



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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October 21, 2008

Spartan Conference Room

Human Services Building

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 Vice Chairperson Norm Smith on Tuesday, October 21, 2008 at 10:04am in the Spartan Conference Room on the lower level of the Human Services Building, 3255 122nd Ave, Suite 102, Allegan, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT: Norm Smith Larry Johnson
 Jan Cushman Betsy Hill
 Al Weener

ABSENT: Stephanie Peterson Dianna Stampfler

Also Present: Kevin Ricco, Director
 Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Betsy Hill to approve the September 16, 2008 meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried unanimously.

TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT

The tourism contact report was distributed by Ronda for the month of September 2008 where there were a total of 110 contacts and 265 itemized inquiries. Ronda explained that the addition of the itemized inquiries represents the number of inquiries requested through the 110 contacts. In other words, one contact may request information on a multitude of items; i.e. lodging, area attractions, outdoor recreation, etc. Other additions to the contact report is the number of information packets that were mailed throughout the month and also a second page that has a pie chart that breaks down by category and percentage the itemized inquiries. Ronda stated she plans to make more changes to future contact reports and welcomed everyone's input of modifications they would find useful. Kevin suggested adding the count of in-state and out-of-state inquiries so we can monitor where the inquiries are coming from.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Upon review of the revenue status report, Kevin reported that the majority of the proceeds came from sales of the Heritage Trail C.D. and Guidebook. On the expenditure side of the report, he noted that funds are showing that are partly committed to the balance due on the banner ad on U.S. 131 Motorsports Park when a portion of it was paid last year and the balance of approximately \$1500 to be paid this year, although Stephanie would be able to confirm the exact amount. The Tourist Council has also agreed to be a part of the Pure Michigan Photo Contest in the fall of 2010 that can be paid over two years. The first payment will come out of the 2009 budget with the final payment coming out of 2010's budget. Kevin suggested that any funds that are left over in the budget should be put aside. He is of the opinion that he would like to see the guide pay for itself but if need be, the money would be available to make the guide better. He also does not want to get into the same situation as last year where there was an additional large sum of money put into the guide. Larry commented we should not show a large surplus that would make it appear as though we do not need the funds. Kevin replied that as long as we show an invoice in the month of December we would be okay, and we will have a better idea of what the guide will cost by the end of November.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public participants.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

'09 VISITORS GUIDE –CONTENT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, MAPS, ADVERTISING

Kevin reported the advertising is in pretty good shape according to Celeste and Deb. They are feeling the advertisements are solid, although there are still prospects deciding if they will place an ad. Norm added they are at \$13,000 in committed advertisements right now and we need \$16,000 to print the guide. They anticipate ending up around \$16,000 to \$17,000 in advertising. Kevin stated that removing M-LIVE made a difference, although people will still have access to it through our website and it will still work the same way. Norm commented that other communities who have their own guide hurt us by taking advertising revenue away from our guide. Kevin would like to consider doing another joint meeting to bring all the chambers together to discuss issues that are being dealt with inside the county. For the most part the county is so spread out geographically that, although we are in the same county, everyone feels they have to do their own guide and we end up with a hodge-podge of information. Norm stated that is the reason the contact report is so important...it tells us who wants the information and who we are promoting to.

Maps were the next topic as Kevin reported they are also in good shape for the guide. Valdis Kalnins, Direction of the Land Information Services Department, is busy working on the advertising and recreation maps that will be inserted into the center of the guide. Kevin asked Valdis to increase the font and change some of the colors and the recreation map will include snowmobile trails, Heritage Trail, boat launches, etc. Kevin stated that, although the maps will not be ready before the next meeting, as soon as they are finished he will email them to everyone in PDF format.

As Kevin has read through the content writing assignments the members have submitted, he has noticed there are overlaps in some areas. He suggested that, instead of everyone trying to edit their own article, one person should take charge of editing all of the articles so it is less confusing. Jan and Betsy volunteered to take on the project and edit the articles together. Norm reported that Celeste made comments to him that some of the publication does not sound professional and he wondered if we should have a professional edit them for us. Larry suggested we use some of the extra funds to hire someone. Since time is of the essence, Kevin asked the Council if anyone knows a writer who might be available to do the editing by the end of November for around \$500. Both Al and Norm said they know professional writers who they can contact. They will call on them to check their availability and what they would charge and will report back to Kevin with the information.

