

**Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau
Board of Directors Board Meeting
Alton City Hall – Council Chambers
Thursday, July 15, 2021**

8:00 a.m.

Present: Kristi Hyten, JD Lorton, Michael Barker, Karen Brncic, Yvonne Campbell, Tom Guarino, Sandy Hefner, Cameo Holland, Linda Jun, Dave Miller, Patty Rotermund, Tim Seebert and Doug Stotler

Absent: John Hopkins, Lauren Pattan, Mitch Bair, Brian Campbell, Cathy Luttrell, Mike McCormick, Jennifer McClure

Staff: Cory Jobe, Barbara Strack, Stephanie Tate, Katie Bennett and Sydney Peckham

Guest: Mary Lillesve, City of Grafton

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Kristi Hyten. Kristi welcomed everyone to the meeting and offered a special thanks to former Chairman John Hopkins for his leadership of the Tourism Bureau board the past few years and is looking forward to the resurgence of tourism.

President opening remarks: Cory welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded board members it is Restaurant Week, which continues until Sunday. We have 21 participating restaurants and 3,000 restaurant week glasses have been distributed.

As we begin our new fiscal year, we will begin a new board meeting schedule as well. Starting with the meeting today we will move to quarterly meetings at different locations: October 21, 2021 in Edwardsville; January 27, 2022 Tourism Summit at Gateway Convention; April 21, 2022 in Grafton; and June 16, 2022 in Alton. The Executive Committee will continue to meet each month at our office in the conference room, located in the One Eleven Building, Suite 315.

Cory is happy to report that we successfully renewed our one-year contract with the City of Edwardsville. He thanked Kristi Hyten and Tom Guarino for their support and comments during the finance committee meeting. Over the next several weeks our team will be launching targeted paid advertising support for the Edwardsville events.

Board Minutes and Financials: Kristi asked the board to review the June board minutes. Dave Miller made the motion to approve the June board minutes. JD Lorton seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried. Kristi asked the board to review the June financials. Dave Miller made the motion to approve the June board minutes. Karen Brncic seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

COMMITTEES:

Nominating Committee: Kristi said Stacy Hinrichs, from DoubleTree in Collinsville, and Erin Ventimiglia, from Tony's Steakhouse, have resigned from the board so we have a Collinsville lodging and Alton restaurant seat open. Kristi said we have a suggested replacement for the Collinsville lodging seat, and it is Daniel Belmont, the new manager at DoubleTree. Dave Miller made the motion

to approve Daniel Belmont as a new board member, whose seat will expire in June 2023. Michael Barker seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried. Kristi Campbell said we have a suggested replacement for the Alton restaurant seat and it is Yvonne Campbell from My Just Desserts. Dave Miller made the motion to approve Yvonne Campbell as a new board member, whose seat will expire in June 2024. Michael Barker seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

REPORT OF BUREAU ACTIVITIES:

Since the opening of the Hartford Tower on June 18th, we have welcomed more than 500 paid admissions.

Last week, the Illinois Office of Tourism was in our area to shoot for their new brand tv commercial. Jane Lynch is the new spokesperson and plays a tour guide and welcomes a family to the Great River Road with a bike ride and Sky Tour ride. Jane stayed overnight in Alton. This national campaign will debut in mid-August.

We received notification that our LTCB grant was fully funded for FY 2022 at \$591,000. This is an increase of last year's grant (funded at 50%), plus the additional area and room counts in Madison County and East St. Louis.

We launched our new website on June 30th. It was designed with mobile first since more than 65% of visits to our website are via mobile. All members were encouraged to review it and give feedback.

Our summer advertising campaign continues to perform very strong. We are seeing tremendous growth of page views and site visits to our website. A portion of our summer campaign is dedicated to targeted digital ads focused on midweek deals called "Why Wait". Cory asked board members to send in more midweek deals if they have any to include in this campaign.

