



# Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 09, 2024 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

The meeting was called to order at 6:34pm by Walcott.

A quorum of the Tourism Commission present included Belschner, Famularo, Hammer, Roelke, and Walcott. Staff liaison Bennett was also present.

Bennett informed the commission that the meeting was properly noticed.

Famularo motions to approve the agenda for Monday, December 9, 2024, as presented. Belschner seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Hammer motions to approve the minutes from November 4, 2024, as presented. Famularo seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

1. Hammer motions to approve the minutes from Tourism Commission meeting from November 4, 2024. Famularo seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

There were no members of the public in attendance for public comment. No other correspondence was received.

## Unfinished Business

2. Belschner presented the final report on behalf of the Redbud Players. Belschner had a good draw from posting the events to 48 niche Facebook group pages. The Redbud Players had 385 paid ticket attendance for the plays and 92 attendees at their Halloween event. 29 tickets were purchased by out-of-state visitors.

Walcott commented that more digital ads should help improve attendance. Walcott also commented that the various local groups in town hosting events can work together to promote each other's events. Belschner agreed about cross-promoting events and cited the Wine Walk as an example.

Hammer motions to award the \$800 in room tax funds to the Redbud Players. Famularo seconds. Roll call vote: Roelke - aye, Belschner - abstain, Famularo - aye, Hammer - aye, and Walcott - aye. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

3. Bennett presented an updated working draft of new guidelines for room tax funding applications. The new updates were based on discussion from the previous meeting.

The highlighted changes include removing a sponsorship category and incorporating it into the other three (Development, Event, and Marketing) that applicants can apply for, a 2nd version of the process details and two options for timelines to follow. The commission had a lengthy discussion debating if the awarding should be upfront or as a reimbursement. After weighing pros and cons, the consensus is to have the awarding remain as reimbursement.

The commission agreed that the version 2 process was easier to follow. There was further discussion regarding the timeline for option 1 which lists dates for applications, review, and awarding. Walcott questioned the January of the following year for reimbursement and felt that it

may be a burden to groups. Belschner and Roelke agreed that groups should have their budget set and utilize the room tax dollars for bigger reach / bigger event for the next year. Famularo sees the timeline as efficient and supports it, but emphasized there needs to be communication about it to local groups. Hammer offered a compromise of offering some leeway as part of an education campaign if groups applied after the deadline. Walcott asked each member what they would prefer. The commission agreed to use version 2 process with option 1 timeline. Roelke commented that the new guidelines will provide an opportunity for stability for granting to existing events with hopes that the commission will eventually create a startup grant for new and smaller events.

Bennett received direction to create a clean copy of the guidelines and include the 2025 budget tied to the room tax funding for the January Tourism Commission meeting.

## **New Business**

### **Staff Reports**

Bennett presented the November budget statement. There were no new room tax revenues reported. Notable expenditures include \$71.91 from the web/media line item for ArchiveSocial contribution and \$143.76 from marketing/advertising line item for Google Ads. Invoices from Madison Media Partners will be reported in December's statement. Bennett cited there is \$20,461.76 remaining in the 2024 budget.

Since the Redbud Players \$800 room tax request was approved, the Special Events fund is tentatively at \$200. Pending approval of the Chamber's Wine Walk application for funding and awarding of their \$1,000 request, Bennett will utilize the expense line policy as approved by the Tourism Commission at its November 2024 meeting.

Future agenda items include continuing the room tax funding guidelines overhaul and Chamber's Wine Walk final report for next meeting. Additionally, staff updates for the Holiday Train, kayak rental, and community calendar will be included. Bennett informed the Tourism Commission of the Beautification Committee's desire for a partnership to have banners on light poles. They would like to be on the agenda for January's meeting.

The next Tourism Commission meeting will be Monday, January 6, 2024, at 6:30pm.

Famularo motions to adjourn the meeting. Hammer seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Meeting is adjourned at 7:44pm.

These minutes will be approved at a future meeting and may be amended. These minutes are respectfully submitted by David Bennett, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator.

\*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.