

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES
Monday, September 9, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

Meeting was called to order by Chair Waspi at 4:02 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Chair Brian Waspi, Vice Chair Zakia Pirzada, Alder Fesenmaier, Alder Howell, Troy Migut, Cathy Stoodley

Absent: Stephanie Klett (Ex-Off), Mayor Krause (Ex-Off), Comptroller Pisarsik

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

None.

Approval of Special Tourism Commission minutes from July 8, 2024

Motion by Pirzada, second by Stoodley, to approve the minutes from July 8, 2024. Unanimously carried.

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

Jones excitedly announced that the lakegenevahotels.org website listing only City of Lake Geneva hotels, set up for the Tourism grants is running and collecting data. There is evidence that visitors to the site are arriving directly from the link or QR code.

Jones explained her monthly report including that 2025 Riviera reservations are up from last year's pace. Her report also included the statistics from the June-August Marketing Campaign.

Update from Tourism Entity – Visit Lake Geneva

Deanna Goodwin highlighted event dates: Christmas Parade, December 7, and Winterfest, January 29 through February 2, 2025. Media visits from this summer will produce feature articles for next summer. Geiger Media Tour was successful with twelve travel writers and future plans for a September wedding/events tour.

Visit's website continues to show increases month after month. Goodwin added an Event Date column to the RFP chart for better tracking.

A bike trail brochure is available at the Visitor's Center, but they are looking for a digital copy that can be refreshed and made more attractive. Also available is a Geneva Lake Shore Path map. Car Wraps will be seen this fall now in Milwaukee and Madison in addition to Chicago.

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

The new event, the Lemonade Crawl, on August 20th, was a huge success. May's social media numbers were way up due to the Murals in Motion. Alex expects to be including Placer.ai reports for October now that the subscription has been invoiced/paid and user training completed program.

Upcoming Events: Oktoberfest, Wine Walk, and Shop Small Weekend
There will be a ribbon-cutting on October 12 in recognition of the Main Street designation received in August. BID is applying for a grant (awarded in February 2025) from a new pilot program from WEDC in relation to workforce housing initiatives for employee retention.

Written financial update provided by City Comptroller

Balance Sheet from June 30, 2024

Total Assets \$842,317.01

Restricted Fund Balance - \$907,882.50

Discussion/Action on Tourism Promotional Grant Program and Requests:

Oktoberfest – Lake Geneva Business Improvement District

Alexandria Binanti, Director of BID, presented the information for this year's Oktoberfest. The whole event budget was submitted with highlights of the marketing focus/totals. The application is detailed and included supplemental materials for targeted marketing to encourage overnight stays in hotels within the City limits. Motion by Pirzada, second by Howell, to award the full grant amount of \$22,450. Unanimously carried.

Abominable Trail Race – ASR Events, LLC

The event will take place at Lake Geneva Ziplines and Adventures in Geneva Township on November 16. Race packets will be available for pick up on Friday night, thus encouraging event goers to stay overnight. City hotels will be encouraged to create and offer special package deals for the event. Waspi noted that the Evaluation form is updated since last year and that printed materials should include the Tourism Commission website link to City Hotels or QR Code and on the event's website. The budget for the whole event is larger than the money requested for the grant.

Motion by Howell, second by Pirzada, to approve the grant for \$3,000. Unanimously carried.

Abominable Snow Race – ASR Events, LLC

The event will take place at Lake Geneva Ziplines and Adventures in Geneva Township on January 25. They are targeting Milwaukee, Madison, Chicago, and Rockford and adding focus on a younger audience this time around. Yeti will be attending Lake Geneva events to promote the Trail and Snow Races. Race packets will be available for pick up on Friday night, thus encouraging event goers to stay overnight. City hotels will be encouraged to create and offer special package deals for the event. Waspi noted that the Evaluation form is updated since last year and that printed materials should include the Tourism Commission website link to City Hotels or QR Code and on the event's website. The budget for the whole event is larger than the money requested for the grant.

Motion by Waspi, second by Stoodley, to approve the grant for \$10,000. Unanimously carried.

The Balloon Adventure – Santa Cause Inc. dba 531 Fund

The event will take place at the Boat Showroom in the Village of Williams Bay, March 6 through March 16, 2025. They are increasing the amount of their Tourism grant request from last year due to a decrease expected this year in their Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) grant amount. Waspi and Stoodley spoke in favor of the event. Waspi stated that room occupancy doesn't have to create a positive Return on Investment (ROI). There was discussion regarding hosting the event in city of Lake Geneva, however there are space limitations and rules at the Riviera that would make this unlikely. Also discussed Covenant Harbor again as a location that Commissioners supported in the past.

Motion by Stoodley, second by Waspi, to approve the grant for \$40,000. Carried, 4-2, with Alders Fesenmaier and Howell voting no.

Final Event Evaluations from organizations receiving Tourism Grants – None; noted this is a recurring item on the agenda.

Discussion/Act concerning revisions to the Tourism Grant application.

Change “printer” to “printed” page 3 Section 3 paragraph 2 last sentence.

Goodwin was given permission to speak. She believes that using a link or QR Code is appropriate for most printed marketing materials but is much more of a challenge to include on social media sites especially Facebook.

Two drafts were included in the packet. The second draft added titles for splitting the grant into TWO sections as mentioned by Pirzada at previous meetings.

Discussion will continue to October.

Discussion/Action regarding links on the Tourism Commission webpage – Completed; see Jones' report above. Linked on City website bottom of front page.

Tourism Commission related forms, paperwork, and grant procedures review

Discussion from above. This is NOT a recurring agenda item. Commissioners should review the application as if they were applying and make suggestions to Chair Waspi.

Future meeting agenda items and next meeting date –

- Approve regular meeting minutes from June 3, 2024 (Migut)
- Tourism Grant Application revision – regarding link or QR code on social media sites and splitting the Grant application into two sections
- Heather Jones' contract expiring Oct. 31, 2024; Waspi will send out current contract
- 2025 Budget - Review

Monday, October 14, at 4:00 PM

Motion by Migut, by Waspi, to adjourn at 5:55 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Alderman Fesenmaier, Secretary