

## **Marion County Chamber of Commerce**

### **Board of Directors' Meeting**

**June 17, 2021**

The Marion County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met at the Western Sizzlin in Jasper on Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 12 noon CDT. The following board members were in attendance: Shelby Potterfield, Dave Pestillo, Travis Hickman, Joyce Burkhalter, Mandy Finotti, and Kathie Tierney. Due to lack of quorum, motions and seconds will be accepted but voting will be deferred to an evote.

Also in attendance were Jenny Holder with Resource Management, Sonya McShan with Erlanger Hospital, Nickie Anders and Lauren Pelham with Hampton Inn, Forrest Holloman with Mueller, County Mayor David Jackson, David Riley with Marion County News, Debi Crabtree with Village Virtual, Mike Otterman with Lodge Cast Iron, Michael O'Hagan with O'Hagan Law Firm, and Judy Blevins, Administrative Assistant for the chamber.

President Shelby Potterfield called the meeting to order and recognized those in attendance.

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

A motion was made by Travis Hickman and seconded by Kathie Tierney to accept the minutes from the May 20, 2021 Zoom board meeting. Motion will be sent for evoting. A copy of the minutes was sent to board members prior to today's meeting and is on file.

#### **Financial Report:**

Treasurer Dave Pestillo presented the following financial reports, which had been emailed to board members prior to today's meeting: "Banking Summary May 1 - 31, 2021" and "Account Balances as of June 16, 2021". By way of explanation, Mr. Pestillo explained that postage in the amount of \$3.40 was to mail a packet of information to a caller in Hixson, TN. There is also an additional \$30 added in May to the usual \$100 monthly fee payable to WinWorld for internet host and maintenance. The \$30 is an annual charge for domain name.

Partial Income and expenses for the golf tournament were reflected in the May report and will continue with the June report. However, a handout was provided showing current income and expenses for the tournament as well as additional anticipated income yet to come. See handout.

It was suggested that since we are now meeting in-person, the Zoom account should be terminated. Several members of the chamber have Zoom accounts and have offered their accounts should the chamber need a Zoom meeting.

Kathie Tierney made a motion to accept the financial report. Mandy Finotti seconded the motion which will be sent for an evote. A copy of the financial report was provided to all persons present and will be on file with the minutes.

## **Mayor's Report**

Marion County Mayor David Jackson addressed the group. He began by expressing sympathy for the recent loss of County Commissioner Tommy Thompson and recognizing the important role Commissioner Thompson has played as a commissioner and as a concerned citizen of Marion County. It is anticipated that Mr. Thompson's wife will be appointed for the remainder of Mr. Thompson's term as commissioner.

Mayor Jackson stated that the land sale at Nickajack Shores and Resort last Saturday resulted in all available lots being sold. With plans to expand services offered (such as docks, and an RV park), Nickajack Shores shows great potential for growth in Marion County.

The county has approved a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) agreement with Nickajack Shores. A requirement of TIF is that there has to be public access. The public will have access to the marina and campground at Nickajack Shores. Through TIF, the developer will borrow the money to run the sewer out to the property (a twenty year note). The county will split property tax on any growth at Nickajack Shores - 70% to the developer and 30% to the county – in order to help the developer pay off the debt. Once the developer has repaid the debt, TIF will end and the county will receive 100% of property taxes due. Mayor Jackson stated that there have been complaints of TIF in the past because the municipality rather than the developer borrowed the money. A new law has corrected that problem. Without the new law, Mayor Jackson explained, Marion County would not have entered into this agreement.

The county has received more than twenty RFP's from the state in the past three weeks. Most have not been returned due to their requirements for buildings which the county does not have.

Currently, Mayor Jackson states that the county is working on a site development grant to do grading on the Nickajack Port property. The Southeast Development District is helping the county locate funds for the grading. Once the grading has been completed, Mayor Jackson states that the Port Authority property will be a top spot for industry. For six years, the county has been working on getting a railroad spur into the port authority and Colonial Chemical. The county has recently received a low bid of 1.9 million dollars from Queen City Railroad Construction to lay the track. The county will also have to pay CSX 1.5 million dollars for switches, RR signs, etc. According to the mayor, the county is closer to getting the railroad spur now than ever before.

