

Regular February Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, February, 5, 2024

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lenny Schaub at 4:00 pm.

Members present, Lenny Schaub, Dennis Fry, Karen Tepley, Christy Adsit and Candace Fagerlind

Member Tepley made the motion to approve the minutes from the December Richland Center Tourism Commission meeting, member Fry seconded that motion. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Tourism Grant Applications:

Driftless Area Deer Classic submitted a grant application for sponsorship of their February 24th event. They attract hunters primarily from a 3-state area including Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. They advertise in Midwest area print publications, online advertising, and other methods that attract a high likelihood of overnight stays. Member Adsit made a motion to approve the grant request of \$1,500 for the Driftless Area Deer Classic. Member Tepley second the motion. A roll call vote was held, Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes, and Fagerlind-yes. The motion carried unanimously.

Gray Media Spring and Summer Streaming Campaign

Director Richards presented a proposal that was put together by Gray Media representatives Jay Miller and Heather Franklin for the next 5 months of streaming advertising. GRT is currently contracted to continue the current streaming advertising in the Milwaukee target until the end of February. This proposal was to extend the campaign in Milwaukee through July and enter the NW suburbs and city of Chicago proper. In this proposal the streaming campaign would continue in the Milwaukee areas of Riverwest and Walker's Point, it would also enter the Wrigleyville area of Chicago, Bartlett, Lincolnwood, Evanston, and Wilmette areas of Chicago.

All total in the areas described above there are targeted impressions of over 100,000 per month, this is a figure that is more than double our target impressions of our past campaign. The total cost per month is \$3,750. The members were excited about the new entry into a prime area targeting visitors who are interested in outdoor experiences, hiking, kayaking, and more. Through our experience from 2023 we have confidence this method of advertising is very valuable and does provide results.

Member Adsit made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$3,750 per month, for 5 months (through July 2024) for a total expenditure of \$18,750 with Gray Media to conduct the spring and summer streaming advertising campaign. Member Fagerlind seconded the motion, a roll call vote was held: Fagerlind-yes, Adsit-yes, Tepley-yes, Fry-yes, Schaub-yes. The motion carried unanimously.

Updates:

Director Richards offered several updates:

2024 Visitors Guide: The guide is in the final stages of design and is expected to be sent to the printer at the end of this week. All Tourism Commission members should have received a draft of the guide to review and check for any omissions, potential grammar and spelling concerns, and other comments. All suggestions are to be sent to Director Richards by the end of day on 02/06.

Upcoming Activity: Director Richards mentioned a couple of important upcoming events. On 02/21 thru 02/29 he will be out on a trip to Aruba. From 03/08 to 03/12 he will be attending the Canoecopia and Governor's Conference on Tourism Conventions. Then on 03/14 he is having a total knee replacement with an unknown full recovery timeline. Accommodations have been made to cover the Visitor's Center during that time in partnership with the Greater Richland Area Chamber of Commerce and other volunteers that have covered the Visitor's Center in the past.

Website/YouTube/Social Media update: Director Richards explained that the new in 2023 website certainly delivered with an increase of website views over 2022 of 122% for the year. Facebook followers increased over 1,000 in 2023 to 5,490 followers total. One surprise was the increase in YouTube usage. Originally the YouTube channel was a library for all of the videos we were doing during 2020 to show our area off during the COVID pandemic. However, as time has gone on and we have started to work the "Shorts" side of videos on YouTube, the use has grown exponentially. Our YouTube channel had 18,812 views in 2023 with 486 hours of viewing. We are also starting to see growth in subscribers as well. This was a pleasant development as the demographics of YouTube are very different from other social media platforms in that it is primarily men. This has turned into a great avenue to reach men with our message of outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, and ATV/UTV activity.

Short-Term Rental Licensing: Member Tepley brought forward the discussion of short-term rental licensing and the growing concern of identifying what properties are indeed short-term rentals vs traditional more-than-30-day rentals and the proper collection of room tax. The city is investigating this discussion and the members of the Commission discussed a couple methods of tracking this situation.

Pine River Trailhead Signage- Member Tepley updated that a proposal would be appearing at the Richland Center City Council on 02/06 to install signage on the City portion of the Pine River Trail and kayak landings to improve the wayfaring and signage issues on the trail.

Vice-Chair Christy Adsit assumed the chair for the meeting as Chair Lenny Schaub had to leave for a City Utilities meeting. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Member Fry, 2nd by Tepley. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 pm.