

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES  
Monday, May 12, 2025  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

Meeting was called to order by Chair Waspi at 4:00 p.m.

**Roll Call**

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

**Absent:** Comptroller Laura Pisarcik (Ex-Off).

**Comments from the Public limited to 5 minutes, limited to items on the agenda:**

Rob Ireland, spoke on Item #14b, with suggestions for more clarity in the grant process especially for any proposed criteria to be added to the grant application. He said there is a misconception that just visiting (versus staying overnight) can build awareness of the destination and influence whether tourists return and book accommodations. Rob insisted there really is no distinction between the City and outside the City especially with some venues like Taco Fest. If a point scale is used in the future, he thought it could be targeted, including whether the event is a non-profit or partners with a non-profit or hotel, expertise in the marketing field, etc.

Chris Buttleman, also spoke on Item #14 b. Criteria or Guidelines for Grant Awards, with a concern that limiting grants to just the first three years could be problematic because of the length of time it takes to deeply build an event with return attendees.

**Approval of Tourism Commission minutes from April 14, 2025**

*Motion by Pirzada, second by Frame, to approve the minutes from April 14, 2025. Unanimously carried.*

**Annual Election of Officers**

**Chairperson**

*Motion by Pirzada, second by Rowell, to nominate Waspi as Chairperson. With no other nominations and by unanimous consent, the Commission approved the election of Waspi.*

**Vice Chairperson**

*Motion by Fesenmaier, second by Waspi, to nominate Pirzada as Vice Chairperson. With no other nominations and by unanimous consent, the Commission approved the election of Pirzada.*

**Secretary**

*Motion by Waspi, second by Pirzada, to nominate Fesenmaier as Secretary. With no other nominations and by unanimous consent, the Commission approved the election of Fesenmaier.*

**Review of City Ordinances pertaining to the Tourism Commission.**

Waspi mentioned the City Ordinance for the Tourism Commission was in this month's packet. He mentioned there are also State Statutes governing the Commission along with an informational packet given to the newest members.

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

Heather Jones was pleased to announce that active inquiries for reservations have increased. She is trying to sort through the data from the Tourism website (listing City hotels) to determine where the traffic is coming from. Vice Chair Pirzada asked that the Airbnb and Vrbo information from the bottom of the site be removed because this takes visitors to the national site, not specifically City locations.

In the Sales Update, Jones stated we are well ahead of last year's bookings.

### **Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva**

Deanna Goodwin pointed out that the monthly Partner Meeting will be held on May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Riviera Ballroom. On the Visit website, the Top Page is Events with Chicago continuing to top the cities list. They will hold a Geiger Media Tour in June with a Meetings and Convention focus in addition to the regular September tour.

### **Update from Lake Geneva Business Improvement District (BID) –**

Alexandra Binanti gave a verbal report of data and events. Although emailed the previous week, the BID report was not included in the May meeting packet.

### **Written financial update provided by City Comptroller**

Balance Sheet from March 31, 2025

Total Assets \$998,689.57

Restricted Fund Balance - \$1,075,073.65

The Balloon Adventure evaluation is included in this month's packet, but according to the financials, there appears to be no reimbursement given at this point.

### **Budget Line Items**

Discussion continued about adding a line item in the Tourism Commission section of the City budget for municipal development including maintenance.

\*Klett left at 5:05 p.m.

### **Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests**

#### **Lake Geneva Taco Fest, Lake Geneva House of Music and Adams Publishing Group –**

Discussion centered around the location, multiple years for the grant, and offering something new or a new target audience. *Motion by Migut, second by Pirzada, to award \$10,000 for Lake Geneva Taco Fest on September 12 -14, 2025; carried with 1 no vote.*

#### **Corporate Meetings and Events Social Media Campaign, Riviera Ballroom, Heather Jones**

– This new media campaign for renting the Riviera Ballroom will run from June 15 to September 15 targeting mid-day and mid-week use. *Motion by Fesenmaier, second by Pirzada, to fund the \$7,500 grant; unanimously carried.*

#### **Das Fest Wisconsin, Prost! Das Fest Wisconsin –**

Tammy Dunn explained this event. The location, but not the event, is new, and due to scheduling conflicts. The shuttle buses will run from three locations in the City of Lake Geneva to the venue

at the Kenosha County Fairgrounds on July 18 – 20, 2025. *Motion by Frame, second by Rowell, to award \$15,000 for the grant; unanimously carried.*

**Venetian Festival, Lake Geneva Jaycees –**

Keith Felt from the Lake Geneva Jaycees explained the grant request for \$60,000. While this is a popular event, Commissioners were concerned about items in the marketing budget that did not align with state statute. *Motion by Frame, second by Pirzada, to award \$60,000 for the grant. Amendment by Fesenmaier, second by Migut, to award \$27,500. Voice vote – carried with 1 no vote. Main motion by voice vote to award a grant in the amount of \$27,500 for Venetian Festival from August 13 – 17, 2025 – carried with 1 no vote.*

**Final Grant Evaluations from organizations receiving Tourism Grant  
Winterfest Ice Sculpture Walk 2025 –**

By consensus, continued to June meeting due to time.

**The Balloon Adventure –**

By consensus, continued to June meeting due to time.

**Tourism Commission related forms, paperwork, and grant procedures review  
Riviera Ballroom Complimentary Request Form  
Criteria/Guidelines for awarding grants, to be included on the grant application**

By consensus, continued to June meeting due to time.

**Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –  
Monday, June 9 at 4:00 PM**

- Promoting Tourism website listing City hotels (Zakia)
- Budget – add line items for municipal development projects including maintenance; City limits entrance signs and wayfinding kiosks
- Riviera Ballroom Complimentary Request form with supporting docs (see above)
- Criteria for grant awards (see above)
- Knowles-Nelson Grant/Matching Funds
- Switch Riviera Contractor individual grant requests to line items in the City budget
- Note: Include Future Meeting Date on the agenda

*Motion by Pirzada, second by Rowell, to adjourn at 6:04 p.m. Carried.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Alderman Fesenmaier  
Secretary