



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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February 2, 2010
Human Services Building
Spartan Conference Room
8:30am

Minutes of a Scheduled Joint Meeting of the Allegan County Parks & Recreation Commission and Allegan County Tourist Council

A scheduled joint meeting of the Allegan County Parks & Recreation Commission and Allegan County Tourist Council was called to order by the Parks Director Kevin Ricco on Tuesday, February 2, 2010 at 8:31am in the Spartan Conference Room in the lower level of the Human Services Building, 3255 122nd Ave, Suite 102, Allegan, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

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| PARKS COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: | Bruce Culver | Kelle Tobolic |
| | Fritz Spreitzer | Mark DeYoung |
| | Larry Rasmussen | Maryln Langeance |
| | Robert Kaarlie | |

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| ABSENT: | Chuck Pullen | Becky Rininger |
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| TOURIST COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: | Norm Smith | Al Weener |
| | Dianna Stampfler | Jan Cushman |
| | Betsy Hill | Luetta Crane |
| | Terry Bonnell | R.J. Peterson |

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| ABSENT: | Larry Johnson | Stephanie Peterson |
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Also Present:

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| Kevin Ricco, Parks Director |
| Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk |
| Kris Allred, Silver Creek Park Manager |
| Lenore Ryun, City of Allegan |

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES – PARKS COMMISSION, TOURIST COUNCIL

A motion was made by Bob Kaarlie, seconded by Larry Rasmussen to approve the January 5, 2010 Parks Commission meeting minutes as presented and mailed. The motion carried by all the Parks Commission members present.

A motion was made by Norm Smith, seconded by Dianna Stampfler to approve the January 19, 2010 Tourist Council meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried by all the Tourist Council members present.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated there is nothing to report at this time on the current financial statement, although there is one item to note looking forward to next month's report. For the first time since the Allegan County visitor's guide began a few years ago, the 2010 guide has made money on advertising sales and earned the TC \$1100. Kevin explained we get a percentage of the profit from Total Market Strategies after all expenses to print the guide have been paid. Not only were there more ads sold this year, but a different printer and cheaper paper were used to help bring the costs down. The \$1100 will be added to the Tourist Council's budget, hopefully by next month. Norm asked what percentage of the profit are we entitled to and what was the total amount for advertising sales; Kevin stated he is unsure of the exact amounts but has the information and will email it to everyone.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kris Allred and Lenore Ryun, both from the City of Allegan, are in attendance to observe the meeting and have no comment at this time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW RICHMOND BRIDGE PARK – RIBBON CUTTING

Kevin has mentioned the two grand opening ceremonies during previous meetings and stated this is a good time to make plans while both groups are in attendance. After much discussion, it was decided the ribbon-cutting ceremony for New Richmond Bridge Park would be as follows:

- 10am on Saturday, June 5, 2010 (approximately one hour long)
- Moderator: Bruce Culver, Parks Commission Chair
- Speakers (pending): Bill Nelson, Kit Lane, Patty Birkholz, Bob Genetski, Dean Kapenga, John Pahl
- Special program (pending): Outdoor Discovery Center presentation, Jamie Krupka; bridge turning
- Refreshments/decorations: To be determined (Crane's Pie Pantry, Lue Crane)
- Press release date: May 20, 2010
- Invitations to donors (mail date): May 3, 2010

TOURIST COUNCIL FUNDING UPDATE

Norm and Dianna attended the Board of Commissioner's meeting last week to reiterate the Tourist Council's concern over their lack of budget; Commissioner Steve McNeal had recommended the action to Norm. Dianna stated the issue was tabled in order to get more information from Administration and she is unsure if it will be on the next BOC agenda. She then commented the visitor's guide didn't really make money this year because we paid for the editorial content to be written; in years past the TC members wrote the articles themselves. Furthermore, the 2011 guide is in jeopardy; Kevin stated the TC is all set for 2010 since guide distribution and tourism advertising is paid a year in advance, 2011 is where you will see the difference. Although printing of the guide is funded entirely by paid ads, it is worthless if it cannot be distributed. We pay West Michigan Travel Association to distribute the guide at nine trade shows in Michigan and surrounding states, and another company to distribute it to many more locations throughout Michigan.

Dianna, who works in the tourism industry, expressed her concern about promoting the County's second largest asset without any funding. For instance, if Allegan County doesn't step up to claim and promote the Wayland Casino that will open in the fall, the surrounding counties will. Grand Rapids, who fought hard against the casino for many years, will be quick to change their tune and claim it as their own. We will also lose our membership with WMTA, who posts a link to our website and is our main source of contacts who request

information on the County. Retaining Tourist Council members in the future is another concern; they are the only group who serve without receiving per diem or mileage reimbursement.

