



## Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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**June 16, 2009**

Camp Kidwell

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, June 16, 2009 at 10:04am at Camp Kidwell, Bloomington, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT:	Norm Smith	R.J. Peterson
	Dianna Stampfler	Al Weener
	Terry Bonnell	Larry Johnson
	Stephanie Peterson	Betsy Hill
	Jan Cushman	

ABSENT: Luetta Crane

Also Present: Kevin Ricco, Director  
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk  
K.J. Kelly, 4-H Camp Kidwell Director

#### ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Larry would like to add to the agenda a short informational presentation on 4-H Camp Kidwell and asked permission to proceed with the discussion at this time. With the Tourist Council's approval, Larry stated this year marks Camp Kidwell's 60th Anniversary. It began in 1949 when the first eight acres were purchased; in fact this was the last effort after WWII to start a 4-H camp in Michigan and remains one of the few that still exist today. To give an overview of the programs offered at the camp, Larry introduced the Camp Director, K.J. Kelly. He stated Camp Kidwell offers many day or resident summer programs to choose from for kids between the ages of 4 to 16 that include activities such as horseback riding, swimming, canoeing, archery, ropes course, and arts & crafts to name a few. The cost is \$300 per child for the Sunday through Friday resident programs and covers all of their expenses, excluding souvenirs and purchases from the camp store. Although most of the kids who attend camp come from local areas, some do come from across Michigan or out-of-state. They also have programming through area schools, hold community events, and the facilities can be rented out for family reunions, youth group programs, etc.; generally there is something going on every weekend May through December. K.J. stated the Camp is very flexible and can make things happen as long as the event falls within the rules and guidelines. Although they receive some money from the State, Federal, or an occasional scholarship, most of Camp Kidwell's funding come from annual fundraisers that include a golf outing in May, Halloween Fest in October, and the Festival of Trees and Dinner at the Lodge held the first part of December. Last year the Festival of Trees and Dinner at the Lodge fundraiser brought in over \$25,000 in just four days. Larry added about ten years ago an opportunity arose for the non-profit camp to purchase an additional 140

surrounding acres and they started a campaign to raise money to buy the property. They were able to raise one and a half million dollars towards a portion of the property and then financed the rest. Today approximately half a million dollars is still owed; Larry explained the mortgage is why the camp has so many fundraisers.

#### **APPROVAL OF MAY MINUTES**

A motion was made by R.J. Peterson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the May 19, 2009 minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

#### **TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT – RONDA**

Reporting on the May contacts, Ronda said there were 321 inquiries concerning 895 separate items; the items showing the highest percentage of inquiries were 22% for camping/parks and 21% for lodging. There were no Heritage Trail sales to report in May, however 91 tourist packets were mailed. Ronda pointed out that of the 91 mailed packets, 49 were out of state or country, and 40 were from another county within the state with only two requests coming from within Allegan County. Contacts were up over last month's total of 240, and last year's total of 165. Ronda reports the Heritage Trail book sales for June are off to a good start with eight books sold as of today and speculates the recent news articles are generating interest.

#### **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Kevin stated there is not much to report; basically there were no changes from last month's financial statements. Dianna stated the Marketing Subcommittee has questions regarding what is paid from the various accounts and how much is available for them to work with for marketing purposes. Kevin stated the line items can be interchanged as needed by the Tourist Council; currently most of the funds under the advertising line item are designated for the US-131 billboard along with the ads for WMTA's Carefree Travel Guide and Lighthouse Map, and the Heritage Trail Water Trail sign. The payment of \$100 per month for the distribution of the Visitor's Guide comes out of the miscellaneous line item. The only funds that cannot be touched are the salaries, FICA, and mileage. He also informed the Council renewal memberships are paid in the summer and as far as the 2010 budget, the County is in the process of defining the new budget that is not due until this fall. A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the financial statements as presented. The motion carried by everyone present.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

##### **KALAMAZOO RIVER HERITAGE WATER TRAIL/KANOE THE KAZOO REPORT**

Reporting on the Kanoe the Kazoo held on Saturday, May 30, 2009, Kevin stated it was a great day and turnout. There were over 50 canoes or kayaks participating; most were not repeats but were new to the event and the bus that transported them was filled over capacity so they had to resort to using an additional van. Coinciding with the Kanoe the Kazoo event was a ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the first segment of the Kalamazoo River Heritage Water Trail, which received a lot of media coverage. There were articles in the Holland Sentinel and Allegan County News, and FOX televised a report a week before the event. Kevin also reported the rearing facility for the sturgeon at New Richmond Bridge Park will probably not happen at this point. He believes the DNR has made their decision, although the possibility for an educational facility to house a juvenile sturgeon still remains.

##### **MARKETING SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

Dianna reported the Marketing Subcommittee has met and advocates bringing in student interns to help with a couple of marketing ventures. The first endeavor is to have an intern assist with our marketing plan for next year by researching all the current trends in the surrounding area; where is everyone else buying ads and how can we coordinate efforts to share larger ads. He or she could develop a newsletter, look at YouTube options, and pursue WMTA leads including the surrounding counties. The second intern's assignment is to host the Tourism Expo event during next year's spring break; families could come and learn about the attractions

available within the County. Dianna stated the area business's who wish to participate in the event would pay a small price to set up a booth; they would offer not only information promoting their attraction but would offer something educational and fun for the kids to do at the Expo. The intern would be responsible to organize and execute the event at the Tourist Council's direction. Dianna requested the Tourist Council's support for the Subcommittee to begin the necessary steps to acquire interns; she stated they would be unpaid college students working towards credit where an internship, that is usually around 300 hours, is a requirement towards their degree. Norm commented that to have someone spend time researching would be well worth it and everyone agreed to support the Subcommittee to obtain interns. The Council discussed different options of where the Expo might be held, including the fairgrounds or The Silo, but the idea of having it at one of the areas high schools piqued everyone's interest. They also agreed to hold a two or three day event, depending on the location and number of vendors. Kevin informed the group that he will have to submit the request for interns before the Board of Commissioners for discussion and once again for approval; the intentions for the interns must be spelled in detail before the BOC will discuss it. He also said the soonest he could get it before the BOC would probably not be until August. Dianna stated August would not be feasible as there is a lot of preparation and unknowns, and it would still have to be approved by the school. She was discouraged by the news, but Kevin stated he believes the Council should still proceed as planned and see if it can be done by August; the marketing benefits an intern could provide is not for just one year but for years to come. Dianna said she would work on the proposal and see how fast she can get everything done.