Mayor Jackson stated that there is new retail coming to the county, although he can not provide specifics at this time.

The mayor is also pleased to welcome Bolt Farms to Marion County. Located on Whitwell Mountain, they have rental cabins (domes and treehouses) with a spectacular view. Owners Tori and Seth Bolt began accepting guests this week. This is good for the county because it will add to the hotel/motel taxes which go to the school system.

Mayor Jackson gave an update on COVID-19 in the county. The State of TN has lifted all COVID related restrictions. Marion County has had one additional death due to COVID, bringing the total number of deaths to 48 at this time. The number of active cases was as low as seven but has jumped back up to twenty-four active cases. Mayor Jackson says that the last information he had from the Marion County Health Department was that approximately 45% of the county has been vaccinated.

One thing we will be dealing with in the coming months is the census which occurred last year. Mayor Jackson expects to receive numbers from the federal government in late September or October, and then we will know how the census will affect redistricting.

As part of the American Rescue Plan, counties will receive federal funds directly, whereas city funding will go to the state for distribution. Marion County has been allotted 2.8 million dollars this year and will have another 2.8 million in May 2022. As long as the money has been appropriated by December 2024, the county has until 2026 to spend the money. Mayor Jackson explained that the county is limited on how the money can be used. The county is looking to spend their money on improving access to better drinking water. The county will also draw interest on this money and can use the interest on other projects. The county will have the Southeast Development District manage our money.

#### **Guest – Forrest Holloman, Mueller Water Products**

Forrest Holloman, Human Resources Generalist, spoke on behalf of Mueller Water Products. They are excited to be able to get out into the community after being confined by COVID restrictions. Mueller makes and manufactures water products. They help deliver safe drinking water to homes and businesses every day. Mueller has been in business for 170 years and now has a plant on Industrial Drive in Jasper. Mr. Holloman stated that Mueller is excited to be in the Marion County area and is looking forward to expanding and growing.

#### **Old Business**

- Marion County Chamber of Commerce Golf Classic 2021

President Potterfield reported on the 2021 golf classic that was played on June 11<sup>th</sup> at Sweetens Cove Golf Club. While some income from the tournament is still outstanding, we are projected to net over \$11,000. Proceeds from the tournament will be used for the chamber's small business grant program in the coming year. President Potterfield expressed the chamber's

gratitude for the sponsors and volunteers, without whom the tournament would not have been possible.

A handout detailing sponsors, volunteers and projected income and expenses was given to each person at today's meeting and will be on file with the minutes.

Kathie Tierney reported that Sweetens Cove Golf Club will allow the chamber to host a tournament there again next year. A couple of suggestions from the course manager were 1.) to increase team prices and 2.) to start the afternoon round at 2:00 PM. These things will be considered in committee and will come before the board when planning for 2022.

- 2021 Annual Banquet

At the board meeting last month, it was the expressed feeling of the board that we should have the banquet in-person this year. (The banquet was not held last year due to COVID restrictions.) President Potterfield and Kathie Tierney volunteered to contact Jasper Highlands to see if the pavilion was available to us and to check with Top of the Rock Restaurant regarding meal choices and prices.

President Potterfield reported that she had spoken with Dane Bradshaw with Jasper Highlands who said that we could use Pat's Summitt Pavilion on August 19, 2021. A requirement is that Top of the Rock be designated for catering the event. Kathie Tierney is to make contact with Top of the Rock and report back to the board.

President Potterfield will appoint a banquet committee which will meet to discuss details prior to the July board meeting.

Save the date and stand by for further information!