GEOCACHING UPDATE

In Dianna's absence, Kevin reports that she is attempting to get the gentleman to attend our November 10 meeting. As discussed during the September meeting, someone has been posting information about Heritage Trail on the Geocache website as part of their 'treasure hunt'.

MICHIGAN HISTORY AWARD

Kevin reported that he, along with Dianna, Jan, and Jan's husband, attended the Michigan History Award ceremony held in Grand Rapids on September 26. Jan won in the non-publication/individual category after being nominated by Dianna. Kevin said the event was very nice with good press coverage. Jan added the event was very impressive and she was honored to receive the award. Although she had been anxious about the possibility of speaking in front of the audience, she was prepared to do so if asked.

NEW BUSINESS

TOURIST COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Kevin asked if everyone received the resignation letters submitted by John Shagonaby and Ann Kilmartin. Since both of these members have resigned, Kevin informed the Council there are now three openings to fill and asked if anyone knew of someone who would be interested in making the commitment. If the Council does not fill the vacancies the Board will, and Kevin prefers we find our own replacements. He received an email from Angel who is still quite interested, although she has not received approval from her boss. Kevin went on to say it would be nice to get a representative from Wayland, Saugatuck or Fennville. Jan stated she will approach Lou Crane from Crane's Orchard in Fennville since she seemed very interested in the Tourist Council. Kevin stated it would be great for the Council to make a final decision on prospects at the December meeting so we would have names to turn into the Board for approval by the end of the year. With any luck, the new members could then start in January. Anyone who is interested should see Judy Nance in Administration at the County Services Building to fill out the application.

NEXT MEETING

Monday, November 10, 2008 @ 10:00 a.m. in the Spartan Conference Room of the Human Services Building. Kevin reminded the Council the meeting will be held on the second Monday in November instead of the usual third Tuesday. Also, the December meeting will be on Friday, December 19 at the Grill House and Kevin will call to make reservations for the meeting.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Larry Johnson

Larry reports he has a buyer for Camp Kidwell and also invited the Council to come out to the camp this weekend for the Halloween program where kids can go on the haunted trails or other activities. He also passed out brochures for the 6th Annual Camp Kidwell Festival of Trees and Dinner at the Lodge being held on December 4 - 7. Visit www.campkidwell.org for more information.

Kevin Ricco

Kevin reports they will be opening bids this afternoon for the New Richmond Bridge Project – Phase I. The engineers have distributed plans to 26 general contractors and today they will just announce who submitted bids. They will be tallied separately and then determine which ones are the best. From there, they will do due diligence to check them out with reference checks and follow-ups. Hopefully they should be awarding the contract by the end of November with construction to start in December.

Al Weener

Al mentioned he had heard someone is trying to get quads legalized to ride on Allegan County roads. Kevin stated that would be an issue for the Road Commission. Al is also involved in running the Haunted Stable House down the hill from the Felt Mansion in Saugatuck and said it is going really well. The cost to go through

the house is \$13/adults and \$6/kids and Al states they also have horse-drawn hayrides for \$5, cider and donuts, and is open Thursday-Saturday through October 31. For more information, visit www.feltmansion.org.

Betsy Hill

Betsy brought to attention the invitation on the table inviting everyone to come to the opening of the Chamber's new office on October 30th from 4-6 p.m. while they show off their new office. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at 4:30 p.m.

Jan Cushman

An exciting thing happened to Jan when she attended the Heath Township meeting last Monday night. She was formally added to the agenda and permitted to give a presentation to the Township. She informed them that a Heritage Trail sign is lacking at the trestle bridge near the Hamilton Township Park and to her surprise, the Township passed a vote to pay for the sign!

Norm Smith

If anyone gets the chance to take a color tour ride this fall, Norm recommends going up to Ludington to the Amber Elk Ranch. You can take a wagon ride tour throughout the 130 acre ranch where you can see huge bull elk up close. Norm says they have up to 200 elk and it is located between Ludington and Scottville. For more information, visit www.amberelkranch.com. Betsy added that you should stop for lunch at The Cottage Garden Café in Pentwater on your way up to the ranch where she says they have delicious food at reasonable prices.

Larry Johnson

Larry noted that the Council should acknowledge and accept the letters of resignation received from John Shagonaby and Ann Kilmartin. The Council agreed and Kevin stated he would send out letters to thank them for their service while on the Tourist Council.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Larry Johnson, to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 am. The motion carried by all present.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk