

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES
Monday, March 10, 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

Meeting was called to order by Chair Waspi at 4:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Chair Brian Waspi, Vice Chair Zakia Pirzada, Alderman Fesenmaier, Alderman Stoodley, Troy Migut, Shelley Rowell; Mayor Krause (Ex-Off)

Absent: Stephanie Klett (Ex-Off), Comptroller Laura Pisarcik (Ex-Off).

Comments from the Public limited to 5 minutes, limited to items on the agenda: Sarah Hill, 1024 George Street, Lake Geneva, commented on Item #8 specifically room taxes. She believes that a sports complex on Hillmoor would attract visitors to the City and increase overnight stays thus increasing room taxes collected.

Approval of Tourism Commission minutes from February 10, 2025

Motion by Stoodley, second by Pirzada, to approve the minutes from February 10, 2025.

Unanimously carried.

Heather Jones, Independent Contractor for Tourism Commission, Meet at the Lake Promotional Activity

Jones explained that the social media campaign is featuring all new pictures of the Riviera, and she has added a special tile to the website with the off-season promotion. Bookings are ahead of pace for 2025 and 2026.

Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin is attending the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism along with Ms. Klett. Waspi highlighted the private partner and public events along with the impressive website metrics. Visit's commercial shoot with Donald Driver will appear in the fall and winter of 2025. Lake Geneva has been nominated in USA Today's 10 Best reader's choice poll in the category of "Best Small Town in the Midwest." Voting is open through the end of March.

Update from Lake Geneva Business Improvement District (BID) –

Alexandra Binanti pointed out the addition of new calendar pages to the Downtown Lake Geneva website including clicks to ticketed events. In May, their website will showcase a Toolbox for businesses with resources from WEDC. Oktoberfest 2025 will be relocated to Flat Iron Park. In February, the Resource Team from the Main Street program visited and conducted an audit. Alex just received the Final Report from that audit and will ask to give a presentation of the results at the May Committee of the Whole meeting.

Binanti took time to review the printed report she had created from Placer.ai for the three grants listed below on the agenda.

Written financial update provided by City Comptroller

The Room Tax comparison between yearend 2023 and 2024 showed a net gain of exactly \$58,001.56.

Balance Sheet from December 31, 2024

Total Assets \$1,256,539.10

Restricted Fund Balance - \$907,882.50

Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests

Wee Whiskey Fest – Geneva Lakes Whiskey Club

Dana Trilla presented the details of the grant and marketing budget for the 3-day event at the end of April. Waspi pointed out that it is off-season and two nights. Trilla was reminded to include the URL or QR Code for City-only hotels on materials. Though one part of the event is in Geneva Township, the Commission discussed that most of the activity would happen in the City of Lake Geneva. The group was asked to apply earlier next time.

Motion by Stoodley, second by Waspi, to fund the grant for \$20,000. Unanimously carried.

Wisconsin Cheese Festival – Lake Geneva House of Music and Adams Publishing

Chris Buttleman and Robert Ireland explained the grant again this month. They disclosed that Geneva Township created their own Tourism Commission in August, that Chris Buttleman is a member of the Commission, and that they were awarded \$15,000 of an additional grant submitted for \$25,000.

That left their original grant to this Commission for \$25,000.

The difference between the marketing budgets is a matter of target audience.

The Commission discussed creating a better criteria system for distinguishing grant's viability based on event location, etc.

Motion by Pirzada, second by Stoodley, to grant \$10,000 of the original grant to our Commission. Unanimously carried.

Waspi reminded the applicants that they needed to include the URL to the City-only Hotels website and the invoices submitted to be very specific for the target audiences in the grant.

Lake Geneva Taco Fest - Lake Geneva House of Music and Adams Publishing

Due to discussion on Item #9b, by consent, the Commission agreed to continue this item/grant to the May meeting.

Final Grant Evaluations from organizations receiving Tourism Grant

Lake Geneva Bridal Expo –

The participation from last year's Wedding Expo has increased. There is a need to find an additional or alternate space for this and other events.

Tourism Commission related forms, paperwork, and grant procedures review

Discussion regarding events held outside City of Lake Geneva. Criteria should be developed to guide the grant petitioners and Commission for awarding grants.

Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –

Monday, April 14 at 4:00 PM

- Develop criteria for events held outside the City limits
- Lake Geneva Taco Fest – schedule on May meeting agenda
- Note: Include Future Meeting Date on the agenda

Motion by Waspi, second by Stoodley, to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Alderman Fesenmaier, Secretary