



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

3255 122nd Avenue, Suite 102

Allegan, MI 49010

Phone: (269) 686-9088 • Fax: (269) 673-0454

Parks Web: www.allegancounty.org/Parks

Tourism Web: www.visitallegancounty.com

E-mail: parks@allegancounty.org



November 10, 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 Chairperson Stephanie Peterson on Monday, November 10, 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
 Dianna Stampfler Stephanie Peterson

ABSENT: Al Weener

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

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Jan Cushman, seconded by Betsy Hill to approve the October 21, 2008 meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried unanimously.

TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT

Ronda distributed the October 2008 contact report and inquiry pie chart and reports she had 258 itemized inquiries and 105 individual inquiries for the month. She also mailed 28 tourist inquiry packets and reported the sales for Heritage Trail was 27 books and 6 C.D.s. which included the order Jan obtained from Heath Township. Ronda also reiterated the contact report is still a work in progress and invites everyone's input. New tallies that have been added and will be reported for the month of November include; where the inquiries are coming from, either inside or outside Allegan County, and also inside or outside Michigan State. Also, how did the contact hear about us? These tallies will be included when this information is available.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

As discussed during the October meeting, Kevin stated we still owe the balance for this year's U.S. 131 Motorsports Park banner ad. Stephanie interjected that we are already up to date for the amount owed for the current year but do owe for 2009 if we are to retain the banner ad for another year. She reports, although the total amount paid for 2008 was \$4000, the cost will be \$5000 for 2009; a portion of that amount to be paid in December with the balance due by the end of January 2009. Kevin reported that after \$500 is paid to Bruce Cutean, the freelance writer who was hired to edit the tourist guide articles, there is still approximately \$3000 remaining in the 2008 budget. Kevin asked the Council if they would like to keep the banner ad on U.S. 131 for another year. A motion was made by Betsy Hill, seconded by Norm Smith, to approve the banner ad on U.S. 131 Motorsports Park for the year 2009 with a portion to be paid in December 2008, and the balance paid in January 2009. The motion carried by all present.

Finishing the discussion for the financial statements, Stephanie asked Kevin if the tourist guide was inline to pay for itself for the coming year. Kevin stated yes, we have already sold more advertisements for the upcoming guide than was sold last year, and Celeste from Total Market Strategies still has some ad prospects pending. By the December meeting, Kevin should have the advertising totals to pass on to the Council.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

'09 VISITORS GUIDE – UPDATES, COVER

Kevin asked if everyone had the chance to see the revised guide cover. It was apparent everyone had seen the cover as they all began to express how much they liked the layout, colors and background. Dianna questioned having the word 'free' or 'complimentary' added and Kevin stated he had already passed on comments he has received to Celeste. Kevin asked if the Council was good with the cover, other than adding the comments, and everyone was in agreement to proceed with the latest revision.

Kevin continued updating the group on the guide, informing them he gave Bruce Cutean until November 15 to finish editing the articles. Bruce is working from the drafts submitted by the Council and is editing to give the same 'feel' as the original authors. For future guides, the writer will compose the articles in their entirety and his fee will also be raised from the current \$500 editing only fee. Kevin reminded everyone that after today, he will be gone until November 19, therefore he has instructed Bruce to send the articles to Ronda via email, and she will forward the articles on to the Tourist Council members for their input.

Kevin passed out the list of businesses that have purchased advertisements so far and Dianna expressed her disappointment with the lack of tourist spots from the area. She doesn't understand why these locations fail to see the value in advertising in the visitor's guide since the target audience is tourists. Norm commented how this is a bad time to get businesses to advertise due to the poor economy and then raised the issue of the competition from other area guides we have been up against. Kevin stated that when the economy is slow is precisely the time businesses should be advertising; and as far as our competition goes, this is only the third year for our guide and we have to prove ourselves to those who we want to buy advertisements. Next year, we should send a letter to businesses prior to starting so we can approach them before the competition. Larry gave the suggestion that maybe we could make an advertising trade offer to the Allegan County Fair next year. They have three publications that are handed out over the course of the year; one of the brochures goes out to ten counties with roughly 200,000 distributed. Larry proposed we do an even trade with them so that both sides would benefit. Norm stated we should conduct a post-publication meeting with Celeste to review her marketing strategies towards obtaining new advertisers and the reasons given from those who did not want to re-advertise; that way we will have a heads-up on what did or did not work going into the 2010 guide.

Chris Bessert from L.I.S. delivered to the Council the recreation map he has been revising for the guide. Although they are still a work in progress, the majority of the changes have been completed. Kevin passed out

the map to the members and everyone commented on how much they liked it, and how uncluttered it now appears. It includes ghost towns, vineyards, the Heritage Trail route, and snowmobile trails along with other recreation locations. Kevin stated there are purposely no streets on the map and there will still be a legend added. Norm proposed the idea that we should bind the maps into a tear-off tablet (with both guide maps on either side) that could be placed in various tourist locations; this would be great for us and the advertisers.

GEOCACHING UPDATE

Dianna reported that, before the October meeting, she was able to make contact with the individual who has been using the Heritage Trail logo and text without permission on his Geocache site. Dianna learned that he works for the sheriff's department at the jail, and after informing him of his improper use of the Heritage Trail copyrighted material, and ensuring him the Tourist Council is interested in working with him, he promised to email Kevin, which never happened. Dianna made several more attempts via email, including his jail email, asking him to contact Kevin and invite him to attend the November Tourist Council meeting. He finally responded to Dianna, explaining he has a busy schedule and is unable to attend a meeting held during the day. Kevin agreed to contact him in an attempt to pressure him into complying with the copyright law.

