



**Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
**In Conjunction with the Jo Daviess County Board**  
**Minutes for Special Board Meeting**  
**JDC Courtroom @ 7:00 p.m.**  
**May 14, 2015**

**Call to order:** Meeting was called to order by Hal Gilpin at 7:07 p.m.

**Roll Call Present:**

**CVB Board Members**

- Matthew Carroll
- Jess Farlow
- Erin Murphy
- Caitlin Oponski
- Sharon Cholewinski
- Helen Schamberger
- Hal Gilpin
- Robert Mahan
- Merri Berlage / JDC Board Member

**Staff**

- Katherine Walker, Executive Director
- Celestino Ruffini, Sales & Marketing Director
- Lori Kinnaman, Administrative Assistant
- Betsy Kaage, Social Media Specialist
- Melosa Belger, Events Coordinator

**Public Comments.** None

**New Business.**

Katherine Walker, Executive Director Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitor's Bureau gave a brief timeline and history of the past thirty years of the CVB.

Hal Gilpin, CVB Board Chair, spoke on the board's position on the one voice proposal. They have not been vocal in stating their position, but have been focused on trying to resolve the situation directly with the Visit Galena Board. He stated that he is interested in reuniting the two organizations because the split should never have happened. The CVB does support a one voice concept, just not the non-negotiable one being presented by Visit Galena.

Chris Hamilton, President and CEO of Visit Galena.org presented a reorganization plan called a Singular Voice. He stated that the presentation is coming from him, not Visit Galena. He described what would be the make-up of the new board and how they would be chosen. He stated that there would not be a loss in jobs other than the current CEO's. The new board would hire a CEO. The two offices would continue to operate in their present locations. The new destination would be called the Greater Galena/Jo Daviess County CVB. He then handed out a packet to the County Board.

### **County Board Questions and Comments.**

Ron Smith asked the County Board if they had questions or comments.

R.J. Winkelhake thanked everyone. He stated that there needs to be an initiative to get to one entity. He asked whether the City of Galena wants one entity and that needs to be the initiative of this board to act on it.

Brad Petersburg asked Chris Hamilton how the board would be chosen. Chris replied that an invitation would be sent out to all the businesses in Jo Daviess County. Who's ever named more often would receive the seat. He then asked, if the County supports the proposal what would be the next step. Chris replied that they would apply for a 501(c)6.

Ron Smith stated that a government body must collect the hotel/motel tax.

Randy Jobgen stated that he is concerned that no matter how you do this, as it is presented, the board will be made up of mostly Galena representatives. He would like it set up with fifty percent Galena and fifty percent county.

Steve McIntyre stated that it's like killing a mascot when two schools consolidate. He appreciates the concept. He stated that everyone should be represented because it is tax dollars that are collected everywhere.

Rick Dittmar asked Chris Hamilton if there will be term limits on the board. Chris replied that it would be a decision for the new board.

Brandon Behlke asked Katherine Walker how a 501(c)6 would affect the CVB. Katherine replied, the biggest change would be with the State of Illinois. They would see it as a restructuring. We would not be able to go with anything in place. It would have to be a new 501(c)6.

R.J. Winkelhake asked Chris Hamilton why he worked with Matthew Carroll and not his counterpart, Katherine Walker. Chris replied that his dialog with Matthew just started naturally.

Merri Berlage asked Chris Hamilton why his handout was not handed out earlier. He stated that he crafted it for this presentation. She stated that it would have been beneficial had it been shared with the CVB Board earlier.

Ron Smith concurred.

William Bingham stated that when you establish something like this you have everything in place, what groups will be represented, how many groups, things like that. If you establish this board ahead of time without some type of structure in place that identifies who and how many. The people who are making this decision will be making it in their best interest. How will it be possible for other people to be asked to come in and other communities to come in. It seems backwards. Every decision that will be made will be made by the first four board members that will be put in place first. They will be in control and with the personality issues that started this in the first place he sees a return to a personality disorder in the organization.

Brad Petersburg made a comment, do we want a political entity. He would like to identify the best people for the board. Who would go forth and collect the information from businesses to create a new entity. He recommends two representatives, one from the city of Galena and one from the county that has no ties should implement the plan.

Merri Berlage read a letter from Erin Murphy, CVB Board Vice Chair. Erin Murphy was unable to attend. She is in favor of the city of Galena and Jo Daviess County putting together their resources to promote tourism in the county. Her concern is how the consolidation is accomplished.

