



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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February 17, 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 Chairman Norm Smith on Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at 10:03am 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
 Dianna Stampfler Al Weener
 Terry Bonnell Luetta Crane
 Stephanie Peterson

ABSENT: Jan Cushman Betsy Hill
 Larry Johnson

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

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MINUTES

A motion was made by R.J. Peterson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the January 20, 2009 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT – RONDA

The January 2009 contact report and inquiry pie chart were included in the agenda packets. Ronda reports she had 485 itemized inquiries and 166 individual inquiries for the month, which was up over last years total inquiries of 126. Of the 166 individual inquiries she received, 16 were from inside Allegan County, 19 were from Michigan but outside the County, 35 were from out-of-state, and 95 were from unknown locations; most presumed to be calls from Allegan County. She also mailed 62 tourist inquiry packets and reported the sales for Heritage Trail was 2 books and 3 CDs.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated he had nothing to report except an error for an advertising expenditure of \$3000 he thought was solely applied towards the 2008/2009 U.S. 131 Motorsports Park banner ad invoice. Following the meeting, Kevin researched the discrepancy and found there was no error; although \$2500 was applied towards the \$5000 banner ad expenditure, another \$500 had been paid for an ad the Tourist Council had placed with West Michigan Tourist in their Lake Michigan Lighthouse Map brochure.

R.J. asked if the Tourist Council is involved with the casino in Wayland and if the County will receive any revenue from them. Kevin stated that the Council has not been involved up to this point but once the casino is open, we will certainly do more with them. Financially, the tribe has been supportive of the Tourist Council and has contributed in small ways, including advertising in the past.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

GEOCACHING UPDATE – JOHN SEXTON

Kevin introduced John Sexton to the Council, who is in attendance to discuss geocaches he has placed at all 28 Heritage Trail stops. Giving a brief background on how he became involved with geocaching, John stated he began in April of 2007 as a way to get exercise and quickly became enthralled by the activity. This is a worldwide ‘scavenger hunt’ where participants can go online at www.geocaching.com and, once they have signed up for a free membership, can obtain clues to find hidden caches in various locations using a handheld GPS. The geocache, which is usually a weather-proof container, may be buried or hidden at the site and once found, contains a notebook for the ‘finder’ to date and sign; on occasion there may also be a trinket one can take. John soon began placing his own caches for others to locate, posting the global positioning information on the website. At that time, he found the Heritage Trail guidebook published by the Allegan County Tourist Council. After researching the historical driving tour, John thought it would be a great idea to place caches at each of the sites. As the caches were placed, he began to include both the logo and text from the Heritage Trail book on his geocache website, obtaining permission to use the copy-righted material from the Tourist Council in late 2008.

The Tourist Council also invited John to attend today’s meeting to discuss ways to cross promote both activities. John and the Tourist Council are excited by the prospect and are in consensus that this is a great way to draw more people into the County. Kevin reiterated the Tourist Council has both the guidebook and CD for the Heritage Trail available for purchase and asked John if there was a spot on his geocache site where a link to our website could be placed. Dianna added that maybe a sticker or note could be put on the guidebook and CD that refer folks to John’s geocache site. She also had an idea to hold an event where everyone is invited to participate in locating the cache’s along the Heritage Trail sites. Everyone agreed this was an excellent suggestion that should be pursued. Kevin commented that people usually buy GPS’s for other reasons and soon discover it can be used to geocache too; holding an event would be a way to get more people involved in both the Heritage Trail and geocaching. The possibilities are endless; we could eventually hold more geocache events in other parks or areas within the County. For the time being, Dianna will work on a press release while John updates his site with the Heritage Trail link and searches for more information on holding geocache events; he will get back with Kevin sometime in March.

NEW BUSINESS

SOCIAL NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES/MARKETING STRATEGY

Following up from last month’s meeting where marketing strategies using various social networking websites were discussed, Dianna stated she doesn’t have much to add at this time. Basically, using MySpace, Twitter, and/or Facebook as marketing tools are great ways to reach out to countless people at no cost to the County. In Kevin’s opinion, Facebook would be the best site to use; they offer group accounts that are set up differently

from the individual accounts. There is a lot of business being done this way including local units of government who have set up accounts as another way to inform the community. Dianna reported that every time the site gets updated, an email automatically goes out to the friends and fans of the site. She will invite one or two key people to attend the April 21st meeting to provide the Council with more information.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 24, 2009 @ 10:00am at 747 Neighborhood Bistro

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Stephanie Peterson happily announced she is expecting her second child in late August and was congratulated by all. She also reported that the nationally televised show 'Pinks All Out', scheduled on July 10th and 11th at U.S.131 Motorsports Park, is close to being sold out.

Terry Bonnell commented that geocaching is a great idea and will be a win all around.

Al Weener reported there is an informational meeting at the New Richmond House on April 25th from 2-5pm for the Sturgeon for Tomorrow group; details to follow.

Dianna Stampfler reminded the Council she will not be in attendance for the March meeting. She will be attending the State Tourism Conference in Detroit and will bring back a report. The focus of the conference; how to survive hard economic times.

R.J. Peterson is with Al in working together to support and participate in developments that will bring people to Allegan County. According to R.J., Saugatuck hasn't done anything new in ten years; often times it is not about the money that prevents things from getting done...it's about trying to get everyone on the same page.

Kevin Ricco informed the Council he is meeting with Celeste Statler from Total Market Strategies tomorrow for lunch; they will be discussing ideas for the 2010 Visitor's Guide.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Stephanie Peterson, seconded by R.J. Peterson to adjourn the meeting at 11:27am. The motion carried by all present.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk