

Contact the Chamber office at
724-465-2511

The Chamber Connection

www.indianacountychamber.us

MARCH 2024, ISSUE 2

Editor Sydney Bower



BOARD MINUTES

Call to Order

Chamber Chairman Dave Reed with First Commonwealth Bank started the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. The January 2024 board meeting minutes and financial reports were reviewed and approved.

Chamber Update

Chamber President Mark Hilliard began his report by discussing some education initiatives in the coming months that the Chamber is involved in. Preparations are underway for the Excellence in Education awards banquet on May 13 at the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex in Indiana. Last year's event was attended by nearly 600 individuals. This event will see 56 students of the month chosen from each of the Indiana County public schools recognized, with one

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- *January Board Minutes*
- *Community Foundation for the Alleghenies Business After Hours*
- *KCAC Upcoming Events*
- *Levity Business After Hours Invitation*
- *Renewing Members*

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

student ultimately being awarded a brand-new vehicle from Colonial Motor Mart.

Hilliard stated that this year the Chamber is looking at enhancing the program and providing even more recognition for all of the nominated students.

“We are creating scholarship opportunities for our student finalists this year and are developing additional recognitions for each student at the event,” Hilliard said.

“This is not going to be your typical end-of-year student award ceremony and we are hoping that it will encourage underclassmen to continue to work hard to potentially be nominated in the future.”

According to Hilliard, they are looking for businesses to sponsor the event to help provide the scholarships. A limited number of sponsorships will be available, and Hilliard said that many businesses have already expressed interest. If your business would like to be a part of the Excellence in Education event, please contact the Chamber office at 724-465-2511.

Hilliard concluded his report by announcing that this spring the Chamber will once again partner with ARIN IU 28 in conducting a soft skills challenge in Downtown Indiana for students. The event will see each high school send juniors and seniors into the downtown on their scheduled day with the students splitting up into small groups and travelling around the Downtown to various locations to partake in challenges geared towards enhancing soft skills. Skills such as teamwork, communication, and critical thinking will be needed at each location with places such as the Jimmy Stewart Museum, the Indiana County Courthouse, and retail locations highlighted throughout the day.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

County Government

Indiana County Commissioner Sherene Hess began the county update acknowledging that February is Black History Month. The commissioners were pleased to present a proclamation on Feb 1st at the courthouse in honor of African Americans and the Arts. She noted that there are many Black artists in Indiana County's history, living and deceased.

Hess continued her report, informing attendees that the county has hired Amanda Steiner to fill the administrator role for Children and Youth Services. Hess also noted that the commissioners have met with aides from the offices of Senator Fetterman and Congressman Reschenthaler to discuss projects that may be considered for the Congressionally Directed Spending and Programmatic Requests. Otherwise known as 'earmarks,' these funds represent an opportunity for local governments and non-profits to obtain one-time grant funding for a specific project in their community.

Hess next described in its efforts to maintain the quality and condition of the county parks, which are increasingly utilized by the public, the county is contracting a sizable project involving the Pine Ridge Maintenance area. Bids will be accepted for the work to be done. Hess also informed the board that efforts to support youth career readiness programs and development of career pathways are underway with the Business Education Partnership, a project of the Tri County Workforce Investment Board Youth Committee. These programs represent opportunities for local businesses to support youth in the way of skills development and provide career awareness and work-based experiences linked to regional high demand occupations.

To conclude her report, Hess spoke of a new initiative called the Southwest PA Municipal Project Hub, which is aimed at channeling the historic amounts of investments being made available by the federal government to the local level to meet workforce, economic development and community revitalization needs.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

Funded by the Heinz Foundation, staff from the Hub will provide technical assistance and guidance to local governments, nonprofits, school districts, redevelopment authorities, and other entities across the region, including those in Indiana County.

State Government

State Representative Jim Struzzi began the state report by discussing Governor Josh Shapiro's recent budget proposal for 2024-25. Representative Struzzi reported that while there are some good components to the \$48.3 billion spending plan, it is important to be cautious.

