyle said he received notes back from one Board member. No changes were made to the Guiding Principles. After discussion, the last sentence in the Mission Statement paragraph was changed to read: *We will use our resources to assist*

*local businesses, attractions and volunteer organizations to showcase a variety of experiences and assets to visitors.* Kyle then read the four Strategic Priorities. Member Bullis suggested adding Washington and Oregon to our target markets. Kyle felt we needed to put a special emphasis on Las Vegas. Kyle then got into the four priorities which go into more detail.

Priority 1: Under the History section, Member McIntosh suggested adding *Mining and Indigenous Tribes*. Member McIntosh suggested adding the words “*per event*” after 200 visitors in the Events section under. After further discussion, the sentence: *Prioritize digital and social marketing over traditional media and trade shows* was changed to read: *Prioritize digital and social marketing with emphasis on integrated campaigns*. A new sentence was added: *Utilize e-newsletters to create relationships with visitors and partners*.

Priority 2: *Washington and Oregon* were added in the heading. Chairman McIntosh asked if itineraries had been created around specific events. Kyle said No but that is a good idea. Chairman McIntosh said it would be nice to create one around the Fourth of July events. The last sentence was modified: *Focus on developing stronger relationships with southern Nevada with the tourism industry and elected officials*.

Priority 3: Chairman McIntosh suggested *industry newsletter* be added in the Add events and meetings line. On Focus on technology upgrades, add *lighting and décor*.

Priority 4: Kyle said this priority mandates investing money back into the community. Chairman McIntosh asked how we will analyze events. Kyle said we will develop the event survey template for any event that we grant money for and they would be required to conduct that survey of their event in whatever way works best for them. In the sentence Focus on creating/attracting events to fill rooms in shoulder season, Chairman McIntosh asked if we could add something that includes partnership with local groups.

Kyle said he is asking for approval of this Strategic Plan document today so we can use the document at our next meeting to go along with our budget. Chairman McIntosh asked if in April Kyle could take the document and show the progress made so we can be kept up to date.

**Motion:** Member Bullis made motion to approve updated Strategic Plan 20/20.

**Motion seconded:** Member Henry. **Motion carried.**

**7. Update on Selection of Auditor:** Kyle said we do have a deadline to name our auditor. We have reached out to the City and the County to get suggestions of auditors throughout the State. We have a boiler plate RFP. We will send out to five suggested auditors. We must name him/her by the next meeting.

**8. Review of Twenty-Eight Day Rule:** Kyle said the reason this was brought up was we had to do a room tax refund. There was someone who stayed in a room for nine months. They had the documentation; they submitted everything properly. Per our policy, we owed them eight months of the nine months back because we keep the first month. Kyle read the paragraph that states the City of Ely Room Tax Ordinance Exemption and the White Pine County Room Tax Ordinance Exemption. The County Ordinance states

further how you go about getting the reimbursement. He then read the criteria that must be met to be exempt from collecting the room tax. It is clear cut. There are specifics on what qualifications you need to meet. He doesn't feel like any of our properties are being malicious. This is being done to read publicly periodically. He will mail this to our hotel/motel properties just to make sure they know. Not in response to anything but more of a let's be on the same page throughout the year on this one. Chairman McIntosh asked if the tenant paid weekly, they would not qualify? Kyle's response was Yes. They must pay monthly in one check. It was asked if a microwave would qualify as an oven. The response was Yes. Chairman McIntosh asked where the City was on Airbnbs. Member Carson said an Ordinance had recently been passed by the City. Member Bullis said the issue hasn't come before the County. James Beecher said he would check with his office to see if they are working on something to put on the County agenda.

### **9. Update on Progress for Shared Space Agreement with Chamber of**

**Commerce:** Kyle said he and James are working on this. James said he is in the process of drafting one now and has an outline of what both parties want to see in the agreement. Chairman McIntosh said our time frame to start construction is in March.

James Beecher left at this time, 4:55 pm.

### **10. Executive Director's Report:**

#### **a. Marketing   b. Events   c. Facilities**

Errol Porter provided the Board with a report that goes into detail. He gave a brief update on social media, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. For targeted digital, a graft shows impression breakdown for the past 55 days. He also shows all the campaigns we have going on right now. He talked about our website, ElyNevada.net. He gave updates on page views and sessions, top five visited pages, refers, updates and the calendar. He gave a listing up upcoming events for the months of February and March.