### **CVB Board Comments and Questions.**

Hal Gilpin stated this concept was first presented to the CVB Board November, 2013. When first presented this concept they did not feel that it represented the county well. He suggested that everyone sit down and put the plan together before going any further.

Jess Farlow suggested an independent arbitrator to get the two entities to come together and lead us in a way to make this work.

Robert Mahan agreed that ultimately it's up to the city and the county. He doesn't agree that the two boards should meet. He supports the plan.

Ron Smith stated that a year and a half ago he and Merri Berlage signed a letter that encouraged both organizations to sit down together. He then read the letter.

Matthew Carroll stated that he, at the time was chair, made the presentation to his board and the board wanted to discuss the plan more and that did not happen. He could not carry forward with the plan because his board did not fully support it at the time it was presented.

Caitlin Oponski disagreed that it is not an issue with ego or personality. We have been listening to the other communities and know that they are not happy. If we don't take that in to consideration when selecting a board for the new entity we will end up where we left off.

### **Public Comments.**

Tammy Trebian, Common Cents Resale, Elizabeth, stated that this is not Visit Galena but an idea from Chris Hamilton. She stated that the current board is all Galena and she would like to see more representation of the smaller communities on the board.

Carrie Stier, Village of Scales Mound, asked how the CVB board is now chosen. She also asked Katherine Walker what the negative or positive consequence of disbanding the current CVB and creating a new one as far as the State goes and how do you get certified and is it important to get certified. Katherine Walker stated that it is important to be certified. The state gives credibility to the professionalism of the organization what they can achieve. Certification is a process that asks for a detailed description and allows you to apply for grants DCEO has. A major one is the LTCB. This year we got \$136, 405. If DCEO has other funds available for tourism attraction or development or improved rail service for Amtrak. It does give you a lot of benefit in that regard, It is very important in the eyes of the State. It takes about a month for the certification to happen and then you must submit an application for approval. Carrie Stier then asked if there is a negative consequence to disbanding and starting over. Katherine stated that there might be because the State usually qualifies a structure to be in existence for two years before you can apply for certification. She has asked that question of the State, they said they would see it as a restructure and we could not go to the 501(c)6 that they have in place. For this case it would have to be a new one. A minus would be for the employees is the benefits that the county offers. Chris Hamilton stated that he was told by the Assistant Deputy Director, if the county officially declared that they were no longer using the certification and was putting their support to the new DMO they would certify whoever the new DMO was. Merri Berlage suggested that the County Board Chair call the State to verify. Carrie then asked how the current CVB chooses their members. Hal Gilpin replied that they seek out individuals and Katherine

stated that they also advertise. Ron Smith then asked the CVB Board members to introduce themselves and state what business they represent.

Randy Pepin asked Chris Hamilton if there are issues with grants or articles of a corporation. Chris Hamilton replied that there would not be. If this new entity forms would there be an issue with the employees from both entities having benefits. Chris stated that he has looked in to the health insurance. Retirement would not be as good as now offered. If the budgetary means exist. Randy Pepin then stated that he supports the singular voice plan.

Kathy Rivera, Galena Chamber, asked Chris Hamilton if the plan was non-negotiable. The plan was created with impute from lots of different people he stated that it is not his plan. Kathy then asked if he would welcome change to the plan. Chris stated that he would not, because he has shown this plan all over the county and this is the plan that was supported.

Mike Dittmar, Village of Elizabeth President, stated that the plan was supported by 21 leaders in the county. What he liked about the plan was the board of directors. He has a concern that the CVB is heavy lodging. He doesn't feel that Elizabeth is represented. He supports the plan.

Caitlin Oponski stated they would support the plan but they were not able to make amendments to the plan. No one is trying to devalue what the community is saying.

Terry McGovern, business owner, feels that the CVB board is stuck and the communities can't get representation. The smaller communities are suffering and she is asking for economic development.

Mike Sholtz, former CVB Director and former CVB board member, stated that the CVB reaches out for information. There is no reason for the CVB not to advertise the communities if they can get the information. He agrees that one organization is a good idea.

Carrie Stier, Scales Mound, asked Chris Hamilton who created the PowerPoint presentation. Chris stated he and Matthew Carroll created the PowerPoint.

R.J. Winkelhake stated that the first question should be resolved. We need to talk to the City of Galena to see if they want one voice and if they do we have to work together and if they don't we don't have to talk about it.

Ron Smith thanked everyone for coming and their comments.

**Adjournment.**

*Motion:* Moved by Jess Farlow, *Second:* by Caitlin Oponski to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Lori Kinnaman

Administrative Assistant/Secretary

Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau

June 30, 2015

Date of Approval