

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES
Monday, November 13, 2023
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, Ald. Fesenmaier, Alderman Howell, Linda Moritz, Troy Migut, Stephanie Klett (Ex-Off), Mayor Klein (Ex-Off) – arrived at 4:23 p.m., sat in audience, Administrator Nord (Staff Liaison) - online

Absent: Comptroller Laura Pisarcik (Ex-Off)

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

Dave Sekeres, 315 Amber Drive, Whitewater, spoke in favor of the Visit 3-year contract under discussion and wanted the percentage increased from 34% to 51% of the Total room taxes collected.

Skip Harless, Sheridan Springs Road, Lyons Township, supported an increase in the percent for the Visit Contract.

Leigh Ann Meyers, 420 S. Lake Shore Drive, owner of the Candle Mercantile, encouraged the Commissioners to support the Visit contract renewal.

Barb Krause, 112 Wisconsin Street, Nie-Turner Media Group, talked about the impressive media campaigns from Visit and supported a renewal of their contract.

Karin Bennett, 384 Stoneridge Drive, Cornerstone Shop, asked for as much funding as possible for Visit. Their team of professionals is cohesive and shows results.

Ann Esarco, 960 S. Lake Shore Drive, spoke highly of Visit's public relations, monthly partner meetings, ribbon-cutting ceremonies for new businesses, and premier events.

Steve Lois, 546 Pheasant Ridge, Fontana, supports Visit's renewed contract and highly praised their quality of work.

[Mayor Klein arrived.]

Lou Ann Anderson, 1333 Promontory Drive, Visit manager, supported the renewed Visit contract and gave specifics regarding the public's access and use of the Information Center.

John Trione, 311 S. Wells Street, owner of the Lake Geneva Balloon Company and Visit manager, referenced Visit's Social Media pages and supported renewing Visit's contract.

Christie Hunter, 1280 Promontory Drive, Visit manager, emphasized the direct tax impact of Visit LG with 500 businesses as partners.

Kellie Carper Sowiak, W3203 Dummer Drive, State Highway 50, enthusiastically supported the contract renewal for Visit.

Pam Carper, W3203 Dummer Drive, Geneva Township, believes Visit deserves the support of the Tourism Commission and pointed to the image that the City of Lake Geneva holds throughout our country and internationally due to their work.

Deanna Goodwin, 745 N 3rd Court, Silver Lake, reiterated the value Visit brings to Lake Geneva's local economy and that their dollars are reinvested to generate more and more visits with a positive impact on our businesses and community.

Approval of Tourism Commission minutes from October 9, 2023

Motion by Pirzada, second by Moritz, to approve the minutes from October 9, 2023.

Unanimously carried.

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

Heather Jones reviewed her monthly report. Most notable was the website traffic with the City of Lake Geneva at spot #5. The Riviera rentals are on pace compared to 2022 numbers. Jones is working on a website refresh and new marketing materials just in time for engagement season.

Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin's monthly report gave dates for events and a long list of earned media including international and state lists:

<https://www.travelandleisureasia.com/in/trips/family-travel/best-winter-family-vacations-from-ski-trips-to-caribbean-escapes/>

<https://www.travelinglifestyle.net/8-best-places-to-visit-in-wisconsin-in-the-fall-2023/>

<https://newyorktravelguides.com/most-romantic-small-towns-in-america/>

Jill Gaulke, Destination Sales manager, will attend the final 2023 Holiday Showcase in Chicago at the end of November.

Goodwin was proud to announce Visit's new media contract with Donald Driver as he will continue working on their fall and winter campaigns.

Riviera Agreement for events that request rental fees waived

Heather Jones will work with Administrator Nord to present a form that parties fill out for waived rental fees which would require Finance, License, and Regulation Committee recommendation and City Council final approval.

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

Binanti referred to materials passed out at the meeting instead of in the packet. Her September and October report detailed their website and social media data. The BID's events include Oktoberfest, Fall Wine Walk, Light Up Lake Geneva, and downtown beautification. Binanti further explained their Placemaking Initiative (interviews with locals), involvement in the short-term rental discussions, and attendance at a Housing Summit in September both in order to find solutions for reasonable and reliable workforce housing. She gave the Commissioners a colored print flier that outlined BID's focus, history and mission, plus goals for 2024.

Written financial update provided by City Comptroller

Balance Sheet from October 31, 2023

Total Assets - \$1,214,242.93

Accounts Payable/Liabilities - \$37,500

Total Fund Equity - \$1,176,742.93

Update regarding Visit Lake Geneva contract with Tourism Commission

The three-year contract continues to be under discussion with two points yet to settle: equal disbursements throughout the year rather than one lump sum at the end for share of room taxes and changing the percentage of room taxes awarded. Currently, the Tourism Commission receives 36%, Visit Lake Geneva 34% including the flat base of \$150,000, and City 30% of the total room taxes collected. Motion by Waspi, second by Pirzada, to continue to December and to possibly call a special meeting for contract discussion only. Unanimously carried.

Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests

Wisconsin Cheese Festival; House of Music and APG Southern Wisconsin

The event was originally scheduled and previous grant awarded for November 18. Due to lack of planning time and implementation, the original kick-off Festival was not held. The organizers decided to change the date to May 17 through May 19, 2024, as a better fit into their overall schedule. Their marketing plan detailed their planned expenditures. Motion by Pirzada, second by Howell, to award the \$15,000 for the new event, Wisconsin Cheese Festival. Unanimously carried.

Jazz Fest; House of Music and APG Southern Wisconsin

This fourth annual event planned for June 19 through June 23, 2024, will now begin mid-week. Although the event will not be marketed for Juneteenth, it will highlight this federal holiday with special music selections. Motion by Howell, second by Pirzada, to award a \$15,000 grant. Unanimously carried.

Lake Geneva Taco Fest; House of Music and APG Southern Wisconsin

This fourth annual event planned for September 20 through September 22, 2024, includes a pepper-eating contest. The application includes a model marketing plan. Motion by Pirzada, second by Moritz, to award a \$15,000 grant. Unanimously carried.

Women's Weekend; Geneva Lake Woman's Association

Event dates are April 26 through April 28, 2024. Kathy Papcke and Ann Kordus explained the theme "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" and the event marketing plan. Motion by Waspi, second by Pirzada, to award a \$16,000 grant. Unanimously carried.

Downtown Ice Sculpture Walk 2024; Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin gave details about the now annual addition of Ice Sculptures in front of downtown businesses during Winterfest, the first weekend in February 2024. The grant will offset the cost for up to 50 businesses to participate with a small increase in price this year. Motion by Pirzada, second by Migut, to approve the Ice Sculpture Walk grant for \$12,000. Unanimously carried.

Tourism Commission Logo and other possible changes

Motion by Waspi, second by Howell, to continue. Unanimously carried.

Addition of link or QR code to all marketing materials including print and social media (Continued from July 2023 meeting). Potential revision to Tourism Grant Application to include that the grantee lists the City website page URL/link (mirrored from the Riviera webpage) showing City hotels and lodging

Motion by Waspi, second by Howell, to continue. Unanimously carried.

Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –

- Visit Lake Geneva contract renewal
- Tourism Logo – vote on invoice for work completed
- Link on City website and revision to Tourism Grant Application listing City website page showing City hotels and lodging

Monday, December 11, 2023, at 4:00 PM

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

Respectfully submitted,
Alderman Fesenmaier
Secretary