"I am pleased to see investments proposed for education, agriculture, and economic development as part of the Governor's plan," Representative Struzzi stated. "But I also am cautious about the amount of additional spending that is included in the plan. It is important to remember that this is only the beginning of the process and that the Appropriations Committee will meet soon to drill down further on this budget and determine what truly is and is not sustainable for the Commonwealth."

Representative Struzzi concluded the state report by announcing that he will be opening a brand-new office in Saltsburg in March. The soft opening is scheduled for March 4 from 9 AM – 4 PM at 307 Point Street in Saltsburg. A formal ribbon cutting will be announced at a later date.

University/Education

Christina Koren, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), began the University report by informing the Board that IUP again had a large presence at Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney. Koren stated that the IUP Culinary Arts program was joined by the Necmacolin Resort and Carhartt in hosting a VIP at the event. This is the second year in a row that IUP was a partner with the VIP tent.

Koren also highlighted some key events on the upcoming calendar for IUP. On March 8, the University will hold a ribbon cutting for its new hotel front desk simulation at the Eberly College of Business.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

The simulation lab will help students in the hotel, restaurant, tourism, and event management program gain hands-on experience. The lab was made possible through a grant by the Statler Foundation.

The University report concluded with Koren announcing that on March 22, IUP will hold a kick-off for its Build Back Better (BBB) Collaboration with Cambria and Armstrong Counties for an entrepreneurial makerspace ecosystem. The \$1.5 million grant was part of the Southwestern Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative BBB regional grant awarded by the United States Economic Development Administration in September 2022. The kick-off will take place at the IUP Northpointe campus in Armstrong County.

County/ICDC

Byron Stauffer, Jr., Executive Director of the Indiana County Development Corporation (ICDC) and the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development began his report by discussing Governor Shapiro's new statewide economic development strategy unveiled earlier this month. The plan prioritizes investments in agriculture, technology, life sciences, manufacturing, and energy. The plan also includes a major investment in site development through the Pennsylvania Strategic Investments to Enhance Sites (PA SITES) program that is designed to bring more commercial and industrial sites online.

"Our plan for Indiana Count has been to get sites built, prepared, and ready to go so that we can continue to build up our industrial parks," Mr. Stauffer stated. "That was a key factor in attracting companies like Urban Outfitters to our county, and we want to continue that trend with our business parks."

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

“Our plan for Indiana Count has been to get sites built, prepared, and ready to go so that we can continue to build up our industrial parks,” Mr. Stauffer stated. “That was a key factor in attracting companies like Urban Outfitters to our county, and we want to continue that trend with our business parks.”

Mr. Stauffer concluded his report by announcing that the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) will soon be holding another round of Public Participation Panel (PPP) meetings for Indiana County. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for years 2025-2028 is being developed, and the draft TIP will be made available for public review at these meetings. The region’s long range transportation plan is implemented with a series of shorter-term investment plans, known as Transportation Improvement Programs, or TIPs. Each TIP is a step along that 25-year investment in our region’s future. Staff from SPC, PennDOT, and the counties will also take part in the public meetings.

Tourism

Greg Van Horn, President of the Indiana County Tourist Bureau (ICTB), reported to the board that the first edition of the 2024 Seasonal Events brochure is in circulation at brochure racks located throughout the county. This brochure is updated on a quarterly basis. If you would like a supply of your own, stop by the ICTB office in the Indiana Mall or call 724-463-7505 for more information.

Downtown Indiana is holding a Chili Cookoff at Noble Stein Brewing Co. on February 24. The Blairsville Area Underground Railroad (BUGRR) will be celebrating Black History Month with an Open House at the Blairsville Underground Railroad History Center on February 24, from 9:00am-2:00pm. At 1:00pm, members of the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office will be presenting a Community Initiative Award to the BUGRR.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

Van Horn continued that March brings the return of some familiar community events including the Family Fun Fest-Game Show Edition, March 2 and Sally's Bazaar March 8 – 10, both happening at the Indiana Mall. On March 6, the popular Empty Bowls Fundraiser returns to the Indiana Eagles. This special community event brings together local artisans & restaurateurs and helps to support the Indiana County Community Action Program. The Spring Coin Show at S&T Bank Arena on March 9 and Smicksburg's Spring Open House on March 23, provide occasions to explore Indiana County.

