

Marion County Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors' Meeting

March 17, 2022

The Marion County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met on March 17, 2022 at noon CDT at the Western Sizzlin in Jasper. The following board members were present: Carmen O'Hagan, Erik McDaniel, Kathie Tierney, Mandy Finotti, Dave Pestillo, Shelby Potterfield and Sonya Walker-McShan. Also present were County Mayor David Jackson, Michelle Story with Fade LLC, Michael Griffith and Daphne Kirksey with Tennessee American Water Company, Gina Pannell with ReMax Realty, Rhonda Van Oteghem with American Job Center, Spike Hosch and Sam Shaw with BetterFi, Michelle Pestillo, School Counselor at Whitwell High, and Judy Blevins, administrative assistant for the chamber.

Note: A quorum of board members was not present; therefore, evotes will be requested for all motions made during the meeting.

President Carmen O'Hagan called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Erik McDaniel and seconded by Kathie Tierney to accept the minutes from the February 17, 2022 board meeting. A copy of the minutes is on file in the chamber office. Evotes will be requested.

Financial Report:

Treasurer Dave Pestillo presented the following financial reports, which had been emailed to board members prior to today's meeting: "Banking Summary – February 2022", and "Account Balances as of 3/14/2022". By way of explanation, Dave reported that the rental storage reflected on the Banking Summary was for two months (\$50 per month), the \$2.00 refund was an amount refunded by First Volunteer Bank for a previous fee (see minutes from February 17, 2022 board meeting). Erik McDaniel made a motion to approve the financial reports as presented. Mandy Finotti seconded the motion which will be sent for an evote. For details, see report, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Jackson reported the following:

- After much delay, construction of the rail spur at Colonial Chemical property has begun. There are many benefits to the creation of the rail spur in New Hope. This ultimately is expected to create 25 – 30 new jobs for Colonial Chemical.

- The county has received eight RFI's from the state over the past three weeks from companies looking to expand. Most require existing large building space which Marion County does not have. One RFI was returned for a company called Moon Dust.
- Thankfully, active COVID cases in Marion County are down to twenty-two; however, COVID deaths have increased to 127.
- Thanks to the efforts of State Senator Todd Gardenhire and the TN Department of Transportation and others, the concrete retaining wall in South Pittsburg is being repaired. Senator Gardenhire is also working with the TN Department of Tourism to clean that wall. Initially, the Cornbread Festival will pay to have this done with the expectation of being reimbursed.
- Thanks to the TN American Water Company for helping to bring good drinking water to the remaining portion of unserved residents in the Northern end of the county by connecting with the City of Dunlap water system.
- COVID relief funds through the American Recovery Act (ARP) have had an impact on the use of Community Development Block Grants in Tennessee. In the past CDBG funds have been used to extend water and sewer lines. Those grants can no longer be used for this purpose. ARP funds will be used to extend water to South Pittsburg Mountain, Hwy 41 and other areas.
- The Marion County Planning Commission recently approved 398 lots for the Aetna Mountain Development. The road leading to the development will come off of Hwy 134 and go across the TN river bridge. Due to new developments such as Aetna Mountain Development and Nickajack Shores, the future may eventually bring retail stores to Marion County.

Old Business

- Chamber Business Grants 2022

The deadline to submit 2022 Spencer Wayne Small Business Grant applications was February 28, 2022. Due to the number of applications received and the money designated for the 2022 grants, not all applications could be approved. After careful consideration of all applications, the grant committee approved six requests. Even though some applicants had requested more funds than the committee approved, all six have agreed to accept the amount offered.

Those approved are: 1) Raulston Woods & Gardens - \$2,200; 2) The Sweet Spot - \$1,500; 3) Busy Bee Laundry - \$2,500; 4) TN River Gorge Trust - \$1,500; 5) Marion County Public Library System - \$2,100 and 6) WEPG/The River - \$1,527. The total grant amount equals \$11,327.00. Money designated for the 2022 grants came from the net proceeds of the 2021 golf classic. That amount was \$11,312.57. The committee is asking for the chamber to add an additional \$14.43 in order to reach the projected \$11,327.00.

Mandy Finotti made a motion to move \$14.43 from the chamber regular checking account to the grant account. Erik McDaniel seconded the motion which will be sent for **an evote**.

- Golf Tournament 2022

The golf tournament committee met on March 16, 2022. President O'Hagan reported for the committee:

- ✓ Tournament date is confirmed for June 10th. There will be a morning round of 9 teams and an afternoon round of 9 teams. During our meeting, Kathie Tierney confirmed with the golf course manager that the morning rounds will begin at 10:00 AM and the afternoon rounds at 2:00 PM.
- ✓ Price for using the Sweetens Cove Golf Club for the day is unchanged from last year's price - \$5,000.
- ✓ Last year's sponsors have been contacted. We are waiting to hear back from some of them before reaching out to new sponsors.
- ✓ Pricing from last year will remain the same: Premiere - \$3,000; Gold - \$2,000; Silver - \$1,500; Bronze - \$750; Hole and Green Sponsors - \$200 each; Four-member team - \$500. List of sponsorship levels and what each includes is on file in chamber office.
- ✓ Lodge has been confirmed as a Silver Sponsor.
- ✓ We also need closest to the hole (morning and afternoon), hole-in-one, and longest drive sponsorships (morning and afternoon).
- ✓ SueBob's Diner has agreed to provide box lunches again this year.
- ✓ Erlanger Hospital will provide drinks.
- ✓ Team sign-ups will be open after sponsors have been determined.
- ✓ Note: last year teams were designated as "Iron Sponsors". There is agreement that we would prefer just to call them teams, rather than sponsors this year.

