



## Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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**October 20, 2009**

Human Services Building

Spartan Conference Room

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, October 20, 2009 at 10:01am in the Human Services Building, Spartan Room, Allegan, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT:                      R.J. Peterson                      Jan Cushman  
   Dianna Stampfler                      Al Weener  
   Larry Johnson                      Betsy Hill  
   Luetta Crane                      Norm Smith

ABSENT:                      Stephanie Peterson  
   Terry Bonnell

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

#### ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

#### APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES

A motion was made by R.J Peterson, seconded by Dianna Stampfler to approve the September 15, 2009 meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

#### TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT – RONDA

Ronda reported 166 contacts were received in September with a total of 310 itemized inquiries, which is down from August's total but over the amount received in 2008. 42 tourist packets were mailed and Heritage Trail sales were at a total of 6 books and 5 CDs. Ronda commented that after taking reservations for more than a year now, she is surprised at the presumptions many folks have when making campground reservations; they assume there is very limited availability and relay how other parks they contacted were already completely booked. With the exception of holiday weekends, Ronda has discovered the campgrounds are virtually wide open throughout the summer. Kevin stated this is primarily due to all the amenities offered at most other campgrounds, whereas our three county campgrounds are all primitive.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Kevin stated he has no comments on this month's financial statements and asked if anyone else has any questions. A motion was made by R.J. Peterson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the financial statements as presented. The motion carried by everyone present.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **2010 VISITORS GUIDE UPDATE**

Kevin reported the only update for the 2010 visitor's guide is in regards to the cover drafts that were recently emailed to the Tourist Council from Total Market Strategies. Both drafts, which primarily pictured close-ups of various people and a Lake Michigan shoreline as the backdrop photo, were not well received by the Council. Those who commented felt the photos should be more on the lines of those from past guides that depicted popular activities within the county; if people were present, they were shown from afar. They also suggested a more eye-catching, colorful background photo. Kevin informed Celeste of the Council's disapproval and has since sent her the winning pictures from the 2009 photo contests for consideration; he hopes to get the next draft in a couple of days. As far as advertisements, Kevin stated the Gun Lake Tribe may purchase the whole back page for the new casino that is set to open sometime next summer. The guide's editorial content is still being worked on and Kevin has requested the first draft be received before the November 10 meeting so the Council has a chance to review and approve the articles before they are finalized.

### **2010 BUDGET UPDATE/DISCUSSION**

Continuing last month's discussion, Kevin stated it appears the Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Department will most likely lose 20% of their budget from the general fund, which amounts to a \$50,000 cut. Kevin was given the budget and told to decide where to make the cuts; he faced either closing one or more of the county's parks with dire consequences, or utilize the Tourist Council's annual budget of \$18,000 to help keep the park(s) open. Unfortunately, this means there will be no funding for the TC in 2010 leaving two options; either they will cease to exist or can continue to meet without paid per diems, mileage, or funds for advertising, etc. Kevin stated we will have to get creative if we are to continue, possibly going to the private sector for help with funding or generate some revenue through the visitor's guide. The TC expressed their disappointment for the County's lack of support for their efforts and failure to recognize the importance the TC has on the local economy. It was determined at the economic development workshop last April the three top assets to the County are agriculture, tourism, and natural resources. Norm asked if all the other departments in the County are facing the same budget cuts and if the budget has already been approved. Kevin stated the budget cuts are not across the board; some departments took huge cuts while others weren't affected at all. The Board of Commissioners has not yet approved the final budget and would be meeting again this coming Thursday. Larry stated the TC should approach the Commissioners and let them know the importance the TC has on the local economy and suggested writing a letter from the group to plead their case.

A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by R.J. Peterson to continue the Tourist Council without paid per diem, mileage, or funding. The motion passed by everyone present.

A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by R.J. Peterson to write a letter of concern to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners from the Tourist Council, and present the letter to the BOC on Thursday, October 22, 2009. The motion passed unanimously.

