



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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January 20, 2009

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 Director Kevin Ricco on Tuesday, January 20, 2009 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 R.J. Peterson
 Jan Cushman Betsy Hill
 Dianna Stampfler Al Weener
 Terry Bonnell

ABSENT: Larry Johnson Luetta Crane

UNEXCUSED ABSENT: Stephanie Peterson

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

ELECTION OF 2009 OFFICERS – CHAIR, VICE CHAIR

A motion was made by Betsy Hill, seconded by Al Weener to nominate Norm Smith as the Chairperson of the Allegan County Tourist Council for 2009. The motion carried by all present. A motion was made by Jan Cushman, seconded by Betsy Hill to close the nomination and unanimously vote for Norm Smith as the Chairperson. The motion carried by all present. Norm Smith will serve as the Chairperson of the Allegan County Tourist Council for 2009.

A motion was made by Jan Cushman, seconded by Al Weener to nominate Stephanie Peterson as the Vice Chairperson of the Allegan County Tourist Council for 2009. The motion carried by all present. A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Betsy Hill to close the nomination and unanimously vote for Stephanie Peterson as the Vice Chairperson. The motion passed by all present. Stephanie Peterson will serve as the Vice Chairperson of the Allegan County Tourist Council for 2009.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Dianna Stampfler to approve the November 10, 2008 meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried unanimously.

TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT - RONDA

Ronda stated that since the December meeting was canceled, the November contact report has been included in this month's agenda handout. Reporting on the December contacts, Ronda said there were 27 inquiries concerning 117 separate items; the items showing the highest percentage of inquiries were 23% for food and restaurants in the area and 20% for lodging. Of the 27 inquiries, six were out of state and five were from another county within the state. A total of 11 tourist packets were mailed and Heritage Trail sales included six books and one C.D. Although December was a slow month, contacts were up over last year's total of 19. Ronda reports the new year is off to a good start with 23 tourist packets already mailed as of today, and countless people making pavilion and campsite reservations for the upcoming summer.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated he had hoped Stephanie would be in attendance today; he has not received the invoices for the U.S. 131 Motorsports Park banner ad he had been expecting since November. At the November 10, 2008 meeting, the Tourist Council approved the billboard, agreeing to pay half of the \$5000 expenditure by the end of December 2008, with the balance due the end of January 2009. This \$5000 represents the balance due for the billboard banner at US-131 that was part of a two-year agreement (2008 and 2009). Invoices for 2008 must be entered into the system by the end of this week so it is imperative to receive the invoice by today if possible. Dianna, who had her laptop with her, sent Stephanie an email requesting the invoices. Kevin continued by stating, other than the missing invoices, there are no surprises in the 2008 year end report; the new 2009 report was run just to give everyone an idea of what the budget looks like and he reminded members this year's budget was reduced from 2008.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

'09 VISITORS GUIDE – UPDATE

Reporting on the 2009 Allegan County Visitor's Guide just released on January 5, 2009, Kevin stated the online version is also up and running on the Tourist Council's website and has been improved over last year; all of the ads have links right to the advertisers website. Norm asked about bringing in Celeste Statler from Market Strategies to discuss ideas, problems and solutions to help with next year's guide advertisers. Kevin replied he had already been in touch with Celeste and was planning to meet with her for lunch to share some ideas of what worked or didn't work when putting this year's guide together. After their meeting, Kevin will pass the information discussed on to the Tourist Council and hear their input and suggestions. Norm questioned Kevin how the distribution of the guide is going. Kevin stated 20,000 copies were shipped directly from Roger's Printing to the brochure distributor, Michigan Brochure Service; close to 10,000 copies to M-Dot; and another 5,000-6,000 copies to WMTA for distribution at their trade shows. The remaining copies were shipped here and Ronda has been busy distributing them locally to Visitor's Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Realtors, and all the advertisers who placed ads in the guide. Overall, the Council is very pleased with how the guide and maps came out and Norm commented on how nice the winning photos from the contest look. Dianna asked if a press release had been submitted for the guide. Kevin stated that we haven't but it would be possible; other than the press release after the first guide, he could not remember if it had been done the following years.

GEOCACHING UPDATE

Kevin gave a brief explanation of geocaching.com to the new members and informed them of John Sexton, the gentleman who has caches at almost all of the 28 Heritage Trail sites; most recently he was granted permission to use the H.T. logo and materials on his geocache webpage. Kevin was able to meet John and has invited him

to attend either the February or March meeting to discuss the possibility of working with him to promote Heritage Trail. Kevin commented this is a great way to raise people's awareness and get them to the trail.

