

**Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau
Board of Directors Hybrid Board Meeting
Alton City Hall- Council Chambers or via Zoom
Thursday, May 20, 2021**

8:00 a.m.

Present: John Hopkins, Lauren Pattan, Kristi Hyten, Michael Barker, Karen Brncic, Brian Campbell, Sandy Hefner, Linda Jun, JD Lorton, Cathy Luttrell, Mike McCormick, Jennifer McClure, Dave Miller, Patty Rotermund, Doug Stotler and Erin Ventimiglia

Absent: Mitch Bair, Tom Guarino, Stacy Friedrich-Hinrichs and Cameo Holland

Staff: Cory Jobe, Barbara Strack, Stephanie Tate, Sydney Peckham and Lauren Richey

Guest: Mary Lillesve, City of Grafton

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by John Hopkins.

Chairman opening remarks: John thanked everyone who made it to the board meeting. He stated this is the last hybrid board meeting and the June in-person board meeting will be at Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville. He said he is encouraged that tourism is starting to pick back up, and our marketing efforts are working. While supporting local restaurants this past week, he happened to meet visitors in our region from other states and they all had complimentary words to say about our region. John thanked Cory and the staff for their efforts.

President opening remarks: Cory thanked everyone who made it to the meeting. He said he is looking forward to the in-person board meeting in June, which is being hosted by the City of Collinsville and Gateway Center. He thanked all who made it to the Tourism Rally on May 6th. There were about 130 people who attended this event, and he gave a special thanks to the Bureau staff, Alton River Dragons and Fritz Distributing. He said the Alton River Dragons will have their home opener on May 27th and encouraged the board to support our local teams.

Board Minutes and Financials: John asked the board to review the April board minutes and financials. JD Lorton made the motion to approve both the April board minutes and financials; Dave Miller seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

COMMITTEES:

John said the Executive Committee reviewed and approved the proposed changes to the handbook. Cory presented an overview of the changes being proposed and if anyone has any further questions or comments about the proposed changes to contact him. The plan is to approve these changes at the June board meeting.

REPORT OF BUREAU ACTIVITIES:

The Visitor Center will re-open to the public on Tuesday, June 1. New hours will be 10 am – 4pm, seven days a week. We have hired a couple of part-time Visitor Center Specialists and continue to look for addition part-time employees.

We have been asked by the new Village of Hartford administration to re-open the Hartford Confluence Tower. It would be great to have the tower open again as an additional attraction in our

area, so we are in the process of providing a scope of work and contract to the Mayor and Village Board. The goal is to re-open in early June. More details to come on this.

Cory said he returned last night from Rockford, IL for the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitor Bureau's (ICCVB) meeting, and was voted on the ICCVB Board as an At Large member.

Cory said he continues to meet with representatives and senators from our region and the state to discuss the fiscal year 2022 funding. The deadline to pass the Illinois state budget is near, and there is potential funding through the American Rescue Plan.

We just launched our new brand campaign "Greatness around every corner", which features outdoor livability and the living like a local theme in our region. The videos and connected tv spots were created by Shift Agency. The new campaign will be airing on connected tv spots, online video, digital and social media advertising. The campaign will run through Labor Day, and then we will pivot to fall advertising. Our target market is a four-hour drive radius. Two videos were shared with the Board to watch.

In addition to paid advertising brand campaign, we are also launching data driven digital advertising campaigns with the Riverfront Times, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Feast Magazine and Illinois Times promoting our Light up the Great River Road weekly fireworks, Epic Food week, Craft Beer week and Alton All Star Restaurant Week.

We have hired Zartico to help measure and track visitor intelligence. They will provide analytics and data visualizations to support data driven decisions in real time.

Last month, we renewed our contract with Grafton and launched a new storytelling marketing campaign this past week, "Get Lost" in Grafton.

We are working with Megyme Productions to create video storytelling that will be used on paid social through the summer and fall season. We are shooting Ferry experiences, Grafton Harbor, the Vineyards at Grafton Winery, Village of Elsah, Willoughby Farms, Collinsville Aqua Park, where the locals like to hang out in Edwardsville, a craft spirits/distillery video and the Alton River Dragons video. We recently finished two videos that Katie will use to promote Route 66 and Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Byway to the group travel market.

Epic Burger Week is June 14-18, and we have 21 participating restaurants from our 6-county region participating. Alton All Star Restaurant Week is July 9 – 18, and we are looking for participating restaurants. This year the commemorative glass will be celebrating the inaugural season of the Alton River Dragons. Cory thanked Lauren Pattan for ordering the glasses and offering to store them for us.

We have started working on the Fall/Winter Go Guide. If anyone is interested in placing an ad in it, please contact Katie Bennett.

The new riversandroutes.com 2.0 will launch on June 30. We will have a preview of the new site at our June board meeting.

Cory said he has been meeting with regional partners and economic development professionals and will meet with MCT next month. He has also been meeting with regional land managers from IDNR, USACE, US Fish & Wildlife and the Audubon Center to begin building working relationships to identify activation projects that our organization and business leaders in the region can support. These are

all economic drivers for our outdoor resources and we need to support the development and upkeep for our livability as citizens and the enjoyment of our guests visiting southwest Illinois.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

General Announcement: Dave Miller said if the Hartford Confluence Tower opens back up, it has the potential to be a great outdoor music venue.

The St. Louis Regional Airport is hoping to send out an RFP for new restaurant operators.

Mary Lillesve said the Grafton History Museum project is back on track with state grant funding and they are building it out now. All board members and staff were invited to their Grand Opening on June 19.

JD Lorton said Aerie's has seen an uptick in organized group tours and lunches recently and thanked the staff for all their efforts. He also said they are planning to add a new attraction, Aerie's Alpine Coaster, which is a 2,600 footlong gravity roller coaster.

Adjourn: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kristi Hyten and seconded by David Miller. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,

Cory Jobe
President/CEO

Kristi Hyten
Secretary/Treasurer