Kevin reported he has been contacted by a second person from Grand Rapids who has asked permission to place Earthcaches in Silver Creek Park. Kevin explained that Earthcaches work the same way as Geocaches. The only difference is Earthcaches teach the 'treasure hunters' about the environment and the area where the cache is found. Silver Creek presents the perfect opportunity for caches of this type since the park has so many unique features. Kevin granted permission and asked to be contacted once the Earthcaches are in place so we can link-up the two sites.

TOURIST COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Kevin asked the Council if they have made contact with anyone interested in filling one of the three open seats on the Tourist Council. Jan reported that Lou Crane from Crane Orchards has agreed to join and has the necessary application to send into Administration. Others have made contact, or have someone in mind to contact, and will direct interested parties to fill out the application. Kevin reiterated the importance of filling the two remaining vacancies ourselves and, although there is not a deadline, time is of the essence.

Stephanie questioned the Council in regards to the two recent members resigning. She asked if anyone was aware of their reasons and if there had been any issues. Jan responded that she had made contact via email and, while there had been scheduling conflicts, she believed there were other concerns between both the members who resigned and the Tourist Council, though she could not name specifics. Dianna remarked that she did not want the Council to get a bad reputation and if there had been a problem, it would be something we should work on correcting in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

FALL PHOTO CONTEST JUDGING/PRIZES

Kevin displayed all the photograph entries for the Council and, after taking a vote for the best one, it was determined that Marsha Behm from Allegan would win the prize in the adult division, and Angie Barber from Otsego would be the winner for the second season in a row for the youth division. Marsha's "Last Fall Sun" photograph depicted a beautiful reflection of fall trees and blue sky reflecting off of Swan Creek in Allegan. Angie's entry, "In the Danger Zone", pictured the sun and its' rays piercing through dark clouds off of the North Beach pier in South Haven. Although the winners have been notified, the prizes have not yet been announced due to availability. The Council would like to obtain them first before they are publicized and then the winners will receive them promptly.

HERITAGE TRAIL AUDIO CD'S

Kevin reported that, although we are not completely out, the Heritage Trail C.D.s are starting to get low with approximately 10 to 20 remaining at the office. Dianna made known that she has around 6 at home and Jan said she has about 10. They will bring the C.D.s with them to the next meeting.

2009 MEETING SCHEDULE

Kevin has put together the 2009 meeting schedule for the Tourist Council to approve, excluding the locations where the off-site meetings will be held. He stated all of the 2009 meetings are scheduled for the third Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. with the exception of: March 24, the fourth Tuesday; November 10, the second Tuesday; and December 18, the third Friday at 11:00 a.m. After many suggestions amongst the group, it was decided the off-site locations would be as follows:

- March 24: 747 Neighborhood Bistro, Plainwell. Kevin will make the arrangements.
- June 16: Camp Kidwell, Bloomingdale. Larry will make the arrangements.
- September 15: HawksHead Restaurant, South Haven. Al will make the arrangements.
- December 18: Saugatuck Brewing Co, Douglas. Dianna will make the arrangements.

A motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Larry Johnson to approve the Tourist Council 2009 meeting dates, times, and locations as presented. The motion carried by all present.

NEXT MEETING

Friday, December 19, 2008 @ 11:00 a.m. at the Grill House in Allegan.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Larry Johnson passed out fliers for the 6th Annual Camp Kidwell Festival of Trees and Dinner at the Lodge scheduled for December 4 through 7 in Bloomingdale. General admission is free to the public where there will be wreaths, trees, poinsettias and other holiday decorations for sale or auction. You will also find holiday treats, entertainment, pictures with Santa & Mrs. Claus, and meals that include a delicious prime rib dinner on Saturday, December 6. Go to www.campkidwell.org for more information.

Dianna Stampfler announced there will be a wine festival next week in Grand Rapids featuring Allegan County's winery, Fenn Valley. She also spoke of a photographic 'history trail' that has been put together that runs along U.S.31. The top 40 photos will be displayed at Saugatuck for the Arts on Wednesday. They want to turn it into a Route 66 of the West.

Stephanie Peterson stated there is a big event that has been scheduled for the second week of July, 2009 at U.S.131 Motorsports Park in Martin. It will be a nationally televised event featured on Speed TV's 'Pinks All Out Show', and promises to be a big hit. The race will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, July 11 with the winner taking home a \$10,000 cash prize. For more details, go to www.knollgasmotorsportspark.com.

Kevin Ricco reports that on December 2 at 8:30 a.m., the architect will be presenting the Silver Creek and Littlejohn Lake park master plans to the Parks Commission. Anyone who is interested in seeing the plan first hand is welcome to attend the meeting. He also updated the Council on the New Richmond Bridge project, informing them the bid was awarded to a local contractor. They hope to be done by the end of July with the first phase, although the contractor has until the end of September to complete it.

Ronda Foreman brought the framed duplicate of Jan Cushman's 2008 State History Award to show the Council. Michigan had not only sent one to Jan, but a copy was also received at the Tourist Council's office. Ronda proposed, not only to hang the award in the reception area, but to surround it with a framed Heritage Trail logo print along with eight to ten 5" x 7" photos featuring some of the trails locations. Ronda also requested permission to use the past 8" x 10" contest photos to display as a collage on the other two walls, and to purchase the necessary materials needed to complete the entire project. Excluding the 5" x 7" frames, she

provided an estimate of \$88 for the rest of the needed supplies. A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Betsy Hill to approve up to \$150 to be used for the cost of materials for the wall displays. The motion carried by all present.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Betsy Hill to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 am. The motion carried by all present.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk