

Regular November Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, November 2025

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chairman Ron Fruit at 4:00 pm.

Members present are Ron Fruit, Jayme Walsh, Toni McCarvel, Dennis Fry, and Karin Tepley.

Karen Tepley made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the September 2025 meeting. Jayme Walsh seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Hub City Dirt Drags Update

Lacey Steffes from the Hub City Dirt Drags joined the commission meeting to introduce herself and provide a basic update on their two events. She shared that both the May and October events continue to grow and draw people from all over the Midwest of the United States. This past event at the Richland County Fairgrounds drew over 1200 paying attendees.

Travel Wisconsin Marketing Update

Regional Tourism Representative, Drew Nussbaum, of Travel Wisconsin joined the commission and shared an overview of Travel Wisconsin's marketing plan and commented on the high effectiveness of Greater Richland Tourism's marketing efforts. Drew mentioned that both efforts feature outdoor exploration and activities, these are both strong attractions for urban dwellers within 3 hours of the Greater Richland Area and dovetail together to be quite effective.

July/August Bill Payment Approval:

The Commission reviewed the listing of bill payments for the months of July and August of 2025, there weren't any questions from the Commission members. Dennis Fry made the motion to approve the payment report for July/August, Karin Tepley seconded that motion. A roll call vote was held: Fruit-yes, Walsh-yes, McCarvel-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes. Motion unanimously passed.

2026 Proposed Budget Discussion and Approval

Coordinator Richards walked the Tourism Commission Members through the proposed 2026 budget. There are only a few notes of change in 2025 vs 2026:

- Room tax revenue collection totals continue to increase as the third-party platforms get caught up with the new townships who have passed the ordinance.
- Coop advertising with Travel Wisconsin was removed from the budget as they no longer offer the e-mail marketing we had utilized.
- There was an increase to the Rhyme Copier Lease as we reached the end of our 3-year contract and they have increased that cost by \$80 a year.
- There is a new expense of \$3,235 for our website. The website is a micro-site of the City of Richland Center's site and the first few years were paid for by ARPA funds. In 2026 Greater Richland Tourism will assume that expense.
- There is not a proposed increase in the rate of investment in our streaming advertising campaign with Gray Media. However, there was discussion of shifting our investment in Milwaukee market advertising to the Minneapolis/St Paul markets due to a noticeable increase of visitors from those areas.

- The final proposed budget reflects \$107,750 of estimated room tax revenue and \$105,281 of annual expenses including marketing and other annual operating expenses for 2026.

One caveat to the proposed budget was explained by Richards that as Greater Richland Tourism shifts to a separate entity it will need to assume some costs that are currently covered under “City” operations. This will cause a need for a mid-year correction to this budget to account for those changes. However, those changes are not completely known at this time and will become apparent as we walk through that process.

Toni McCarvel made the motion to approve the 2026 Budget as proposed with the understanding this may need to change as the entity changes, Jayme Walsh seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held Fruit-yes, Fry-Yes, Walsh-yes, McCarvel-yes, Tepley-yes. Motion unanimously passed.

Rhyme Copier agreement changes and approval for additional funds.

Richards explained there was an increase to the Rhyme Copier Lease expense as we reached the end of our 3-year contract, and they have increased that cost by \$80 a year. Therefore, to remain under budget in that category for 2025 we would need to increase that budget by \$80.

Fry made the motion to increase the Copier Lease budget by \$80 for 2025, Tepley seconded that motion. A roll call vote was held: Fruit-yes, Walsh-yes, McCarvel-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes. Motion unanimously passed.

Gray Media Streaming Advertising Discussion and Action. Director Richards explained that the Commission had approved Streaming Advertising with Gray Media for the Chicagoland and Milwaukee areas through October. Streaming advertising has continued to be a huge driver of visitors to our website and to visit our area. Until we had a better understanding of the increase or decrease in annual room tax collections Director Richards had determined that it was prudent we pause streaming advertising for November.

Director Richards explained that we have seen continued increases in annual room tax collections over the budgeted amounts for 2025 and recommended that the Commission approve continuing the streaming marketing effort through December of 2025, in the amount of \$2,500 to run to the end of the year.

Karin Tepley made the motion to approve spending \$2,500 to continue streaming advertising with Gray Media in the amount of \$2,500 to resume streaming advertising through December of 2025 in the Chicago market only. Jayme Walsh seconded the motion, a voice vote was held: Fruit-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Walsh-yes, McCarvel-yes. Motion passed unanimously.

Department Updates:

Director Richards offered a brief update:

- The weather was extremely favorable and the attendance for all Center Colorfest events was very strong. Lodging in October was full for most of the month and it appeared to be a strong time period for all tourism aspects.

Next meeting and topics.

None offered

It was determined that the next meeting is expected to be Monday, January, 3, 4:00pm.

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Tepley, 2nd by Walsh. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 pm.