With the return of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's faculty and students for the spring semester, Van Horn reported that there are many exciting upcoming events for residents and visitors alike. The Cejka Planetarium in the university's newly opened John J. and Char Kopchick Hall will host free shows for the community during the spring semester.

The upcoming shows include "The American Total Solar Eclipse of 2024" on March 7 and March 18 at 7pm and March 30 at 11am; and "Far from Home: Perseverance on Mars" on May 14 at 7pm. Weather permitting, after the shows, there will be telescope observation of the night sky (evening shows) or of the sun (daytime shows). Seating is limited; doors will open 15 minutes before each show. Groups that wish to attend are asked to call 724-357-5626 or 724-357-2379 in advance of the shows.

The tourism report continued with Van Horn announcing that the Kovalchick Convention & Athletic Complex is busy hosting various sporting events and will be welcoming back the PA State Taxidermy Association March 20 – 24, 2024. This will be the association's third year gathering at the KCAC for their annual convention & art competition. The public is invited on Saturday, March 23 for an "Outdoor Sportsman's Show" to view the taxidermy & wildlife art competition room and participate in voting for "Peoples Choice" awards. There will be over 40 vendors, raffles, demonstrations, a food truck and more.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

The Indiana Theater has a robust schedule of events featuring live music & comedy, movies and open mic nights. For a complete concert lineup and schedule of community events.

White Township

Chauncey Ross, public relations and communications specialist from White Township informed the board that White Township is on the verge of an extraordinarily busy period of development in the commercial and public-sector fronts.

Construction season has begun early, and Ross reports that projects are under way or will be coming soon in sanitary sewer and storm sewer improvements, road work, the traffic signal at Warren Road Ben Franklin Road and Indian Springs Road. Projects are also expected this year in Kennedy-King Park and at the White Township Recreation Complex.

Ross continued his report by explaining that public involvement is key in two areas right now in White Township. The White Township Stewardship Committee has completed a draft plan for the future care and well-being of White's Woods. It is not available for public review and comment before the final plan is presented to the supervisors. Ross reports that anyone who would like to learn about White's Woods and its future can fund the draft plan on the township website at whitetownship.org. Find the Stewardship Committee under the Government drop-down menu.

Ross also announced that the Chevy Chase community is going through a public-driven planning process. According to Ross, several neighborhood residents have come forward with an interest in how to have a better community. The Indiana County Planning Office, through Josh Krug, has taken on the planning process and will hold two public town-hall style meetings to collect input.

BOARD MINUTES

Continued

Those who care about or have an interest in the Chevy Chase community will be asked to suggest the valuable features that should be protected, the good things about Chevy Chase that should be improved or enhanced, and the community issues that should be changed or transformed, under the “PET” principles. The planning office will soon announce the date for the first town-hall meeting in March.

Ross concluded the Township report by stating that many restaurants have come through the various stages of the planning process in White Township, such as Primanti Bros., Texas Roadhouse, Jersey Mikes, Panera Bread and Applebee’s, and now Raising Cane’s. But Ross would like it to be noted that the township is not endorsing any of these businesses or presenting them as being better or as good as existing businesses. Ross stated that the township’s mission is to create the platform that enables business owners and entrepreneurs to choose locations for starting businesses, putting people to work and moving dollars through the local economy.

Membership

Upcoming Chamber member events include:

- Business After Hours @ Levity Brewing – March 28 @ 5 PM



COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF THE ALLEGHANIES BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Thursday, February 22nd, the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce had the opportunity to attend a Business After Hours Event hosted by the Community Foundation for the Alleghanies held at the Indiana County Technology Center (ICTC).

The interior of ICTC glowed as it illuminated the dark evening sky. Guests slowly filed into the building greeted by counselor Kelly Fox and CFA director Katrina Perkosky as well as chamber ambassadors with warm smiles.