NEW BUSINESS

MICHIGAN BROCHURE SERVICE AGREEMENT

Kevin informed the Tourist Council that since the December meeting was canceled, he made the decision to renew the service agreement with Michigan Brochure Service for the third year. For a monthly fee of \$100, the service distributes our Allegan County Visitor's Guide at 135 locations throughout Michigan. Kevin stated the service is well worth the money; they go out weekly and ensure the racks are always full.

OAKLAND PRESS ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

Information regarding an Oakland Press advertising opportunity received by Kevin is included with the agenda packets. Although we have advertised in Oakland Press before, Kevin's opinion is we didn't get much bang for the buck. They have revised their advertising options and terms of agreement, giving the advertiser more flexibility. As far as Kevin is concerned, he has no strong feelings either way about the prospect. After discussing the pros and cons, the Council agreed funds would be used more wisely by pursuing other alternatives.

Dianna suggested looking into various internet options where we might be better suited including: FaceBook, MySpace, Twitter and YouTube. Kevin agreed stating, while we would have to be careful of how it is set up, the government has already been taking advantage of these resources and the Internet makes it easier to interact with the public. In order for the Tourist Council to learn more about these options and help decide which ones would be the most advantageous, Dianna recommended inviting a student intern from Grand Valley to come to a meeting. Not only could an intern inform the group which sites are the most valuable to suit our needs, he or she could also help us set-up different networks and once established, there would be ongoing upkeep and maintenance for the site. Students are always looking for opportunities to intern since it is a prerequisite to earning their degree. Currently, 300 hours are required to receive credit for an internship. With everyone agreeing this is worth further investigation, Dianna will get more information and possibly have a student attend the meeting in February.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 17, 2009 @ 10:00am in the Spartan Conference Room

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Al Weener inquired where the off-site meeting locations are for 2009 since he was not in attendance at the November meeting when the locations were discussed and approved. After Dianna read where the meetings would be held, R.J. interjected that he and Al could sponsor a meeting at Tower Marine in Saugatuck sometime this summer. Although the June meeting is already set for Camp Kidwell, Kevin said it was up to the discretion of the Tourist Council where the meetings are held. A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Dianna Stampfler to hold the July 21, 2009 meeting at 10:00am at Tower Marine in Saugatuck. The motion carried by all present. The 2009 meeting schedule will be amended and posted.

Jan Cushman has been working with two ladies from Hamilton and Wayland respectively, to have the Heritage Trail interpretive signs made that are missing from their areas. The signs will cost more than they have in the past, but not by much. Jan also informed the group she would not be in attendance for the February or March meetings.

Betsy Hill informed the group she would not be in attendance for the February meeting. She also stated she ran into John Shagonaby who said he would like to come to a meeting to give an update on the tribal casino project.

Terry Bonnell, the new Tourist Council member who represents the Allegan County Fair, stated he is happy to be here and looking forward to working with the group.

Al Weener reports the Allegan chapter of Sturgeon for Tomorrow has a grant application in and we'll know by February. It is a small grant, but it is a start and we're real excited about it.

R.J. Peterson, the new Tourist Council member representing the Saugatuck/Douglas area and Tower Marine, gave a brief update stating there is a lot happening in Saugatuck/Douglas. The area has been affected by the recession and a lot of money is being wasted in Saugatuck and Douglas; everyone is going in opposite directions trying to draw people to the area instead of working together. R.J. stated it is a shame that an area with such tremendous potential has missed one opportunity after another. He is heavily involved in trying to have the two areas consolidate their efforts. The ongoing problem regarding the Dennison property is completely messed up; Douglas spent a half million dollars last year fighting developers and now they might lose the harbor. We have been trying to form a Harbor Authority which will involve the County at some point. M.S.U is going to participate in making the Saugatuck/Douglas area a test-case for a Harbor Authority, similar to Illinois and Wisconsin, which would preserve the public access. The idea is to tie a big section of the Kalamazoo River to Lake Michigan. At this time privately owned marinas are not eligible for the money that people pay to put gasoline in their boats or the registration. As an Authority, a lot of income opens up to allow the marinas to tap into resources. R.J. closed by saying the real challenge when trying to draw more people to the area is using the available funds efficiently and effectively.

Norm Smith thanked everyone for electing him as the Tourist Council Chairperson for 2009.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Betsy Hill to adjourn the meeting at 11:15am. The motion carried by all present.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk