



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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March 18, 2008

New Richmond House

New Richmond, MI

10:00am

Minutes of a Scheduled Meeting of the Allegan County Tourist Council

A scheduled meeting of the Allegan County Tourist Council was called to order by Chair Stephanie Peterson on Tuesday, March 18, 2008 at 10:00am at the New Richmond House, 3131 57th Street, New Richmond, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT: Stephanie Peterson Ann Kilmartin
 Dianna Stampfler John Shagonaby
 Norm Smith Larry Johnson
 Al Weener Jan Cushman

ABSENT: Betsy Hill

Also Present: Kevin Ricco, Director
 Angel Schneider, Parks and Tourism Clerk

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES

Motion by, Ann Kilmartin, seconded by Dianna Stampfler, to approve the January 15, 2008 minutes as presented and mailed. Motion carried by everyone present.

TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT

Angel distributed the tourism contact reports for January and February. Angel shared that numbers are slowly rising. Angel also attached a copy of the January and February long distance bill for the 1- 800 number. The bill shows what state the person is in who is using the number.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Angel distributed the financial statements for March 2007. Kevin shared that there have not been any significant changes to the budget. Dianna Stampfler questioned what was spent out of the advertising budget. Kevin responded with WMTA membership and advertising for 2008, the Yellow Pages ad for the year, the monthly brochure service fee and the 2008 fee for the billboard on 131. There were no other questions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public present.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VISITORS GUIDE UPDATE- DISTRIBUTION, CONSERVATION WITH JIM STEPHANAK

Kevin informed the council that he had to ask the brochure company to return 12 boxes of visitor's guides because we only had 2 left in our office for the year. Brochures are being distributed nicely this year and everyone agreed that it was a wise decision to use the brochure distribution company. The Council also likes that this year there are stickers on the boxes giving information on how to order more copies.

Kevin had a conversation with Jim Stephanak the publisher for Total Market Strategies (TMS) about the service the Tourist Council received with the 2008 brochures. Jim suggested they would provide better service if they were to do the guide next year. Norm Smith suggested we ask for a timeline in writing, Ann Kilmartin recommended that Celeste Statler from TMS bring in a proposal and present it at the April meeting. Kevin is going to call Celeste with the information. Kevin wanted everyone to start thinking about what the content for the 2009 guide should be and he would make it a topic at the May meeting. The Tourist Council came up the wording "3rd Annual Official Publication" for the cover.

WEB SITE UPDATE

Kevin reported that the web site is up and running and is getting a great response. The statistic reports that the site generated is detailed. There is one problem that has raised and that is people are requesting a visitors guide in the section that is for requesting your event or business be added to the web site. Angel is separating these out and responding correctly. Angel reported that we have had 4 people requesting to be added to the web site. Two businesses were denied according to the web site criteria the Tourist Council had established. Stephanie Peterson recommended that we offer the businesses we turn down to advertise in the next guide and that will get them on the web site in the brochure.

NEW BUSINESS

ADVERTISING OPPURTUNITY

Kevin was contacted by Journal and Topics a publication out of Chicago, IL. The rates were reasonable but there was some concern on the quality of the publication so Kevin is going to request they send each copy of the publication and then the Council will decide at the April meeting.

STRATEGIC PLANNING- REVIEW FOR 2009 BUDGET

Kevin stated that this process had to be done for the 2009 budget process and because the council had been updating it every two years. The SWOT analysis is attached.

NEXT MEETING

April 15, 2008 @ 10:00a.m. in the Spartan Conference Room

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

John Shagonaby

The tribes annual fundraiser golf outing is May 16th. Also the tribe has not heard anything from the US Court of Appeals.

Jan Cushman

The Otsego Mill is open this month.

Ann Kilmartin

Dorr felt left out of the visitors Guide because they did not have much advertising in there. Wayland is moving along with the Heritage Trail interpretive sign.

Dianna Stampfler

She will be at the State Tourism Conference during the April meeting so she will not be here. She will also be bringing in information to the Council about joining TYCOM to support tourism in Michigan.

Larry Johnson

Camp Kidwell is taking applications for summer campers. The Camp's annual golf outing is May 17th. The camp is also having a breakfast over Memorial Day weekend. United Way Campaign has reached 90% of their goal.

Stephanie Peterson

Showed the design for the billboard and wanted everyone's opinion. She stated that the billboard should be up next week. The race track is in the process of adding grandstands. There are currently 15 rows and they are going to 30 rows and it is a lot of work she added.

Kevin Ricco

Betsy Hill was not able to attend the meeting due to an episode she had this morning and was taken to Bronson by ambulance.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned.

By: _____
Angel Schneider

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>SWOT</u> Strengths Weaknesses/Needs Improvement Opportunities Threats</p>
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STRENGTHS- internal

- Team Work
- Heritage Trail
- Visitor's guide
- Board of Commissioners
- Marketing
- Good staff support
- Good county representation
- Set goals and achieve them
- Website project
- Photo contest
- Indicators to measure success in place
- Inventory of attractions
- Web site

WEAKNESSES- internal

- Lack of full time staff
- Not enough data to analyze market trends
- Connecting county
- No central city or media
- Website
- Council turnover (continuity)
- Follow through (i.e. Heritage Trial, special events)
- Lack of marketing plan
- Inability to find Council replacements

OPPORTUNITIES- external

- Heritage water trail/ Kalamazoo river cleanup
- West MI Cultural Trails projects
- Eco Tourism/ Agri Tourism
- Expressway corridors
- Casino
- Equestrian trails
- Hunting / fishing
- Bringing county together
- Affordable
- Golfing (MI=4th in nation, \$3 billion statewide)

- Motor sports Park
- Campgrounds rustic/ kids camps
- Natural Resources/Business Resources
- Kalamazoo River
- Winter sports
- Allegan County Fairgrounds
- Lakeshore
- New tourism developments

THREATS- external

- Budget cuts
- Fuel costs rising
- Economy
- Fragmented media
- Lack of good coordination countywide
- Other counties encroaching/claiming Allegan County opportunities
- External negative county image

ISSUES

- Poor economy (2)
- Promote what we already have (5)
- **Lack of marketing plan and promotional tools (12)**
- Lack of full time staff (4)
- Event coordination (7)
- Lack of coordination with CVB's, DDA's, DBA's, and chambers (8)
- Budget/funding (0)
- Volunteers- lack of (0)
- **External negative county image (9)**
- **More advertising visitors guide (9)**
- Define target market and measure success (3)
- Increased lodging (1)

NOTE: Issue voting points are in parentheses and the top three issues for 2009 are in bold.