#### **WMTA LIGHTHOUSE MAP**

Continuing the WMTA Lighthouse Map advertising discussion from last month; Dianna stated the Marketing Subcommittee recommends increasing the ad size to a 1/3 of a page panel ad for \$850 instead of the 1/6 of a page panel ad for \$500 that was placed in this year's map. At this point, the first right of refusal was due yesterday and Dianna is unsure if the size can be increased, but believes the ad would be worth the money if accepted. She reported there is a long list of advertisers who are waiting to purchase ad space in the map. A motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Al Weener to place a 1/3 of a page panel ad for \$850 in the 2010 WMTA Lighthouse Circle Tour Map. The motion carried by everyone present. Dianna will notify WMTA today.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **HERITAGE TRAIL SERIES IN PENASEE GLOBE**

Charlotte White, a writer for the periodical The Penasee Globe, recently contacted Kevin. She had heard about the Heritage Trail driving tour and the geocaches hidden at most of the stops. Now she is writing a weekly series on the Trail where she will visit and then write about one or more of the twenty-eight sites throughout the summer. Kevin stated the first of the series was published in the last week's issue and he thought it was a great article. Dianna stated she would link up Ms. White's articles on Facebook to reach more folks. Norm reported there was also a press release regarding the Heritage Trail in Senior Times, and passed around a few copies for the Council to view.

##### **PARKS MASTER PLAN PUBLIC MEETING**

Kevin informed the Council of a Parks Master Plan public meeting to be held on July 7, 2009 at 6pm in the Zimmerman Room in the Human Services building. He explained that every five years the County has to write a new Parks master plan that must be on file with the State to ensure they qualify to apply for state grant funding. The current version is set to expire in February of 2010. One requirement in preparing the new master plan is to hold a public workshop; Kevin will also run a press release regarding the public meeting.

##### **SPRING PHOTO CONTEST**

There were three photo entries received for the Spring 2009 Photo Contest adult division; none were submitted for the youth division. For the third consecutive contest, Marsha Behm of Allegan, was named the winner for her fantastic photo submission "Allegan Springtime Surprise" which depicts a morel mushroom found in her own backyard. After some discussion amongst the Council, it was decided the prize to be awarded to Marsha will be two gift certificates towards dune rides at Saugatuck Dune Rides, Inc., Saugatuck, MI.

**NEXT MEETING – JULY 21<sup>TH</sup> AT 10AM AT TOWER MARINE  
LUNCH AT THE RED DOCK BAR & GRILL**

R.J. recommends everyone meet in the Tower Marine parking lot off Blue Star Highway and the Kalamazoo River.

**ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION**

**Al Weener** reported attending a carp derby and found it to be interesting. He also announced a fund raiser for the Kalamazoo Sturgeon from 7 - 11pm on July 22nd at Saugatuck Brewing Company, 2948 Blue Star Hwy in Douglas. Please call 269-227-3574 for more information.

**R.J. Peterson** stated that in his opinion, tourism happens when an area has attractions that draw people from 100-150 miles away. He believes the main challenge for Allegan County as a whole is to get more attractions and believes there are many opportunities to do so. He stated no money is being used towards tourism; he knows of many places that could be tourist attractions if developed. R.J. then challenged the Council to rethink what tourism is and come up with attractions that should be promoted within the County.

**Stephanie Peterson** reminded everyone of the huge nationally televised event at US-131 Motorsports Park that is coming up on July 10-11; PINKS All-Out. She stated racers from all over the country will participate and they are expecting 30,000-40,000 people to attend; by the end of last February all of the surrounding hotels were booked for the two day event.

**Kevin Ricco** had two things to mention; the BOC is currently working on the 2010 budget and it looks as if it will be the toughest since he has been employed with the County. He also wanted to inform the Council of a Parks tour that is scheduled for October 6, 2009 from 8:30am – 2pm. New Richmond Bridge Park should be completed and other parks will be visited as time allows. The Parks Commission is organizing the tour and the Tourist Council and Board of Commissioners are all invited.

**Betsy Hill** reminded everyone of the Plainwell Island City Festival scheduled for the last weekend in July. For more details visit [www.plainwellchamber.org](http://www.plainwellchamber.org).

**Terry Bonnell** had a couple of fundraisers for the fair he's excited about; July 11<sup>th</sup> there is a concert and dance and on July 31<sup>st</sup> a cabaret is scheduled at the fairground. The State pulled all the funding for county fairs so organizers are trying to raise money towards this year's fair in September. Terry also loves the marketing ideas Dianna spoke about.

**Larry Johnson** reminded everyone of the flyers on the table for Camp Kidwell and stated he would be happy to answer questions and will show anyone around the camp who might be interested.

**Norm Smith** asked if Lue is expected to still be recovering from her surgery during next month's meeting; if so, we should get a get-well card to sign and send to her.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by R.J. Peterson to adjourn the meeting at 11:54am. The motion carried by all present.

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