

## Marion County Chamber of Commerce

### Board of Directors' Meeting

January 21, 2021

The Marion County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met via Zoom on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 12 noon CT. Logging into the meeting were the following board members: Erik McDaniel, Travis Hickman, Cody Fox, Carmen O'Hagan, Dave Pestillo, Mandy Finotti, Joyce Burkhalter, and Kathie Tierney. Also on the call were Marion County Mayor David Jackson, Mike Otterman with Lodge Cast Iron, Rhonda Van Oteghem with the American Job Center, and Judy Blevins, Administrative Assistant for the chamber.

In the absence of President Shelby Potterfield, Vice President Erik McDaniel called the meeting to order and recognized those in attendance.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Travis Hickman and seconded by Dave Pestillo to accept the minutes from the December 17, 2020 Zoom board meeting. Copy of the minutes was sent to board members prior to today's call and is on file. Motion carried without dissent.

#### **Financial Report:**

Judy Blevins presented the following financial reports, which had been emailed to board members prior to today's meeting: "Banking Summary December 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020" and "Account Balances as of January 20, 2021".

Mandy Finotti made a motion to approve the financial reports. Cody Fox seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Copy of financial report was sent to board members prior to today's meeting and is on file with the minutes.

#### **Old Business**

- Copier for the Chamber Office

We are happy to report that the Lanier Copier purchased from Beeler is up and running at the chamber office. As approved by the chamber board and Beeler, three equal monthly payments are being made with no incurring interest. As reflected in the financial report for December, the first payment of \$345.96 has been made.

#### **New Business:**

- Spencer Wayne Small Business Grants 2021

Thanks to the generosity of Lodge Cast iron, \$10,000 has been designated for the 2021 Spencer

Wayne Small Business Grant Program which is available to small businesses who are chamber members in good standing and for whom a grant would help fund projects such as landscaping, signage, equipment, personnel training, maintenance or software.

Prior to today's meeting the board was sent information detailing rules for the Spencer Wayne Small Business Grant Program in past years.

President Shelby Potterfield requested that in today's meeting the board discuss a time frame for the 2021 grant program. President Potterfield will appoint a committee to review and approve applications received.

Vice President Erik McDaniel opened the floor for discussion which resulted in a motion by Travis Hickman and seconded by Cody Fox to begin the application process on February 1, 2021 and ending on February 26, 2021. The motion further included that the committee will meet the first week in March to review each application. Applicants will be notified of results by March 15, 2021. Motion was approved without dissent.

Volunteering to serve on a committee were Joyce Burkhalter, Dave Pestillo, Mandy Finotti, and Kathie Tierney.

- **2021 Golf Tournament**

Kathie Tierney reported to the board that the Sweeten's Cove Golf Course had contacted her regarding a possible golf tournament this year. The chamber is one of five organizations/sponsors that has been approved to have a tournament at the course if we wish to do so.

In order to reserve the possibility of a 2021 tournament, Kathie agreed to a tentative date of June 4, 2021. No deposit is required. The course understands that due to COVID-19, the chamber may not choose to sponsor a tournament or may wish to move the date to the fall.

Vice President McDaniel opened the floor to discussion which resulted in consensus that the board can't make a decision at this time but would like to reserve the option to look at this again closer to the June date. A motion was made by Kathie Tierney and seconded by Travis Hickman to defer a decision until at least April but to have further discussion at the March board meeting. Motion carried without opposition.

During discussion, Mike Otterman suggested that we raise the entrance fees. Because the course has become so popular, it should be no problem to sell out at an increased fee. Others in today's meeting agreed. If we move forward with a tournament, a decision regarding team fees will be on the table for consideration.

### **Miscellaneous**

None

## **Sharing from Community Partners**

Rhonda Van Oteghem introduced herself as the business representative from the American Job Center and expressed an interest in becoming more involved with the business community. The American Job Center partners with employers and prospective employees to train and match employees for job positions. The American Job Center receives federal grant money to fund employee education and training including on-the-job training.

Mike Otterman reported that Lodge has a variety of job positions open at this time. Ms. Van Oteghem added that the American Job Center works closely with Lodge.

Joyce Burkhalter explained that there is a new round of PPP loans now being processed through financial institutions. First Volunteer Bank is accepting round two loan applications from any qualified business, not just First Volunteer customers. Qualifying businesses range from those who are self-employed to large businesses. Deadline to apply is March 31, 2021. For more information, visit [www.SBA.gov](http://www.SBA.gov) or contact Joyce Burkhalter or another local financial institution of your choosing.

## **Mayor's Report**

Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, Mayor Jackson stated that it has been a struggle. The state is tasked with distributing the vaccine which they say is based on population and need. In Marion County the local health department is vaccinating by appointment. The numbers to call to be put on a waiting list for the first vaccination in Marion County are 815-1331 or 815-1332 or you can apply online at [https://covid19.tn.gov/vaccine\\_phase/marion-county/](https://covid19.tn.gov/vaccine_phase/marion-county/). For those who have had the first of two vaccinations, the health department will call them to set an appointment for the second dose. Those who are eligible for vaccinations in Marion County at this time are those in categories 1a1 and 1a2 and ages 75+. Mayor Jackson stated that there are some counties who have been allowed to lower the age limit but that does not apply to Marion County at this time. Mayor Jackson expressed frustration that from the state level information regarding vaccine distribution has been confusing to local counties. The Mayor did state that active cases in Marion County appear to be going down. He encourages folks to follow COVID-19 protocol such as social distancing, washing hands, staying at home when sick, avoiding big crowds, and wearing a mask when in public. There is, however, no general mask requirement in Marion County.

The next Marion County Commission meeting will be on Monday night, January 25<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 PM via Zoom. The virtual meeting can be viewed via WEPG or Marion County News. Mayor Jackson stated that the commission hopes to be able to meet in-person in February, pending COVID stats. The February meeting will be announced later.

Mayor Jackson stated that yesterday he visited a new business on South Pittsburg Mountain. Sasquatch Farm Campground & Nature Park is located at 2985 Brown Trace Rd in South Pittsburg, a couple of miles off of highway 156. They will offer some 50 RV sites in a natural environment for hiking and exploring.

Mayor Jackson says the county continues to experience growth in building.

The county is still working with Nickajack Shores, previously known as Rarity. The county commission in November put the TIP tax program in place, whereby the developer can borrow money to do some type of infrastructure to which the public must have access. They are talking about putting in a campground, a marina, and a boat dock, trails, etc. The Tip program will allow for the sewer line to be extended which will also add to the increase in property value. The TIP program will not apply to residential property but will include properties with public access.

The county is continuing to recruit new industry and business which cannot be disclosed at this time. According to Mayor Jackson, we are hoping to get back to some semblance of order once we are able to get on the other side of COVID.

Mayor Jackson was asked about new cabins that are being built on Whitwell Mountain. He stated that a young couple has purchased property that will have some 14 or 15 primitive rental cabins (maybe 20 if they can work out water issues). Cody Fox added that he has been contacted by them to be the hot tub vendor. It is his understanding that they are also building tree houses and dome homes for rent. According to Cody, they plan to open March 15, 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Next scheduled meeting of the board is Thursday, February 18, 2021 at noon. It will continue to be via Zoom.