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Motel occupancy down, but better than similar markets

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While Warren County motel occupancy was down 2.9 percent for April, the community still is faring much better than other places to which it compares itself.

Smith Travel Research numbers show that for the same period, Jackson, Tenn., was down 18.7 percent, Valdosta, Ga., 9.3 percent and Kenton County, 16.8 percent, according to Vicki Fitch, executive director of the Bowling Green Area Tourism Commission.

Fitch talked about the numbers at Monday's Convention and Visitors Bureau board meeting.

"Compared to multiple cities where we do business in, Bowling Green is doing well," said Tim Knopp, a board member and regional representative for Courtyard by Marriott.

Texas markets are down 25 percent, Knopp said.

Imran Hussain, general manager for Holiday Inn University Plaza Hotel and a board member, said the Atlanta market is down 30 percent and Charlotte, N.C., is down 28 percent.

So to be down only by single digits is an accomplishment, both said.

"These (people) are doing their job," Hussain said of CVB staff members.

"We are making the right investment to stay better than the rest of the markets out there," board member Larry Bailey said.

As a result of those efforts, Bailey recommended that the staff get an annual merit raise pool of up to 4 percent and that \$40,000 be set aside to be used on a quarterly basis for teamwork incentives.

Last year's merit pool was 3 percent and the incentive pool was \$30,000. City employees will likely get a .5 percent raise this year and Bowling Green Municipal Utilities employees might get a 2 percent merit increase.

"Look at the effort they've done recruiting new events and keeping events here," Bailey said. "My intent is to try to keep them here when they are doing a good job."

Board member David Wiseman said the proposal was a "generous one" for employees, but he recognizes the hard work that they do.

"We expect a lot out of you," Bailey said.

The board unanimously approved the raises, which are to be determined by Fitch.

Hussain passed around photos he had taken of property near the Greenwood Interstate 65 interchange. What appears to be in the state right-of-way are abandoned planting beds with half taken down signs and in one case a hole where a pole used to be.

"This is the first thing you see when you come into the city (from this exit)," Hussain said, noting it is the path to his hotel. "And often times the first impression is the last impression people have."

Hussain said he would be willing to commit funding to fix up the area.

Fitch said she had been meeting with Operation P.R.I.D.E. director Ray Lackey to see what could be done. Fitch said for at least part of the property, they hope that some planned development that is expected to be announced soon will take care of it. And they will look at what can be done for the remainder of the property.

"It bothers all of us every day," said Amy Cardwell, sports marketing director.

The CVB office is nearby.

In other matters, CVB staffers went over some upcoming activities, which includes the Best of the Bluegrass football game Friday at L.T. Smith Stadium at Western Kentucky University, the BiG Cruise on Friday at Fairview Plaza and Saturday at the National Corvette Museum and Kentucky State Series Race at Ballance Moto Cross.

Cardwell said efforts are ongoing to land several U.S. Judo events, expand the number of soccer tournaments, youth tennis and volleyball events.