Kyle said the grant cycle is open and he will be writing a grant for special event marketing. He will be writing a grant to cover the cost of mailers. We received a report from East River PR showing two months of the places we have pitched, itineraries that have been created, and content that has been created. We do have someone coming out June 12. We have spent two years of creating content so now it is a matter of getting it out there and that is what East River is doing. It is a six-month experiment. The first few months usually move slow because you are getting them familiarized with what your goals are. We have had quite a bit of written content that has been put out. Kyle said he is also looking at another PR firm that focuses on outdoor recreation.

### III. Old Business:

**1. Parking Lot Subcommittee Report-Goeringer:** Kyle said the lights have been picked and ordered. When the next warm day is here, Terry Reck said the lights will be put in and the handicapped parking spots will be adjusted. That will then get us up to landscaping which will have to be approved after the fact because the money approved for the parking lot was strictly for lights and handicap spots repaving.

**2. White Pine Golf Course:** Chairman McIntosh thanked Kyle for attending the Golf Course Advisory Board meeting. To her knowledge this is the first time Tour and Recreation has written a grant on behalf of the golf course for advertising for them and helping them increase player numbers. The grant was to attract the future of golf, i.e. college-aged golfers, to come out and formulate a relationship with our golf course.

**3. White Pine Trails Update-Goeringer:** Kyle said Great Basin Trails Alliance has submitted their three priorities to the Forest Service for what trails they want built this summer. We should get three to five new miles of connector trails between Ice Plant and Ward Mountain. Reference the trail accelerator grant, they will be coming out in April walking around Squaw Peak and Garnet Hill. For the amount of money for the project, we can expect 20 to 25 miles of new trail design in that area and then incorporating some of the Bootleg trail could put us up to 25 to 30 miles of trails for that trail system coming right back into downtown.

**4. Nevada Northern RR Director's Report:** Mark Bassett said we have moved locomotive 81 from the engine house to the machine shop; it went well. January went very well. Shooting the fireworks off the back of the train for Fire and Ice was amazing. We carried essentially the same number of people as we did last year. We did get some press coverage last month. A big shout out to Kyle. Mark was very surprised to read that there was \$30,000 in rural tourism promotion grants for the bike and train project. The 1956 Pontiac HY-RAIL #18 is back. It will be available to chauffeur our Main Street people. In January we passed 100,000 followers on Facebook.

**5. White Pine Public Museum Update:** No report.

**6. Main Street Update:** Chairman McIntosh shared the agenda for participating in transformational strategies on Wednesday, March 4 and Thursday, March 5. This is free for Main Street America. Main Street is also helping with the all class reunion.

**7. Board Member Reports:** Member Henry is working on the horse racing. Chairman McIntosh said we have a special guest coming for the Ely Film Festival. We have student film participation and prizes. We hope everyone in the community can come and participate. It is highlighting the films that have been shot in White Pine County. Thank you to the Ely Times for an on-the-phone interview with Dutch Marich.

**IV. Public Comment:** Tim Bunch had some suggestions in reference to the Strategic Plan, Priority #4. Three ideas. Try to focus on downtown. I have lived in areas that have bed races and then to have a bed and breakfast race where you are feeding



pancakes as you are running down main street. Tim wanted to know why we don't have something set up for Frisbee golf at our golf course. Kyle said we do have disc golf at our golf course. He has approval from BLM to expand nine more holes to make it an 18-hole disc golf course. We are the only disc golf course in Eastern Nevada for four hundred miles. Tim had an idea about opening up a canvas. Ely prides itself in its art work and preserving what we have on buildings. What if we were to do something where we open up a canvas building for artists to present their art work. In other words, have a competition and have artists send samples of their art work from those states that we are wanting to focus on. Do a social media campaign to focus on that artist from that state.

Mark Bassett said we are finding out there is tremendous interest in the 1956 Pontiac. Most of our visitors come here via automobile. This would make a wonderful venue for car clubs. Kyle said that is something he is working on.