## **New Business**

- Membership Application

A membership application has been received from the non-profit "A Step Ahead Chattanooga", (Contact person Lissa Goeltz). The chamber's membership committee has reviewed the application and recommends membership approval. Kathie Tierney made a motion to approve the membership application for "A Step Ahead Chattanooga". Travis Hickman seconded the motion which will be sent for an evote.

## **Miscellaneous and Sharing from Community Partners**

David Riley reminded folks that there is an open house tomorrow, June 18<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 AM CDT at the new location of Marion County News, 969 Main Street, Suite B, in Kimball. Everyone is invited to attend.

Judy Blevins informed the group that we have received a very nice note from Marion County Libraries Director Karen Strain thanking the chamber for our contribution to the Marion County Libraries Summer Reading Program.

Dave Pestillo read a note from Michelle Pestillo on behalf of Whitwell High School, thanking the chamber for the gift cards donated for students who improved their ACT scores (this group is called "ACT Growers").

Dave (Emendee Technologies) is hosting the next chamber coffee which is scheduled for Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 AM and will be held at Pat's Summitt Pavilion at Jasper Highlands. Everyone is invited to attend.

Sonya McShan announced that Franklin County Chamber is hosting a business expo on 9/2/21 from 4:30 – 7:30 CDT. Some of our members might like to attend to see if an expo might be something for us to consider in Marion County.

Mike Otterman shared that Lodge Cast Iron has started their 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Foundry fifty million dollar expansion. They anticipate hiring 45 to 90 employees and hope to be operational by May of next year.

Lodge bought a street sweeper for the City of South Pittsburg that could be used for streets near Lodge as well as other streets within the City.

Lodge is also planning a warehouse sale and 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary event beginning on September 30<sup>th</sup> and running through October 3<sup>rd</sup>. There will be music and food and, of course, Lodge products for sale.

Mandy Finotti told the group that next Saturday will be the Launch Party for Arts-in-the-Burg in South Pittsburg. There will be vendors in tents on Cedar Avenue from 9:00 until 4:00 CDT followed by musical events at the Princess and at the main stage on Cedar Avenue. For details see Arts in the Burg facebook page.

Jenny Holder gave an update on Resource MFG. They have been in Marion County since 1997 providing recruiting assistance to employers and job seekers. As we know, the labor market is really struggling for associates. As a result, Resource MFG has introduced a program called "Better WorkLife" which offers online courses for associates, including a GED program. For additional information, see Resource MFG's facebook and website.

Debi Crabtree announced that Village Virtual LLC is excited to partner with Marion County Schools to offer a K-12 fully online program as an alternative to an in-person traditional classroom setting. For additional information, go to [www.villagevirtual.com](http://www.villagevirtual.com) or contact Ms. Crabtree at [debi.crabtree@villagevirtual.com](mailto:debi.crabtree@villagevirtual.com) or contact the Marion County School System.

Travis Hickman with WEPG/The River shared that Channel 12 in Chattanooga recently ran the annual "Viewer's Choice Awards". Travis was the top vote recipient for DJ of the year and Joey Manis (also with WEPG) was the runner-up. Currently, the Chattanooga Times Free Press is accepting votes for the "Best of the Best". WEPG/The River is in the top eight radio stations at this time and the only station outside the Metro-Chattanooga area. So, if you are so inclined, go to the Chattanooga Times Free Press website and vote for your favorite radio station (Travis is hoping it is WEPG).

David Riley also stated that Marion County News is currently accepting votes for "The Best in the Sequatchie Valley". Deadline to submit a vote is June 21 at 4:00 PM CDT. Voting can be online at [msnbisv.com](http://msnbisv.com) or [mcnewstn.com](http://mcnewstn.com) or by mailing in a copy of the "official entry form" printed in the Marion County News (last issue ballots are printed is June 15, 2021).

Here being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Next scheduled board meeting is Thursday, July 15, 2021.

---

Voting yes to all votes: Joyce Burkhalter, Kathie Tierney, Patrick O'Hagan, Vicki Messer, Dave Pestillo, Travis Hickman, Carmen O'Hagan.

As of 7/6/21