Lined along the far wall of the room, there was a diverse array of food catered by ICTC. There was an excellent selection of finger foods such as sandwiches, different types of delicious and savory pasta salads, as well as other vegetables, snacks, and hors d'oeuvres. One stand-out dish of the evening was the strawberry pretzel pie which featured a bottom crust of pretzels, a decadent layer of a rich cream filling followed by a fresh strawberry Jello, topped with whipped cream and crisp strawberry slices.

After sampling each dish available, one could understand why the staff enjoy purchasing lunch from the café which features delicious dishes created by the culinary students.

As the evening progressed guests had the opportunity to learn about the Makayla's Dream Scholarship fund. This fund was created to help aspiring cosmetology students obtain the necessary kits and certifications to further their careers by providing financial aid and/or supplies to those struggling. Although secondary kits may be available, many young stylists struggle to find the funds to obtain these crucial tools and certifications. Makayla, as well as prior instructors and co-workers, all discussed the financial impact purchasing these tools has, especially for students who may not have the finances or the support system to obtain them.

Overall the evening was wonderful, as many guests enjoyed the food, guests were thankful to be able to learn about the scholarship through the Community Foundations for the Alleghanies, and hear MaKayla's inspiring journey.

UPCOMING EVENTS



PA STATE TAXIDERMY TRADE SHOW

MARCH 23

SPORTSMAN'S SHOW: 10A-4P

TAXIDERMY SHOWROOM: 12-4P



IA BUILDERS ASSOCIATION HOME SHOW

APRIL 5: 5-9PM

APRIL 6: 12-8PM

APRIL 7: 12-4PM

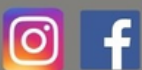


PA STATE TWIRLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

APRIL 20-21



VISIT WWW.IUPTIX.COM, THE FIRST COMMONWEALTH BANK BOX OFFICE,
OR SCAN THE QR CODES TO LEARN MORE & PURCHASE TICKETS!



UPCOMING EVENTS



PA STATE TAXIDERMY TRADE SHOW

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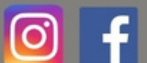


PA STATE TWIRLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

APRIL 20-21



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- YOUR NAME, TOWN & STATE**
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- A DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ITEMS**



COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS HEALTH FAIR

Colorectal Cancer is the 2nd most common cause of cancer death among men and women in the U.S., but it is ***preventable, treatable and beatable!***

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month!

Wednesday, April 3rd

5 pm Health Fair

6 pm Discussion

IRMC Cafeteria

835 Hospital Road
Indiana, PA



REPLICA
DA VINCI XI
ROBOT ON SITE!

- Learn from experts on colorectal cancer
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- Test drive our demo da Vinci Xi robot
- Meet our surgeons, gastroenterology team, cancer care team and more!
- Free blood pressure screenings
- Health education
- Registered dietitian to discuss how diet can reduce your cancer risk
- Schedule a visit for screening

**Giveaways, prizes,
healthy snacks,
and more!**

IRMC



RSVP at **www.irmc.org/2024** or **724.357.7188**

CYBERSECURITY SYMPOSIUM



REGISTRATION



ENDS MARCH 21

DON'T GET APRIL FOOLED

Don't miss this chance to fortify **your business** against cyber threats and ensure a secure digital future.

WHERE: Regional Learning Alliance
Cranberry Twp, PA 16066

WHEN: Monday, April 1, 2024, 8AM-2PM

Keynote Speaker:

John Pulcastro, Dr. Doom from the FBI
Emerging Threats on Social Media, AI and Cybersecurity

The Tri-County Workforce Investment Board and the Tri-County Technology Consortium present Cybersecurity Symposium 2024, aimed at small to midsize business owners seeking non-technical insights into cybersecurity. With a focus on practical knowledge of IT specifics, the event will feature speakers addressing essential topics like phishing attacks, secure password practices, and incident response plans. Attendees can expect interactive sessions, networking opportunities, and access to valuable resources to enhance their cybersecurity posture.

