



## Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

3255 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Suite 102

Allegan, MI 49010

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

Parks Web: [www.allegancounty.org/Parks](http://www.allegancounty.org/Parks)

Tourism Web: [www.visitallegancounty.com](http://www.visitallegancounty.com)

E-mail: [parks@allegancounty.org](mailto:parks@allegancounty.org)



**March 24, 2009**

747 Neighborhood Bistro

663 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Plainwell

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, March 24, 2009 at 10:05am at the 747 Neighborhood Bistro in Plainwell, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT:	Norm Smith	R.J. Peterson
	Larry Johnson	Al Weener
	Terry Bonnell	Luetta Crane
	Stephanie Peterson	Betsy Hill

ABSENT:	Jan Cushman	Dianna Stampfler
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Also Present:	Kevin Ricco, Director
	Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk

#### ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

R.J. Peterson requested an addition to the agenda under NEW BUSINESS, 9a. New Richmond Fish Hatchery.

#### APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES

A motion was made by Stephanie Peterson, seconded by R.J. Peterson to approve the February 17, 2009 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

#### TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT – RONDA

The February 2009 contact report and inquiry pie chart were included in the agenda packets. Ronda reported she had 575 itemized inquiries and 149 individual inquiries for the month, which was down over last years total inquiries of 200. Of the 149 individual inquiries she received, 6 were from inside Allegan County, 22 were from Michigan but outside the County, 32 were from out-of-state, and 89 were from unknown locations; most presumed to be calls from Allegan County. She also mailed 60 tourist inquiry packets and reported only one Heritage Trail book was sold.

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated he had nothing new to report this month in regards to the financial statements.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### NEW BUSINESS

#### NEW RICHMOND FISH HATCHERY – R.J.

R.J. informed the group of a proposal to reestablish a connection between Saugatuck and New Richmond along the Kalamazoo River. When construction began on the New Richmond Bridge, the idea was to re-establish the waterfront connection between New Richmond and Saugatuck, which is already being heavily used by paddlers. By historically rebuilding the waterfront with businesses and restaurants, it could bring a lot of folks to the area. Since New Richmond is the first place sturgeon can naturally spawn, building a fish rearing facility and chemically imprinting the area would ensure their return. R.J. stated this will be part of the harbor fundraising for the Saugatuck Harbor and they have already received some donations designated for the rearing facility. Al interjected the maintenance and ability to fund it on a long term basis is more of a challenge than building it; although the first grant applied for was denied more applications are being submitted for grants. Kevin recommended applying to Great Lakes Fisheries Trust who he believes would be a great source for funds since they are all about education and restoring fisheries and waterways. He also suggested applying to the Perrigo Foundation, another organization who has donated to Allegan County Parks in the past. Al informed the Council of a joint meeting that will be held with the Tribe, the DNR, Sea Grant, and any other interested parties around the 15th of April. Once a location and more information is obtained, he will email everyone. There is also an informational meeting from 2 – 5 pm on April 25th at the New Richmond House and everyone is invited to attend.

#### 2010 VISITORS GUIDE DISCUSSION

Kevin recently met with Celeste Statler and the advertising manager from Total Market Strategies to talk about plans for the 2010 Visitors Guide. Kevin handed out a summary of some suggestions that were discussed as follows:

- Name change to: “INSIDE ALLEGAN COUNTY, *The Official Guide to Allegan County*”. Kevin explained that removing the word ‘Visitors’ from the name would give a broader perception of the guide and would ultimately reach more people than just ‘visitors’ to the area.
- Enhance the editorial content of the guide to include the top 10 requests received from the Web site. Articles about the area that are important to the reader may also be included, such as education or health.
- Hire a freelancer to write and edit the guide’s content.
- The Gazette will post BLOG as a “news section” for the publication on Mlive where all the editorial content is present. Advertisers can post their ad at a minimal cost.

Celeste also researched the cost to print the guide in an effort to find a solution to avoid an increase in the advertising rates for the 2010 guide. After contacting other printers she proposed the following modifications:

- Continue to have the cover printed on 60# Gloss Text No. 3 paper, so the quality of the guide would appear and feel the same.
- The inside pages of the guide would be changed from the 60# Gloss Text No. 3 paper to 50# Uncoated Offset 84 Brite paper, significantly reducing the cost of printing.
- Alterations to the map in the center of the guide, changing it to a six page single gate fold out map using a stock of paper that is complimentary to the rest of the publication but not overly expensive; samples are still pending from the printer.

Kevin stated that Celeste will be in attendance at the April meeting in hopes that the Council has had a chance to review the suggestions and are ready to make recommendations for the 2010 guide. As far as changing the

name, the Tourist Council commented they like the idea of “INSIDE ALLEGAN COUNTY, *The Official Guide to Allegan County*” and agreed with the reasons to change it. Regarding the content, Kevin stated that we should start thinking in terms of what people are asking for. Also, some advertisers decide whether to place an ad based on the subjects of the articles, therefore the sooner that decision is made, the better.

A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Larry Johnson to approve the name “INSIDE ALLEGAN COUNTY, *The Official Guide to Allegan County*” for the 2010 guide. The motion carried by everyone present.