We are working with the creative team at Meredith Corporation to launch a new multi-page fall insert in the Midwest Living Magazine. The insert will be included in 300,000 magazines mailed to targeted households in IL, MO, KY, IL and IN.

Our new Fall/Winer Go Guide will be distributed in early September.

We have been busy hosting Tim Ezell with Fox 2 in the Morning for three market appearances over the past four weeks, including Hartford Tower, Aerie's and Grafton Loading Dock. Cory thanked Stephanie for her hard work and strong media relationships in the market for getting us so much earned media for our bureau and the communities we represent.

On Sept. 3, Fox 2 will launch a new midday show called Studio STL. We have secured a partnership with 12 in-region segments that will air every Thursday from September to February highlighting fall and winter events.

The Spirit of Peoria returned for another season of cruising and on Wednesday, August 25 we will be hosting a special event on the boat during the afternoon cruise boarding at 3:30 pm and departs at 4:00 pm. All board members will receive an invitation in the next week.

Craft Beer Week is from July 25-31. Five area breweries are collaborating this year with craft beer glasses available. Our Epic Food Week campaign is going well. We have 17 participants signed up for the Ice Cream Week, which is August 9-13. And we had 22 participate for the Epic Burger Week.

During the legislation session we worked with legislators to secure \$4 million in ARPA Federal Funds for the development, planning and marketing of Route 66 communities leading up the historic centennial year in 2026. The funds will be shared with 7 DMO partners who represent communities who represent IL Route 66. We need to develop a solid plan to attract and retain travelers driving Route 66 so they stay in our region. In the next few weeks, we will announce a new initiative and steering committee focused on a plan and activations to further develop our Route 66 heritage and product leading up to the anniversary of the “Mother Road” in 2026. SJ Morrison and Mitch Bair have agreed to co-chair this steering committee. We will be asking 7 additional community leaders to join this initiative. We are calling it the Last 100 Mile of Route 66 initiative.

Cory said he continues to meet with community leaders and land managers about the importance of our outdoor recreation opportunities and activation. Everyone agrees we need a strategy and development platform to move forward as a region. A collective idea has emerged to update the master plan activation strategy for the Byway, which is a common thread for the communities from Hartford to Grafton. It will include opportunities to further develop an active lifestyle with outdoor recreational development through public private partnerships. We will create a new regional outdoor and livability working group in the next few weeks.

Cory said he continues his conversations with the Governor to develop a strategy to utilize outdoor parks for active lifestyle and livability in downstate Illinois.

Cory said that Lauren has been reaching out to everyone about working on committees that came out of the strategic plan. Kristi said with the quarterly board meetings, this should allow more time for board members to be able to participate in the committee meetings.

Yvonne Campbell joined the board members at the end of the meeting. Cory welcomed her as a new board member and the board members went around the room and introduced themselves.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

General Announcement: Linda Jun thanked Katie for her help with her group boarding at the Spirit of Peoria. JD thanked Cory for getting our region highlighted in the new IOT campaign.

Tom Guarino said Bella Milano has been approved for catering at LCCC in Godfrey and will market their rooms available for rent and catering.

Dave Miller said a B-29 and the Goodyear Blimp flew into the airport recently. He said the Annual Fly In is scheduled for the last Saturday in September.

Sandy Hefner reminded board member the Jersey County Fair is going on until Sunday, July 18. She also said there are two new businesses in Jerseyville that opened up in renovated buildings.

Karen said the Alton Marina will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year, and she will be hosting a Celebration on August 28th. That is same day as the Food Truck Day at Amphitheater, and she invited all board members to attend.

Mary Lillesve said the Grafton History Museum is open and invited everyone to attend. It is connected to the Grafton Visitor Center and has state of the art technology in it.

Adjourn: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dave Miller and seconded by Karen Brncic. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,

Cory Jobe
President/CEO

JD Lorton
Secretary/Treasurer