

**Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
December 13, 2023
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
RACVB Annex**

Board Present: Todd Cagnoni, Patricia Diduch, Kevin Frost, John Groh, Tiana McCall, Carol Schuster, Mick Gronewold, Bobbie Holzwarth, Geno Iafate, Shelton Kay, Dana Martin, Ricardo Montoya-Picazo, Jay Sandine, Richard Shuga, Patrick Thompson

Board Absent: Nathan Bruck, Jennifer Furst, Sonya Hoppes, Caitlin Pusateri, Kirk Weitzel

Staff Present: Kristen Paul, Joanne Nold, Lindsay Arellano, Kara Davis, Brandi Liantonio

Guest Present: Jon Schmieder and Kevin De Lange of Huddle Up Group, LLC

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:34 a.m. by Carol Schuster

Board Chair Carol Schuster began the meeting with a festival holiday greeting and recognition of the staff, noting their recent efforts including successfully producing Stroll on State.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

It was moved and seconded to approve the October 25, 2023, meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Destination Master Plan – Sports Tourism Report

John Groh introduces Jon Schmieder and Kevin De Lange from Huddle Up Group. HUG is part of the team working on Thrive 2035, our destination master plan under development. They are working on an analysis of sports tourism opportunities. Huddle Up Group has developed a technology platform that allows us to compare ourselves to other destinations that are in the sports space. Their technology helps with analysis of our competitors as well as viewing projections for future opportunities.

Schmieder shared that from an Amateur Sports Tourism position, Rockford is widely viewed around the country as the “gold standard.” He shared their 6-step process of analyzing the sports tourism industry involving; a Sports Tourism Index Survey with 1,900 data points, interviews with stakeholders, onsite visit and quantitative report sharing, Playbook outline creation, Playbook rollout, and a 30-45 day follow up.

Rockford’s index score is very good and hosts over 100 events a year, which is substantial. The numbers from the index are available to review weekly, but the best practice is to review the information every 6 months. The Playbook, once submitted, will have 2 levels of recommendations; items that are short-term and long-term opportunities for growth/improvement. John Groh added that HUG is conducting an analysis about RACVB’s program of work, budget, staffing, etc. and will offer recommendations for improvement/change where needed.

Internal Monitoring Reports:

After discussion, it was moved, seconded and approved to accept the Internal Monitoring Reports including John Groh's CEO interpretations, for monitoring on:

- 1.1 Create Economic Wealth (deferred from October)
- 2.5 Asset Protection

Governance Process:

John Groh reported that the annual Form 990 had been approved by the Board Governance Committee and will be filed. Copies of report were made available to board members and the report is on file in the office if requested.

CEO Report:

- **Stroll on State:** Operationally it was one of the strongest and smoothest years of Stroll, with better weather than the forecast called for. Kristen Paul mentioned that the Sock Monkey balloon donated by Hard Rock was a big success. Initial numbers show that numbers were up for the year in attendance, with the biggest Dasher Dance in several years with 1,138 runners.
- John recognized Kristen's new role as Executive Vice President.
- **Sales Update:** Lindsay Arellano shared that the team just booked the Leatherneck Classic, a large collegiate bowling tournament, which had in the previous 20 years been in the Quad Cities but has decided to book with Rockford this year.

Partner Updates:

- Patrick Thompson shared that things are going well with the county.
- Geno lafrate shared that Hard Rock continues to be on schedule and they are completely weathered in and offered for the board to tour the building.
- Todd Cagnoni reported that the capital improvement plan is wrapping up for the year. A number of projects are planned for next year.

At 8:36 a.m. Chair Carol Schuster adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Respectfully Submitted,



Darrell Snorek, Board Secretary

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