- Update on Career Days Program

Dave Pestillo reported that the last career day program for 8th grade students in Marion County public schools for this year took place at Jasper Middle School on March 11, 2022. Already, two schools have been scheduled for the next school year – South Pittsburg High – October 21, 2022 and Monteagle Elementary – February 3, 2023. On behalf of the chamber, Dave expressed thanks for the community partners who participated in the career day program 2021/22, and looks forward to presenting career day programs for 8th graders in the next school year.

Dave requested \$700 from the chamber to order pop-sockets to give to the students as we have been doing this year. Sonya Walker-McShan made a motion to allocate \$700 for items to hand out to students during Career Days 2022/23. Erik McDaniel seconded the motion which will be sent for an **evote**.

- Update on Website

Mandy Finotti gave an update on the plan to revise presentation of member bio's on the chamber's website. She has been in contact with Samuel Keys with WinWorld, our host company. The plan is to create a slider system so that at any time three chamber member

businesses/organizations will be highlighted. The goal is for the website to ultimately have bio's on all chamber members that can be viewed by sliding from one to another.

- **Marathon Race Update**

There was discussion about the chamber's participation in a proposed marathon. See minutes from last month's meeting. Since last month, Mandy Finotti has spoken with Brett Del Balso about his ideas for the race. Plans are still in the beginning stages with the Marion County Chamber not yet committed to participation. Sonya-McShan knows someone with experience in planning and implementing marathons. Sonya gave contact information to Mandy to share with other interested parties. Discussion to be continued at next month's meeting.

New Business

- **Request for Sponsorship – 25th National Cornbread Festival**

Board members were given copies of a letter from Shawn Henson, requesting a donation for the 25th National Cornbread Festival scheduled for April 23rd and 24th. Kathie Tierney made a motion that the chamber sponsor at the "Volunteer T-shirt" level in the amount of \$400.00. Shelby Potterfield seconded the motion which will be sent for an **evote**.

- **Request for Donation – Whitwell High School ACT Growth**

Board members were given copies of a letter from Michelle Pestillo, School Counselor at Whitwell High School. Whitwell High awards students who have taken the ACT more than once and have raised their scores in any subject or on their composite score. The awards can be gift certificates, gift cards or monetary gifts. Kathie Tierney made a motion to donate ten \$20 gift cards to be used for the Whitwell High School ACT Growth program. Eric McDaniel seconded the motion which will be sent to board members for an **evote**.

During discussion, a question was raised as to whether other Marion County high schools have a similar program. Kathie Tierney agreed to contact the other schools and report back to board members.

Please Note: After the meeting, Kathie Tierney contacted Marion County High School and South Pittsburg High School. Both schools stated that they encourage growth in ACT scores and would welcome monetary support from the chamber for that purpose. Therefore, Kathie Tierney asked to amend her motion to include gift cards for MCHS and SPHS as well as to WHS. Eric McDaniel agreed to second the amended motion as stated. **An evote** will be requested.

- **The Jason Foundation**

A letter has been distributed to board members which requests that the chamber add their name to a website “partners” tab for the Jason Foundation. The letter states that The Jason Foundation has created a campaign called “Tennessee Won’t Be Silent” with the mission of raising awareness for suicide prevention targeted at youth and young adults. The letter does not ask for money but simply the ability of the Jason Foundation to show that the Marion County Chamber of Commerce supports the mission of the Foundation. With a partnership, the chamber’s logo and name will be displayed on the website TNWontBeSilent.net as well as to make available to the chamber brochures and other material as requested at no cost.

Kathie Tierney made a motion to allow The Jason Foundation to use the chamber’s name in a show of support for suicide prevention. Sonya Walker-McShan seconded the motion. An **evote** will be requested.

Membership Application

No membership applications have been received since the February 17, 2022 meeting.

Miscellaneous

The chamber has been contacted by a local resident, John Christof, who is concerned about the litter problem in Marion County. A letter from Mr. Christof was distributed in the meeting. See copy of letter on file with the minutes. He is requesting help from the chamber with a fund raising project he is calling the “Mountain of Kindness”. During the board meeting, the chamber expressed agreement that Marion County has a litter problem; however, the board would like additional discussion with Mr. Christoff. Erik McDaniel suggested that the chamber create a committee to be in contact with Mr. Christof in order to get additional information. President O’Hagan appointed the following to be in contact with Mr. Christoff: Patrick O’Hagan and Michelle Story to join President O’Hagan and Judy Blevins on the call.

Sharing

Erik McDaniel shared information about Champion Recovery Community in Marion County. The purpose is to work with women who are coming out of addiction co-dependency and trauma. One service offered is drug testing at a reasonable rate so that Marion Countians who need drug testing do not have to travel out of county to receive it. As Champion Recovery grows and new services are offered updates will be shared with the chamber and other community partners. Perhaps, we could arrange for a speaker to come to a chamber event in the future.

Sonya Walker-McShan gave Erik a contact number for someone who might be helpful for him as a resource.

Chamber members were encouraged to attend the next chamber coffee which is scheduled for April 12, 2022 and hosted by Adoration Home Health & Hospice in Whitwell.

The meeting was adjourned until the next scheduled board meeting which is set for April 21, 2022.