Fritz stated the BOC is waiting for Administration to go to the department heads; at this time there is not a lot of money available in the County for discretionary spending. Mark added it is hard for the BOC to go into contingency so early in the year and warned there may be further cuts next year. He suggested we make the whole County a CVB (Convention & Visitors Bureau), which is funded by a hotel bed tax like the Saugatuck/Douglas CVB. Kevin stated yes, he has already done some research and the County would qualify. Now would be the time to do it before more hotels are built, specifically around the new casino; the bed tax would have no affect on smaller B & Bs but would apply to the larger hotels. He does not believe local units would have to approve and since the Saugatuck/Douglas CVB is already established, they could remain unchanged. Kevin added the County becoming a CVB would solve the Tourist Council's budget issue although the BOC would have to approve; he will send the information he found to Fritz and Mark.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS UPDATE – RIBBON CUTTING

After much discussion, the following was decided for the equestrian trails ribbon cutting ceremony:

- 2pm on Friday, May 21, 2010
- Moderator: Bruce Culver, Parks Commission Chair
- Speakers (pending): Bob Kaarlie, Mark DeYoung, Kevin Ricco, Rebecca Humphries, Sara Schaefer
- Refreshments/decorations: To be determined
- Press release date: May 3, 2010
- Invitations to volunteers (mail date): April 26, 2010

NEW BUSINESS

PARKS AND TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGIES

Kevin asked if anyone has additional ways the two groups can work together. Currently, we have new Parks brochures on order and will eventually order new equestrian trail brochures. Land Information Services are close to having updated trail maps. Kevin stated the equestrian trails have the potential to bring a lot more people into the County. In the spring, campsites at both Ely Lake and Pine Point Campgrounds will be converted over to equestrian sites; the Tourist Council can help promote and market the equestrian trails.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mark asked if the equestrian trails are listed in the trail-riding magazine; Kevin stated yes, they are listed. He also commented it would be a good way to spread the word about our trails if the magazine were to come out and write an article.

NEXT MEETINGS:

PARKS COMMISSION: MARCH 2, 2010 @ 8:30AM (SPARTAN CONFERENCE ROOM)

TOURIST COUNCIL: MARCH 16, 2010 @ 10:00AM (CRANE'S PIE PANTRY)

ROUND TABLE

Kris Allred thinks it is great the two groups held a joint meeting and feels they should do it more often. She stated she has lived in the county for 10 years and has found it frustrating how little people work together so she is glad to see everyone come together today.

Lenore Ryun is in agreement with Kris.

Al Weener informed everyone Sturgeon for Tomorrow has received a small grant to be used towards website development.

R.J. Peterson stated there is a move under way to form a Harbor Authority, which would include the three local communities of Saugatuck, Douglas and Fennville, and Allegan County; by bringing everyone together it will be easier to obtain grants. The Harbor Authority would be the instrument to save the harbor in Saugatuck. According to Michigan State figures, this would quadruple the economy for Saugatuck and Douglas area and greatly impact Allegan County. There is already a Harbor Committee who has hired JJR of Ann Arbor to represent them and work on the decertification of the Harbor Authority and apply for grants.

Lue Crane stated she is looking forward to next month when the Tourist Council holds their meeting at Cranes.

Mark DeYoung is looking forward to the ribbon cutting ceremonies. He also agrees with the comments about joint meetings and appreciates everyone getting together.

Jan Cushman stated she has good news; the interpretive panels are almost done for the two Heritage Trail stops located in Wayland and Hamilton. They just need to be printed and hopefully can be installed by this spring.

Terry Bonnell stated it is great to be back and also believes it has been beneficial for the two groups to come together.

Maryln Langeance agrees with the comments regarding holding joint meetings.

Kelle Tobolic is in agreement and thanked the TC for coming.

Fritz Spreitzer also agrees with the two groups working together.

Bob Kaarlie would also like to see more joint meetings and keep the lines of communication open; it's much easier to get things accomplished when working together.

Bruce Culver echoes the sentiments regarding joint meetings. In regards to being the moderator at the ribbon cutting ceremonies, he asked Kevin to provide him with short bios on all the speakers in order for him to properly introduce them.

Dianna Stampfler concurs and apologizes for getting a little rambunctious earlier; she hates to see the momentum lost for the County's tourism and will continue to fight for the cause.

Kevin Ricco received an application from Laura Canaan of Holland for the vacant Parks Commission seat; everyone has a copy in their agenda packets. Mark stated there are others who are interested and plan to apply; Kevin stated we can hold off until next month to make a recommendation.

Kevin has also been involved for some time now in a group who has been working to link up non-motorized trails throughout nine counties in southwestern Michigan, including equestrian and water trails. A trail summit was held last week where about 20 people were in attendance. There were two main topics for discussion; first they were getting everyone's input to update the trail map and identify potential trail corridors. Secondly, how can we as a region bring more people to the area; good trail systems statistically draw many people. He stated Allegan County is the black hole; there are many trails that surround us and we are the missing link for the trail connections.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16am.

By: _____

Ronda Foreman, Clerk