

## **City of Columbus, WI**

### **Tourism Commission Minutes**

**July 15, 2024**

#### **City Hall Council Chamber**

##### **1. Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 6:31 PM.

##### **2. Roll Call**

- Famularo, Hammer, Walcott, and Walker were present and made quorum. Staff member Bennett was present.

##### **3. Notice of Open Meeting**

- Bennett stated the meeting was properly noticed.

##### **4. Approval of Agenda**

- Motion to approve the Agenda for July 15, 2024 as written by Famularo. Second by Hammer. Motion passes unanimously.

##### **5. Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary**

- Hammer proposed to postpone the nominations until the next meeting due to all the commission members not being in attendance. The other commission members agreed to postpone nominations again.

##### **6. Approval of Minutes**

- Review minutes from June 3, 2024, make any corrections, changes, etc. if needed and approve
- Motion to approve the June 3, 2024 Minutes as written by Hammer. Second by Famularo. Motion passes unanimously.

##### **7. Public Comment**

- There was no public in attendance for comment. Staff and the Tourism Commission did not receive any correspondence.

##### **8. Discussion and Direction for Staff Assisting Non-Profit Organizations with Tourism-related Grants**

- Randy Koehn, representing the Columbus Area Historical Society presented the organization's capital campaign to purchase the Bellack's building for a new museum. Koehn added that the space will serve to host the George Hasey Popcorn Wagon and small event venue. After some discussion about the property, Famularo asked Koehn what the Historical Society is requesting from Tourism. Koehn is requesting staff assistance with any possible tourism grants and possibly a financial contribution from the commission. The deadline would be August 17 unless the purchase contract is extended.
- The Tourism Commission discussed the commission's options after the presentation. Famularo would like to further discuss potentially allocation a set amount of time for staff to help non-profits with apply for appropriate tourism grants. The commission would like to create a policy that outlines staff grant research and other resource availability to local groups. Bennett will have a draft for the next meeting. Walker will connect Bennett with a colleague at Prairie Ridge Health regarding grant writing. Walcott expressed desire to possibly make a financial pledge to the Historical Society for their new museum.

## **9. Financial Report**

- Bennett presented updated revenues and expenses for 2024. No new revenue was reported. Walcott asked if the City can charge a late fee for the delayed room tax contributions. Famularo was not sure that's allowed in State Statutes. Bennett will look into it. B
- Bennett stated that \$702.46 was spent in June for the quarterly contribution to the City's website. \$37,262.46 remains in the 2024 budget. The commission asked about the Special Events line item. Bennett stated that currently nothing has been spent from it, however there's a pending room tax funding request by the Columbus Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (CHLPC) for their summer concerts. This request was for \$1,000 but Bennett will double check the actual amount and would be granted pending a final report. There was concern of the CHLPC not fulfilling promised sponsorship on banners and flyers. Bennett was asked to follow up with them.

## **10. Website and Calendar Update**

- Bennett has converted the Visitor page on the City website as the new landing page for the VisitColumbusWI.com website. It now features a seasonal banner picture, a smaller list-like calendar, a welcome intro, a featured events section, and a featured restaurants section. Other featured sections and a dining page will be added later.
- Staff has been running Google Ads campaigns in the run up to the 4th of July events and more ads to run over the summer.
- Staff has attempted to reach out to local churches again regarding adding events to the calendar, but has not had any responses. Varsity sports have been added as in the previous year.

## **11. Kayak Rental Update**

- Staff has submitted the \$19,000 activation fee to Rent.Fun to the Finance Department. The City will send Rotary an invoice for their contribution after July 1st to fulfill a grant requirement Rotary is applying for. A new line item was created by Finance in the Tourism budget to handle the revenues earned from the kayak rental. Staff is working with Rent.Fun to determine the exact location in Rotary Park for the units. The commission would like to hold a ribbon cutting for the kayak rental and release a media announcement.

## **12. Digital Signage Including Possible Kiosk in Davies Park**

- Staff has been researching various digital signage options including kiosks from Redyref priced at \$16,416 and Advanced Kiosks priced at \$25,817. The Economic Development Department along with Administration is interested in possibly partnering with Amtrak to update the train station with modern signage. Other options staff looked at was cloud digital signage from Soofa and Reach. The commission would like staff to ask Amtrak, Julie's Java House about interest before selecting digital signage.

## **13. Print Ads Update**

- Famularo stated that she and Belschner have discussed this project, but Belschner would have more information for the next meeting.

## **14. Planting Redbud Trees Discussion**

- Staff informed the commission that the Chamber of Commerce is revamping its Redbud Day to incorporate more tree planting and education. Staff recommends partnering with the Chamber to possibly partner with them for additional trees. The commission discussed some additional ideas for marketing the redbud trees and Walker provided information on behalf of the Chamber regarding planning for the 2025 event.

### **15. Future Agenda Items**

- Policy to assist non-profits for tourism resources
- 2025 budget
- Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary
- Bennett will alert the commission as to when the delivery of the kayaks and possible ribbon cutting to take place if before the next meeting.
- Next meeting will be August 12, 2024 at 5:30 pm.

### **16. Adjourn**

- Motion to adjourn by Famularo. Second by Walker. Adjourned at 8:12 pm

-Submitted by David Bennett