



## Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 06, 2025 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

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Walcott called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

A quorum consisted of Hammer, Belschner, Walcott, and Walker were present. Staff liaison Bennett was also present.

Members of the Beautification Committee were in attendance.

Bennett informed the Tourism Commission that the meeting was properly noticed.

Belschner would like to move item #4, Discussion with the Beautification Committee regarding banners from under New Business, to after Public Comment. The Commission agrees.

Belschner motions to approve the agenda with the change of moving item #4, discussion with the Beautification Committee about banners from New Business to after Public Comment. Walker seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

1. Hammer motions to approve the minutes as written from the meeting of December 9, 2024. Belschner seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

### Public Comment

There were no comments at this time from the members of the Beautification Committee.

There were no other members of the public in attendance for public comment, nor any correspondence received.

2. City Administrator, Amundson gave a brief introduction to the Beautification Committee's idea of partnering with the Tourism Commission to replace the banners decorating the downtown light poles. Amundson cited the group wanted to avoid duplication and possibly collaborate if tourism is planning the same project.

The Tourism Commission asked about a potential timeline for the project. Alder Lawson stated that the project goal would ideally be spring of 2025. Additionally, the banners could be expanded to the new light poles on Farnham Street by the high school with the school district's support. The banners could be done in 2026 and possibly in phases to cut down on initial costs.

Belschner asked about designs. Lawson stated that there were options such as seasonal designs and custom designs. Walcott suggested the Beautification Committee reach out to the school district and parochial schools' art departments and have a contest that showcases students' work. Boness informed Walcott that the committee already worked with the Columbus School District and had a design, but it was rejected by Council. Belschner added that the design should be more than just the school. Amundson explained that the committee could consider the previous design while looking at 2-3 additional designs. There could be new opportunities near the school for a school-centric design with other themes for the downtown area.

Walcott asked Bennett if there were possible funds in the tourism budget to assist with the project. Bennett stated that they could use the materials and services line item, but most of the money there is potentially earmarked for digital signage or a kiosk. Belschner asked Amundson if the City is a 501(c)(3) in order to get funding. Amundson cited that City government is not. Hammer asked about the donors who have contributed to the mural project. Boness stated that those donors only contributed to the murals. Hammer may follow up with them.

Both the Tourism Commission and Beautification Committee are interested in potential partnership. Amundson stated that Beautification Committee will create a proposal for a future meeting.

### **Unfinished Business**

3. The Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce did not submit a report or have a representative present to give the report for its 2024 Wine Walk funding request of \$1,000.

Belschner motions to deny the funding due to lack of a final report. Hammer seconds. Roll call vote: Walker - abstain, Belschner - aye, Hammer - aye, and Walcott - aye. Motion carries with 3 ayes and 1 abstention.

Hammer and Walcott would like to give the Chamber a chance to submit its report due to this meeting taking place within the 60 days from their Wine Walk event. The Chamber has until January 30th to submit their report. Walcott proposes to give staff the authority to approve report if it meets guidelines. Walcott indicated that the Chamber has photos from the event and Walker stated they have their receipts from the event, so they should be able to submit a report.

Hammer motions for the Tourism Commission to delegate staff authority to award reimbursement based on guidelines if the Chamber submits their final report within 60 days. Walcott seconds. Roll call vote: Belschner - nay, Walcott - aye, Hammer - aye, Walker - abstain. Motion carries with 2 ayes, 1 nay, and 1 abstain.

Due to the conflict of the two motions, Hammer makes a motion to rescind the original denial of funding to the Chamber of Commerce. Belschner seconds. Roll call vote: Hammer - aye, Walcott - aye, Belschner - aye, Walker - abstain. Motion carries with 3 ayes and 1 abstention.

Bennett will apply guidelines to any submitted final report from the Chamber's 2024 Wine Walk event. If it meets guidelines and is awarded requested funding, Bennett will update the Tourism Commission and implement expense line policy as directed.

4. Bennett presented to the commission a cleaned-up draft of the proposed new guidelines for distributing room tax funding for tourism events and development. The Tourism Commission discussed the potential of applications being received after March 31. Belschner suggested those applications be placed on a wait list. Hammer asked about a possible exemption or leeway for the first 1 or 2 years for implementation. Walker suggested adding a line that says applications will be placed on a wait list based on available funding. The commission agreed to add that line. It would be added in the timeline section.

The other edits would include the addition of the word "in" for the 4th bullet in the timeline section. There was discussion about the final report due date as it may not give staff enough time to process reports for commission review. Hammer suggested December 23rd. Belschner would like "emailed or delivered to City Hall" to be included as well.

Belschner motioned to approve the new guidelines with the changes as discussed. Walker seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

### **New Business**

5. According to the Tourism Ordinance, the Tourism Commission held its election of officers. Hammer alerted the Commission that appointments to this commission are annual, and that not all applications for appointments / re-appointments were submitted yet. The Council will approve appointments at its meeting on January 21, 2025. The Tourism Commission can still hold its election but may need to hold a new election if the roster changes after the appointments are approved.

Hammer motions to nominate and re-elect the current officers which include Walcott as Chair, Famularo as Vice-Chair, and Walker as Secretary. Belschner seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Walcott would like to go over the Tourism Ordinance at a future meeting.

## **Staff Reports**

Bennett presented the December budget update along with presenting the 2025 budget.

There were no new room tax revenues to report.

Notable expenditures include \$2,365.53 for holiday train ads from Madison Media Partners. Staff is waiting for Google Ads invoices. The Tourism Fund has \$15,421.84 remaining pending invoices and potential Wine Walk reimbursement.

The 2025 budget includes \$20,000 for materials and services, with most earmarked for digital signage and/or kiosk, \$10,000 for general tourism marketing, and \$10,000 for special events to help local groups with tourism marketing, events, and development in the city.

Bennett presented end-of-season use of the new kayak rental units. Despite arriving at the end of September, it was utilized 17 times with the City / Tourism earning an estimated \$137.50. Walker would like to see signage for the kayak rental / launch near the road towards Rotary Park. Bennett will check the current wayfinding signs for open spots to order vinyl stickers for. Bennett suggested talking to the Rotary Club to put signs underneath the Rotary signs at the park.

Bennett updated the Tourism Commission regarding the management of the community calendar. Due to how Events.com sets up accounts, staff would effectively maintain its current account but add to the Chamber account's calendar instead. Walcott suggested some sort of succession planning in the event the Chamber isn't able to maintain the calendar.

## **Future Agenda Items**

Items for future agendas include a potential update regarding the Wine Walk funding request and reviewing the tourism ordinance.

The next meeting will be Monday, February 3, 2025.

## **Adjourn**

Belschner motioned to adjourn the meeting. Hammer seconds. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:37pm.

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.