

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES
Monday, December 12, 2022
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 Hedlund, Linda Moritz; Kevin Singh, Mayor Klein, Stephanie Klett.

Comments from the Public limited to 5 minutes, limited to items on the agenda: None.

Approval of Tourism Commission minutes from September 12, 2002, October 10, 2022, and November 14, 2022 Motion by Pirzada, second by Waspi, to approve the minutes from September 12, 2022, October 10, 2022, and November 14, 2022. Unanimously carried.

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

While the stats for November were down across the board, Jones had good news from the Meeting Professionals International/Great Lakes Education Summit (MPI/GLES) hosted at the Riviera in November.

The newest social media campaign starts on December 15th as a kick-off to the holiday wedding engagement season. The Lake Geneva Bridal Show will be held on January 21st which should provide many bookings for the Riviera. We now have 51 bookings for 2023 and 10 for 2024 at the increased rates.

Heather had to review the information orally because her report was not included in the packet although it had been emailed to City Hall. Brian will ask the City Clerk to send out to the Commissioners.

Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin enthusiastically highlighted the December Partner meeting which will be held at the Geneva Lake Museum, providing a holiday atmosphere with the Parade of Trees as the backdrop.

The lighted Christmas Parade was a huge success with 72 floats participating along with a new procedure for passing out candy using Ambassadors rather than candy being thrown everywhere. The downtown Ice Sculpture Walk, held in combination with Winterfest the first weekend in February, has 30 businesses signed up thanks to the grant.

November Earned Media sample:

- Wassailing in Wisconsin: Yule Love these Local Celebrations | Northwest Quarterly (Print)

<https://oldnorthwestterritory.northwestquarterly.com/2022/11/22/wassailing-in-wisconsin-yule-love-these-local-celebrations/>

The VISIT Lake Geneva website received a bit of a facelift including the addition of their Instagram feed to the front page. Visitor stats continue to increase with the website shooting past two million for 2022. Walk-ins at the current location in Flat Iron Park near downtown also continue to increase.

Goodwin noted that their emails had also been bouncing back and not being received by the City.

Update from Lake Geneva Business Improvement District (BID) – None

Written financial update provided by City Comptroller

Balance Sheet as of November 2022

Total Assets - \$1,126,223.23

Restricted Fund Balance - \$685,614.30

Outstanding Grants worksheet showed a total unpaid liability of \$435,002.10.

Waspi noted that on the Room Tax Comparisons chart November and December data will be added for the next report. The total to-date for 2022 is \$1,914,454.84 which is an increase of \$390,876.62 over last year. Not reflected is the final payment to VISIT Lake Geneva which receives 35% of the collected tax over \$500,000.

Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests

GLAS Request for time extension to submit Tourism funding reimbursement request

Adam McCulloch from Geneva Lake Astrophysics and STEAM (GLAS) explained that there was miscommunication regarding timely submission of the invoices from their events. They can submit all the necessary paperwork by the end of the week. Motion by Pirzada, second by Moritz, accept the late invoices and grant reimbursement form. Unanimously carried.

Bacon Fest 2023 – Wisconsin Valley Media Group/Lake Geneva Regional News

Kelly Wells presented the information from the grant application. This third year they are adding a Friday night event from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. with a larger band. Included in the packet were statistics tracking attendees from last year. The full report was shown as hard copy but will be scanned and emailed to the Commissioners. Waspi pointed out that the group has already received the necessary permits from the City (as part of the required application procedure), is using local vendors, and that the event is off-season. Motion by Waspi, second by Pirzada, to grant the \$10,000 amount requested for the May 12 through May 14 Bacon Fest 2023 event. Unanimously carried.

Big Balloon Build – Inspiration Ministries

Kimberly Voller, Inspiration Ministries Development Coordinator, explained the details of the event including breakfast, school visits, public viewing, and balloon-popping party. Although the graphic in the packet shows Grand Geneva (outside the City limits) as the Exclusive Hotel Partner, the logos will be changed to reflect the hotel sponsors including Harbor Shores. The annual GaryCon Convention will be held that same weekend, so GG capacity will likely be limited with tourists choosing City hotels closer to the actual venue. The marketing plan presented as part of their overall budget reflects target audiences outside the area that will likely need overnight lodging in our City Hotels. Except for the GG exclusive partner error, the Commissioners cited this application as exceptional with details and picking an off-season date.

Motion by Pirzada, second by Moritz, to grant the \$10,000 amount requested for the Big Balloon Build held March 19 through March 26, 2023 with the requirement that the words or any reference to “Exclusive Hotel Partner” be removed from ALL marketing materials and campaigns. Unanimously carried.

Motion by Fesenmaier, second by Pirzada, to suspend the rules to allow Spyro Condos, BID President, the opportunity to give a report for Item #7. Unanimously carried.

Condos introduced himself and made note of the absence of the BID Executive Director who was told by another BID Board member not to attend the Tourism meetings. The BID has hired a new Executive Director. Condos thanked the Commission for its support for BID events in the past. He explained that this year’s annual Oktoberfest was a huge success despite high winds and that the recent Tree Lighting event, both in Flat Iron Park, was also popular especially using a natural tree in the park rather than a cut tree placed in the pavilion.

Condos made known his participation on the “ad hoc” Parking Committee recently formed to find alternatives and solutions to the \$4 rate increase and additional parking. He pointed out the need for employee parking outside of the immediate downtown area which should be used for patrons – visitors and locals. The Parking Committee is looking at property behind the museum and school plus remote parking on Hillmoor with future potential for parking structure(s).

Condos announced that BID will sponsor a trolley to move people from remote parking to downtown and suggested the City or Tourism Commission might be interested in purchasing a second trolley.

The new Executive Director will attend future Commission meetings, and the plan is to add even more events for 2023. Pirzada requested information be provided regarding the mission and boundaries of the Business Improvement District. No action taken.

Heather Jones, Independent Contractor for Tourism Commission, annual contract

Motion by Hedlund, second by Waspi, to approve the Jones’ annual contract November 1, 2022 through October 31, 2023. Fesenmaier requested that a clean copy be included in next month’s packet for the record. Waspi and Jones still need to sign the contract. Unanimously carried.

Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –

- Include in packet Heather Jones’ 2022-2023 contract (clean copy) – no action needed
- BID events and mission

Monday, January 9 at 4:00 PM

Please let the City Clerk know whether you can or cannot attend the January and February meetings.

Motion by Hedlund, second by Waspi, to adjourn at 5:09 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Alderman Fesenmaier, Secretary