

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES
Monday, February 13, 2023
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

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

Roll Call

Present: Chair Brian Waspi, Ald. Fesenmaier, Alderman Hedlund, Kevin Singh, Mayor Klein

Absent: Vice Chair Zakia Pirzada, Linda Moritz, Stephanie Klett

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

Ryan Lasch, Lake Geneva Jaycees, speaking on Item 9c. Ryan questioned the appropriateness of using Tourism funds for event parking fees.

Ryan Stelzer, Lake Geneva Jaycees, also spoke on Item 9c questioning the use of Tourism taxes for parking. He explained that using a permit to waive fees and depending on the Tourism Commission didn't give groups like the Art Foundation nor the Jaycees assurance for future event funding.

Approval of Tourism Commission minutes from December 12, 2002

Motion by Hedlund, second by Singh, to approve the minutes from December 12, 2022.

Unanimously carried.

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

Jones presented the data from her January and February 2023 reports highlighting the 10% increase in website sessions, 99 active inquiries, and 94% of the website traffic were new visitors. The website numbers are likely due to the current marketing campaign which began in mid-December and runs through March. The January Bridal Show provided great exposure with 1 firm booking and 2 more possible at this time. Jones also pointed to the bookings and revenue: 2022 year ended with \$286,754.23 net revenue after tax.

Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin gave highlights from the January and February 2023 reports. She pointed to the huge success of this year's Winterfest noting that the Riviera building was open Saturday and Sunday this year with food and activities. Winterfest media was so successful one of their Facebook posts reached 180,000 views. Visit is holding an invitation-only Business After Hours event on February 16 with an exclusive Miss America Homecoming Tour.

The year-end data from the Visit website showed many records were broken – 59,000 Facebook, 10,000 Instagram followers, 18,000 walk ins at the Visitor Center in Flat Iron Park.

Update from Lake Geneva Business Improvement District (BID) – Alexandria Binanti

Alex, new Executive Director for the Business Improvement District, handed out paper copies of the BID Strategic Plan held January 26, 2023, which was open to the public. The 7-page document outlines goals, objectives, and measurements of success. She stressed that the BID will be focusing on quality over quantity in 2023 and will be unveiling a new website domain next month – downtownlakegeneva.org .

Written financial update provided by City Comptroller

Balance Sheet [not available]

Total Assets -

Restricted Fund Balance -

Outstanding Grants worksheet showed a total unpaid liability of \$490,799.37.

Currently, the money on hand for grants is \$30,000 until the next June payment. There is technically another \$100,000 available for grants due to timing of payments to Visit Lake Geneva and our Riviera contractor.

Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests

Jazz Fest – Kelly Wells, Wisconsin Valley Media

Kelly explained the event and last year's data. There was concern that the marketing budget did not assign specific amounts to the line items/activities. Waspi also presented a one-page document labeled Amplified Digital accepted by the City Administrator for last year's reimbursement that was very general and did not include specific invoices. These invoices need to be submitted for city "audits" listing amounts for each line item and noting the audiences/locations targeted. Motion by Waspi, second by Singh, to grant \$10,000 for Jazz Fest on May 19 and 20, 2023, including the resubmission of monetary amounts in the marketing plan. Unanimously carried.

Taco Fest – Kelly Wells, Wisconsin Valley Media

Kelly explained the 3-day event. The same concerns were repeated from the discussion above. Motion by Waspi, second by Hedlund, to grant \$10,000 for Taco Fest September 8-10, 2023, including the resubmission of monetary amounts in the marketing plan. Unanimously carried.

Art in the Park 2023 –

Julie Sarton, Treasurer of the Geneva Lakes Art Foundation, and Jeff Russart, Art in the Park event director, presented the details of this annual event. They had submitted a revised request for an additional \$7400 for parking due to a 4-1 vote at the February 7 Finance Committee meeting not to waive parking fees. Chair Waspi clearly stated he believes grant money for parking fees is not in alignment with State Statute and cannot be paid with a marketing grant from the Tourism Commission.

Motion by Hedlund, second by Waspi, to grant the original amount of \$15,253 for Art in the Park on August 12 and 13, 2023. Unanimously carried.

Lake Geneva Meeting Planner Open House – Heather Jones

Heather Jones explained what an advantage holding and sponsoring this event at the Riviera brings for future bookings and revenue for the City. Motion by Hedlund, second by Singh, to grant \$2,200 for the Lake Geneva Meeting Planner Open House on May 10, 2023. Unanimously carried.

Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –

- Include in packet Heather Jones' 2022-2023 contract (clean copy) – agenda item only, no action needed.
- BID events and mission
- Include in packet Jazz Fest and Taco Fest resubmission of marketing plans with monetary amounts specified for a complete application – list on the agenda, no action needed

Monday, March 13 at 4:00 PM

Motion by Hedlund, second by Waspi, to adjourn at 5:25 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Alderman Fesenmaier, Secretary