

Watertown Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes August 13, 2026 8am

The following Tourism Commission members were present at Watertown City Hall: Courtney Krause, Ken Berg, Vick Patel, Steve Board

Tourism Commission member present by phone: Melissa Lampe

Also present: Tourism Director Robin Kaufmann, Watertown Main Street Program Executive Director Stefanie Broere, Resident John Kadisch, Resident Margaret Jaberg, Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Director Linden Peacy, Watertown Parks and Rec Director Ryan Schmidt

1. The meeting was called to order by Courtney Krause at 8:00 a.m.
2. Review & Approve September Minutes. Motion to approve minutes was made by Steve Board and seconded by Courtney Krause. Motion passed.
3. Old Business:
 - a. Approve Financial Report: Motion to approve the financials and to allow the AutoFest grant check to be made payable to the Watertown Humane Society was made by Melissa Lampe and seconded by Steve Board. Motion passed.
 - b. Marketing Plan – review and act on marketing plan.
 1. Visitor Guides – Robin will reach out to the guide distributor for a timeline on a second-round distribution schedule.
 2. Ad opportunities – Robin received solicitations from the Wisconsin Badgers annual program and by a national influencer. She explained both programs, but was not asking for support at this time.
 3. Update on billboard commitment – There are few billboard commitments going forward. Robin has sent information to all past billboard subscribers and to several local businesses that inquired. She will continue to promote the program to fill the space. When space is available, it will be filled with a generic “Visit Watertown” graphic, or will be used on City sponsored events.
 4. Placer.ai usage updates – Robin used placer.ai to generate attendance numbers for The BIG Pop-Up held on August 8. The Placer.ai report showed 6.7k attendees within the event boundaries.
 5. Review and act on mural restoration projects. – There was no update to share. Conversations with the building owner and artist continue. The need remains for a lift to safely complete the work.
 - c. Discuss Hotel stay updates: Vick from Best Western provided an update. As of August 12, YTD the hotel is at 64.66 occupancy, LY 62.34%. July 2026 was 64.43%, LY 66.19%. August 7 93.67% and August 8 100% occupancy due to Watertown events, a wedding, and a golf tournament in Oconomowoc. Monday – Thursday of EAA Airventure occupancy was 100%, Friday and Saturday 92%.
4. New Business
 - a. Discuss update on website breach – Robin explained that the visitwatertownwi.com site had been breached by a phishing scam. The breach took place over a couple of days, but web hosts made the page unavailable to users due to the security threat. Even though the page has since been “cleaned” and all threats removed, several web hosts continue to block its content to their users. Robin and Jennifer Creative have been working to resolve the blocks. Robin had put a pause on blogging and creating new content while viewership was restricted but will soon resume as all but three hosts are still restricting the page.

- b. Review and discuss The BIG Pop-Up Event – Tourism, the Chamber and Main Street Program organized The BIG Pop-Up that was held on August 8. Over 200 vendor booths and organized activities filled the space between 1st – 6th Street on Main Street, and included the blocks to Madison and Market Streets. The three organizations had a strong group of volunteers and heard a lot of positive feedback from vendors and brick-and-mortar stops on Main, including very strong sales from both. The three organizing groups have been encouraged to bring the event back next year, which is currently being considered.
- c. Review Manager's report of previous month's tasks – Robin provided the report to the group.
- d. Commission Members' report.
- e. Discuss upcoming and past events – MBU freshmen arrive August 29 and classes begin August 31. Athletes arrive next Monday. The Chamber will be hosting the New Teacher Breakfast at MBU, which includes 70+ new district and private school teachers. They will also host a Networking After Hours with Johnson Creek Tourism on August 19 at Berres Brothers Café. Kim Italiano officially joined the Chamber staff on August 3. Park & Rec is hopeful the BQ tennis courts will be reconstructed and available in two weeks. The Watertown Aquatic Center closes this weekend. Fall registration is open for sports and classes. The Department is offering two day trips; one to Warren's Cranberry Fest and the other to The Fireside Theatre. Main Street announced there are two more Music on Main Street concerts this fall and another Farmers Market After Hours this Friday, August 14 at the Bentzin Family Town Square. The Watertown Historical Society announced their final Music at the Museum concert will take place Monday, August 17 with Ladies Must Swing. Their last concert with Eric Diamond was their strongest attendance yet. The Ice Cream Social held in July had low attendance, with attendance going down in recent years.

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 am was made by Ken Berg and seconded by Courtney Krause. Meeting adjourned.

Agenda items:

A reminder from Robin to have all requests for additions to the next meeting's agenda to her by Tuesday, the week before the meeting.

The next meeting will be at 8 am on September 10, in person at Watertown City Hall

NOTE: These minutes are uncorrected, and any corrections made thereto will be noted in the proceedings at which these minutes are approved.

Submitted by,
Robin Kaufmann, Director of Watertown Tourism

Manager's Report – July 2026

Social Media Report

Facebook: 13,003 followers (Post views 820,105)

Visitwatertownwi.com: 3,022 Users – 5,207 views

Instagram: 1256 followers

- Regularly created content and posted to social media on Tourism and BFTS
- Attended Watertown Main Street Program Board of Directors meeting
- Represented Tourism at Wake up Watertown
- Continued work on Willkommen Mural Project
- Created marketing materials for Watertown AutoFest
- Worked on billboard commitments (including graphic work)
- Coordinated Watertown Tourism grant requests
- Continued work on The BIG Pop-Up
- Met with Jefferson County Communications Director to discuss county tourism
- Attended Wisconsin DOT meeting regarding Main Street Reconstruction
- Created and submitted several press releases for Watertown events
- Visited businesses/events for promotional purposes:
 - Oasis Salon & Spa
 - Berres Brothers Coffee Roasters
 - Music on Main Street Concert
 - Watertown Applebees/IHOP
 - Watertown 4th of July Parade
 - Watertown 4th of July Festivities at Riverside Park
 - Literatus & Co.