*The following is the letter submitted by George Chachas:*

Feb. 25, 2020

- 1) Madam Chairman - On your agenda item II (8) the twenty eight day rule needs to stay in place and modified so that tax ceases to be collected once the 28 days have been reached. No one should have to wait 9 months to request a refund as is required now.
- 2) Madam Chairman - there was nothing in the packet in regards to putting back the walkway in the Convention Center parking lot. There was nothing in regards to meeting the minimum ADA standards as well as putting in a cold patch over the trench that was dug in the road - the sudden drop will affect vehicle alignment or possibly cause tire damage - City code and policy is not being followed.

3) Madam Chairman - there was nothing in the packet regarding agenda item II 6 for the public to view.

**I. Public Comment:** George Chachas said the money that was given to the Community Choir for pigeon control needs to come back to this Board. NRS forbids you from supporting a private business owner. I want to remind you again they were not a 501c at the time they applied. They misled you. Failure to properly disclose or file under false pretense is a violation of the law. We all know that. Those fly-by-nights need to clean up their act. They do not even meet minimum ADA standards for the handicapped for that facility. They have a problem. A sign is posted on the front of the building stating No Soliciting, No Loitering, No Skateboarding - Private Property. You can't do that folks. The Convention Center/Tour and Rec Board building needs new signage on the glass front. You can't see the signage. I drove by this morning, once at 7:45 and once at 8:15, and did not see an Open sign. I looked closer at your lettering on the front glass and could barely see what the building represented. You need to change the lettering to a lighter color, perhaps white, something that stands out. Something that informs those passing by what the building is for and what the hours of operation are. I thought it was just glare before and it was just me. But no. As I was walking up today, same thing. You need to change

Carry Forward

No response to date

that. I can understand why tourists have a difficult time in finding you folks. The information signs located along Aultman have yet to be modified to show distances to the different facilities and tourist attractions. Rookies need to be replaced. Those that don't have any skin in the game are causing hardships for those that do. Whoever is planning these signs and not putting on any kind of distance. They don't have anything to gain. We are the losers. Somebody from out of town looking for the golf course sees the sign - they are going to drive 2 1/2 miles before they find it. Correct the situation. Period. Correct it. Same with the signage here where this facility is. Across the street, two feet - something. With all the money that this Board has given to the County golf course, what is the increase in play over the last three years. I have asked that numerous times. The County Commission just gave one percent of room tax that was designated to the County pool to the golf course. That was improper. The one percent levy was for the swimming pool only. If they don't need it, that room tax must be reduced by the one percent. It can't be changed. You enacted it for a specific purpose only. It wasn't part of the general tax. It was for the swimming pool only. Agenda Item II. 7, the Chamber is a private club. I want to remind you this Board cannot enhance private business; you can do tourist related events together, but they need to pay their own way in remodeling their building - not the hotel motel industry. Some are members; some are not. Again, it is a private club. The contemplated agreement is one-sided. I don't see any modifications. I have asked in the past and I am asking again, I have yet to receive any information regarding Mr. Spear who was a contractor with the Tour and Rec Board. Does he have a state business license, city business license, commercial location or home occupation. I want to remind you he took over \$300,000 just in bonus money from this facility. He was a contractor; he was not an employee. He needs to step up and prove that he was properly licensed. The Nevada Northern Railroad is continually given additional grant money from

this Board in addition to \$240,000 they receive in room tax. They are not operating under the Nevada Open Meeting Law and the tax payer cannot see how the monies are spent. Again, they need to be cut off or held accountable. I remind you that Mr. Bassett manages the railroad and his wife is the bookkeeper. There must not be any nepotism and there is. At a recent City Council meeting held on September 19, 2019 the railroad was seeking to borrow approximately \$450,00 and for what we don't know. They have yet to report what their total debt is. I want to know if any member knows. The sitting members should know, and they have the responsibility to disclose. But first I want to ask you. I want to know what the debt is. I don't know if they are still in debt. They have an obligation to be debt free by the end of the year.

**V. Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Member Bullis. To adjourn.

**Motion seconded:** Member Henry. **Motion carried.**

**Minutes submitted by:** Judi Bourbeau

**Minutes approved by:**

<u>Caroline McAntosh</u>	<u>3/18/2020</u>
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>