Norm stated, as the Tourist Council's Chairman, he will attend the meeting and present the letter on behalf of the TC. Anyone else who can make the meeting should be present.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **ALLEGAN COUNTY'S 175TH ANNIVERSARY**

Kevin informed the Tourist Council of Allegan County's 175th anniversary in 2010, and asked for suggestions of how we could promote the occasion. A banner across the cover of the visitor's guide was proposed to commemorate the milestone, and everyone on the Council liked the suggestion. If anyone comes up with more ideas, pass them on to Kevin and he will present them to the group.

### **WMTA CAREFREE TRAVEL AD**

Kevin drew everyone's attention to the current 1/6 page ad in the WMTA Carefree Travel guide; to renew the same size ad for the 2010-2011 guide will be \$1260. Kevin met with the WMTA representative, Bruce Barker, who would like to see Allegan County run a similar ad to Holland and Muskegon County; they both have banner ads at the top of the page with local ads that comprise the rest of the page. Kevin displayed their ads; Holland's is a 1/8 page banner ad costing \$975, and Muskegon County's banner ad is a 1/4 page at \$1820. Kevin really likes the concept to have everything in the county on the same page and the Council agreed. In keeping with the previous discussion Larry suggested a quote for the ad, "Allegan County Celebrating 175 Years Through Our Heritage Trail" or something to that effect, along with some wording that highlights what the County has to offer. The question was asked if there are enough ads from county businesses to fill two pages and if so, can we get a 1/8 page banner ad across both pages at the same cost as one 1/4 page ad.

A motion was made by Al Weener, seconded by Betsy Hill to approve a 1/8 page banner ad across two pages contingent on the following two conditions: enough local ads have been sold to fill both pages and the cost will be the same as one 1/4 page ad of \$1820, instead of two 1/8 page ads at a total of \$1950. If those two conditions are not met, a 1/8 page banner ad across one page will be purchased for \$975. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

### **PURE MICHIGAN PHOTO CONTEST**

Kevin reported the Tourist Council was on schedule for the fall of 2010 to participate in the Pure Michigan photo contest, but due to the current budget dilemma he had to withdraw the TC from the competition. He stated the contest is a very competitive one between professional photographers. The cost to enter the contest would have been \$5000 split over two years, which is unfeasible at this time. Kevin stated this is a huge loss; the exposure the county would have received from the publicity would have been priceless. When you go on their website and check out past contests results, those areas receive a tremendous amount of press. This is just another example of opportunities lost due to the budget cuts.

## **NEXT MEETING – NOVEMBER 10, 2009 @ 10AM IN SPARTAN CONFERENCE ROOM**

### **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION**

**Dianna Stampfler** proposed to move the fall photo deadline to December 1st for next year's contest. She feels the November 1st deadline is too early for everyone to enter their fall photos in time. She stated she has revised the flyer to promote the photo contest and will send it out to all the schools, libraries, and other businesses in the county to generate more interest and entries. She has also posted updates on the TC facebook page, and even asked State Representative, Bob Genetski, if he would send the information out with his enews letter.

**Norm Smith** reports he attended the ground breaking ceremony held in September for the new casino; there were many people in attendance, including Kevin. There is a lot of excitement being generated at the prospect of the number of jobs the casino will bring to the community both during construction and after it's completion, not to mention the anticipated boon to businesses in the area. He drove by the site a couple days ago, and construction is definitely underway.

**Larry Johnson** informed everyone of a Haunted Forest out at Camp Kidwell the next two weekends.

**R.J. Peterson** asked if the Tourist Council can accept donations; Kevin stated yes, donations are acceptable and are tax deductible for private businesses. Norm added we can approach some of the larger companies who have a stake in the County to sponsor us as well.

**Kevin Ricco** had two more items to mention; included in todays handouts are some great ideas from The Advisors Marketing Group on how we can promote the County; he received them last week during the conference he attended. Secondly, he has a renewal contract for 2010 from Michigan Brochure Service, who distributes the visitor's guide at welcome centers; the cost will remain unchanged. The Council all agreed to continue with the service.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:41a.m.

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