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April 1, 2024



2024 DOWNTOWN INDIANA CALENDAR

www.DowntownIndianaPA.org

FEBRUARY

SAT
24

CHILI COOKOFF
NOBLE STEIN BREWING CO



MARCH

SAT
8

ST PATTY'S OPEN
THE CONEY

SAT
16

ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE
11 AM | HOSTED BY THE CONEY

SAT
23

EASTER BUNNY TRAIL
10 AM - 12 PM | DOWNTOWN INDIANA



APRIL

THU
18

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



SAT
20

ARTS WALK
INDIANA ARTS COUNCIL | DOWNTOWN INDIANA



MAY

SAT
4

SPRING LADIES DAY OUT
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



THU
16

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



SAT
18

JIMMY STEWART BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
THE JIMMY STEWART MUSEUM

SAT
25

WESTYLVANIA JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL
IRMC PARK



JUNE

THU
20

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



JULY

THU
11

TASTE & TOUR
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



THU
18

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



AUGUST

SUN
11

ITALIAN FESTIVAL
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



THU
15

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



SEPTEMBER

FRI
6

NORTHERN APPALACHIAN FOLK FEST
DOWNTOWN INDIANA

SAT
7

NORTHERN APPALACHIAN FOLK FEST
DOWNTOWN INDIANA

THU
19

THIRD THURSDAY
IRMC PARK



SAT
21

OKTOBERFEST
NORTH 8TH STREET LOT



SAT
28

BOCCE FOR BREAST CANCER
JOSIE'S PIZZERIA AND ENOTECA



OCTOBER

SAT
5

IUP HOMECOMING PARADE
10 AM | HOSTED BY INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENN

SAT
26

HALLOWEEN TRICK OR TREAT
10 AM - 12 PM | DOWNTOWN INDIANA



NOVEMBER

FRI
1

WINE & SPIRITS WALK
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



SUN
10

FALL LADIES DAY OUT
12 - 4 PM | DOWNTOWN INDIANA



MON
11

VETERAN'S DAY PARADE
10:45 AM | HOSTED BY AMERICAN LEGION POST 141

FRI
22

HOLIDAY PARADE & LITE UP NIGHT
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



SAT
23

IAWL HOLIDAY FESTIVAL
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



SAT
30

**SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
& IAWL HOLIDAY FESTIVAL**



EARN 2024 DOWNTOWN DOLLARS ON SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

DECEMBER

SAT
7

IAWL HOLIDAY FESTIVAL
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



SAT
14

IAWL HOLIDAY FESTIVAL
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



SAT
21

IAWL HOLIDAY FESTIVAL
DOWNTOWN INDIANA



UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

2024

FEB

27

COFEE TALK - RIZIKI CAFE

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

JIMMY STEWART AIRPORT

MARCH

28

LEVITY BREWING CO.

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

**1380 WAYNE AVE # A,
INDIANA, PA 15701**

APRIL

11

RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

**84 TROJAN LN
SALTSBURG, PA 15681**

MAY

13

**EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARDS &
CEREMONY**

4:00 PM

**KOVALCHICK CONVENTION AND ATHLETIC
COMPLEX**

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Indiana, PA 15701

Phone: (724) 465-2511

Fax: (724) 465-3706



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RENEWING MEMBERS

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Johnstown Symphony Orchestra
Indiana Cigar
Gibson Thomas
Ralph Wingrove,
Kathy Hawk
Upstreet Financial Advisors
Burrell Township Library
Crimson Hawk Housing
Indiana County Humane Society
Catalyst Connection
Center Township Board of Supervisors
Disobedient Spirits
Indiana Networking
Indiana Audiology
Evergreen Ins Co
Howard, Hanna, Lockard
Chestnut Ridge Communications
A-1 Vending
Clymer Borough
Relator Association of Indiana & Westmoreland
County
Jiimmy Stewart Airport
Antria Inc
Nelson & Associates Ins
Concordia, IRLC
Indiana Career T.R.A.C.K
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Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors

