



## MINUTES

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Roll Call**

Commission Members Present: Greg Buckley, Curt Andrews, Rick Carey, and Bill LeClair.

Also in attendance: Jeff Dawson, Joy Chair of Explore Two Rivers, Joe Metzen, Director Explore Two Rivers, and Elizabeth Runge, Community Development Director.

3. **Review 2023 Operating Results**

The year ended with increased revenues, up from 2022. This provided revenue for Explore Two Rivers, funding the Director position, and an operating budget for the tourism entity of \$90,000. The room tax revenues total for 2023 at 322,984 compared to 297,598 at the end of 2022.

4. **Review 2024 Budget as Adopted**

The 2024 budget was up, approximately \$50,000 over 2023. It provides for wayside maintenance, visitor information services to Main Street and the Washington House. It has included an allocation for an "opportunity fund" to Explore Two Rivers for event assistance, in the form of an application and review process.

5. **Update on Activities of Explore Two Rivers, Inc.**

**A. Update from Tourism Director:**

Joe Metzen updated the Commission that the Explore new Facebook Page is up and running and has been operating for about three weeks. When the timing is better, he plans to make a more formal announcement. Radio spots, and trade show attendance has been ongoing as well as meeting with all board members, room tax commissioners, and many others during the initial two months in this position. Additional pushes are to prepare for a culinary push, to ride on the wave of the Wisconsin location of Top Chef and to also prepare for the NFL draft in 2025.

**B. Discussion of Opportunity Fund Grants to be Awarded and Administered by Explore Two Rivers, Inc.**

The newly developed application will be available by April. The Explore Board of Directors' intention is to push shoulder season and new events to expand the tourism schedule.

**6. Status Report on Adaptive Re-Use of the City-owned High Lift Building as a Welcome Center for Both the Community and the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary**

The plans approved for the next level of design and estimation will be available for review later this week from Vision Architecture. The Room Tax Commission expressed their support in seeking and pursuing funds to press forward with plans to have this site finished for use.

**7. Status Report on Implementing SwimSmart System at City Beachs (Neshotah Beach and "New Beach")**

New technology has been offered by NOAA to be added to the Swim Smart system the City is pursuing at the beach. It will be attached to buoys and will collect data of the waves and water action to of the lake. It will be pioneering hardware in the region and add value to the swim smart system.

**8. Discuss Any Special Project Requests Related to Tourism and Room Tax Funding**

Joe Metzen identified a need in the upcoming budgeting cycle(s) for “infrastructure” items for use at trade shows such as booth table covers, booth banners and materials for proper representation of Explore Two Rivers at these shows and for marketing purposes. Additional signage, at the curve on Memorial Drive in the future instead of banners to announce events and in Central Park to provide information about sponsors, and wayfinding were all mentioned as projects. Also, additional funding for Central Park to address the construction costs.

**9. Update and 2024 Visitor Guide and its Distribution**

The two tourism entities (Two Rivers and Manitowoc) are distributing the guides and updating in real time the location and amounts of distribution. Visitors are also requesting the book and the information is being maintained for marketing purposes.

**10. Discuss Schedule for Any Upcoming Meetings of the Room Tax Commission**

May 16, 2024 at 12 noon is the next meeting date.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

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*It is possible that members of and possibly a quorum of governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information; no other action will be taken by any governmental body at the above-stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.*