A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the paper change for the inside pages only of the 2010 guide to 50# Uncoated Offset 84 Brite (not to include the center map). The motion carried by everyone present.

Ronda was asked to put together a list of the top 20 inquiries compiled in 2008 to present at the April meeting, at which time the content of the articles can be decided upon.

### **KALAMAZOO RIVER HERITAGE WATER TRAIL**

As previously mentioned, Kevin reported to the Tourist Council he has been involved with a group for the last few years that is made up of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo County, Allegan County, Jackson County, and Calhoun County, who are looking to turn the Kalamazoo River Watershed into a state designated heritage water trail. There is a state program that designates heritage water trails and includes a list of criteria necessary to obtain the state designation. Dr. Dave Lemberg from Western Michigan University has been designated as the State Coordinator of the Heritage Water Trail Program, and he and his group are the ones who have established the criteria to get the designation which include:

- Detailed mapping of the river, including take-out points and mileage between points.
- Locate sites/buildings along the waterway with historical significance.
- Designate the historical sites with signs (2'X3' sign with 50'-75' distance visibility range).
- Complement the signs with a guide book that gives more details about the various sites.

Up to now the primary focus has been on the main stream, from its head waters in Jackson County to where it empties in Saugatuck/Douglas. With over 100 sites identified, the text for the guidebook, photos for the sites, detailed river maps, and the design of the signs, have all been completed. Kevin explained the way this is funded is by selling site sponsorships, which is a great advertising opportunity. Each site has a sign posted on the river stating what the site represents and the organization that is sponsoring the site, along with their contact information. In the guidebook, there will also be a listing of all the sponsors and their contact information. The cost is \$500 for a three year sponsorship and so far, enough have been sold to complete all of the river signs in Kalamazoo and Allegan Counties. Although there is not enough funds to print the guidebooks at this time, the group will post a PDF version online for anyone who would like to see or print it. Kevin asked the Tourist Council if there is any interest in being a site sponsor, stating most of the sites in Allegan County are still available although the Parks Commission will most likely sponsor the New Richmond Bridge site. Everyone present agreed this is a tremendous opportunity to take advantage of for both advertisement and tourism purposes. Kevin stated he will email everyone a list of available sites to consider and anyone who would like more information on heritage water trails or to see the detailed river maps can go to [www.wmich.edu/glcms/watertrails/](http://www.wmich.edu/glcms/watertrails/).

A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Larry Johnson to commit to sponsoring a site along the Kalamazoo River Heritage Water Trail for \$500 for three years, with the site to be determined at the April 21, 2009 Tourist Council meeting. The motion carried by everyone present.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, April 21, 2009 @ 10:00am in the Spartan Conference Room.

## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

**Kevin Ricco** reported that everyone will be receiving an invitation in the next couple of weeks to attend an Economic Development Workshop scheduled for Tuesday, April 21st from 2 – 8:30pm, with dinner at the Silo in Allegan from 5 – 6pm. As many already know, for the past year and a half Kevin has been the Interim Economic Development Coordinator for the County, and one of his tasks has been to develop an Economic Development Plan for what the County needs to do at the county government level to help facilitate economic development. Last year they had a small project team working on some concepts and the Board set aside some capital funds and ended up hiring a professional consultant who has recently begun working with the team to complete the plan. Essentially, the plan is to bring together all of the stakeholders in the county and ask them what do they need from the County to facilitate economic growth. The workshop, which is being partnered with AAESA (Allegan Area Educational Service Agency), will be in two parts. The first part will be presented by AAESA from 2 – 5pm, and they will talk about the 21st century workforce. After dinner from 6 – 8:30pm, will be the economic development portion where we will be getting the stakeholders' input regarding countywide economic development; what should we be doing as a County entity to help get new business in and retain the business we have, and what do the stakeholders need to make progress from an economic development standpoint.

Kevin also reported to the Council that the construction on the New Richmond boat ramp has almost been completed. As soon as the water levels go down, work will begin on the trails.

**Larry Johnson** passed out Camp Kidwell pamphlets and flyers for the following events:

- 2009 4-H Camp Kidwell registration information for the upcoming season. (For more information visit [www.campkidwell.org](http://www.campkidwell.org) or call 269-521-3559.)
- 2nd Annual 4-H Auction, doors open at 5:00pm on April 25th at the Allegan Middle School, 3300 West 115th Avenue. (For more information call MSU Extension at 269-673-0370.)
- 2009 Camp Kidwell 4-Person Scramble and Silent Auction, shotgun start at 9:00am on May 16th at the Cheshire Hills Golf Course. (For more information visit [www.campkidwell.org](http://www.campkidwell.org) or call 269-673-2882 or 269-521-3490.)
- Host Families needed for the 4-H Japanese Exchange Program, July 24th – August 22, 2009. (For more information call Larry Johnson at 616-396-1426 or email [johns153@msu.edu](mailto:johns153@msu.edu).)

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Betsy Hill to adjourn the meeting at 11:26am. The motion carried by all present.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk