



## Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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**March 16, 2010**

Crane's Pie Pantry

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 Chair Norm Smith on Tuesday, March 16, 2010 at 10:13am at Crane's Pie Pantry, Fennville, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

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

ABSENT: Jan Cushman

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

#### ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Kevin asked to add an item to the agenda, 5a Tourism Contacts Report. A motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Larry Johnson to approve the March 16, 2010 agenda as amended. The motion carried by everyone present.

#### APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Dianna Stampfler, seconded by Lue Crane to approve the February 2, 2010 meeting minutes as presented and emailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin reported the Finance Department transferred \$2910 from the Parks budget into the Tourist Council's advertising account at his request. On the revenue side of the statement, proceeds of \$1100 were deposited from the visitors guide advertising sales. Essentially, there is \$4000 available for the TC to use at their discretion. A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Al Weener to approve the financial statements as presented. The motion carried by everyone present.

## **TOURISM CONTACTS REPORT - RONDA**

The February 2010 contact report and inquiry pie chart are in the agenda packet handouts. Ronda reports she had 805 itemized inquiries and 187 individual inquiries for the month, which was up from last year's totals of 575 itemized inquiries and 149 individual inquiries. Of the 187 individual inquiries she received, 27 were from Michigan but outside the County and 49 were from out-of-state. She also mailed out 83 tourist information packets and received payment for one Heritage Trail book and five CD's from library sales.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **RIBBON CUTTING UPDATES – NEW RICHMOND, EQUESTRIAN TRAILS**

Kevin drew everyone's attention to their packets where they have a worksheet outlining the items that were discussed during last month's meeting for the ribbon cutting ceremony at New Richmond Bridge Park on Saturday, June 5, 2010 at 10am. The plan is to have the ceremony take place on the bridge and will include the turning of the bridge. The whole program should be done in about one hour; the Outdoor Discovery portion will begin after the speakers are finished and will be geared towards wildlife in and around the Kalamazoo River. A press release will be posted on May 20, and invitations will go out to the donors on May 3. The refreshments, seating, bridge decorations, and someone to direct parking still need to be determined. So far, Kevin's wife Esther has offered to bake some treats and Lue Crane will contribute cider and doughnuts for the refreshments.

Kevin stated if it is a nice day he anticipates a lot of people will show up; we want to make this a kickoff celebration to get people there and aware of the park. He asked the Council for their thoughts; Dianna suggested setting up some tables to sell Heritage Trail books and CDs and have information on the Sturgeon for Tomorrow project. Al has tables and chairs he can bring to setup for the ceremony. RJ agreed to bring his paddleboat as discussed during last month's meeting. Larry asked if we could charge \$1 per person to have RJ take folks under the bridge to generate revenue. Kevin replied it would be RJ's decision if he wanted to charge a fee that could later be donated to the Tourist Council and he would also have to carry liability insurance naming the County as being insured. Another suggestion was to put a donation bucket at the refreshment table; Kevin stated this is a celebration for the opening of the park and does not want attendees to feel they are obligated to donate money. Stephanie suggested we could get local businesses to donate money towards the ceremony and their name could be mentioned in recognition of their donation; Kevin stated we would be happy to accept business donations.

Now that the park is open, eventually Kevin would like to work with the Village of New Richmond to possibly revive 'Old Fashion Days'. If anyone wants to volunteer for refreshments, more seating, bridge decorations, or to help direct parking, please let Kevin know.

Moving on, Kevin directed everyone to the last page of the agenda packet. The ribbon cutting ceremony for the equestrian trails is coming along for Friday, May 21, 2010 at 2pm at Silver Creek Park. Although most speakers have been confirmed, Rebecca Humphries and Sara Schaefer from the DNR may also say a few words. Although absent from today's meeting, Jan previously volunteered to provide punch and cookies, volunteers are still needed for more refreshments, seating, and someone to direct parking. A press release will be posted on May 3 and on April 26, invitations will be sent to all the volunteers who helped clear and mark the trails; Kevin has asked FACETS to provide him with addresses.

There are still a few odds and ends to take care of before the grand opening including the installation of the new message center in the day ride parking area and the placement of the remaining trail markers. Land Information Services is almost done updating the maps, and the mileage for the trails will be included in the legend. All tallied there are almost 30 miles in the Silver Creek area and another 30 miles in the combined Pine Point/Ely

Lake areas totaling close to 60 miles of trails. Kevin is working with PJ Printing for an Equestrian Trail System brochure and fold out map that will include the entire trail system for all three areas. The ceremony coincides with the Judged Trail Ride on May 22, so there should be a good turnout. Dianna stated she knows someone at FOX 17; maybe she can setup an interview that would be broadcast live on air. If anyone has more suggestions or would like to volunteer for refreshments, seating, or to direct parking, please let Kevin know as soon as possible.

#### **TOURIST COUNCIL FUNDING UPDATE**

Although there is nothing to update on the Tourist Council's lack of funding, Kevin stated there are certain funds in the Economic Development budget we may be able to tap into as a funding source. There is approximately \$20,000 available in discretionary funds and if we can make a case connecting ED and Tourism, some of that money may come to us. Kevin plans to have a discussion with Rob Sarro, the County Administrator, to see if he can make this happen. This subject also coincides with the next item on the agenda.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **PURE MICHIGAN PHOTO CONTEST – NEW OPPORTUNITY**

Kevin stated this opportunity was first discussed a year and a half ago and although we were signed up to participate this year, we were forced to cancel due to the budget cuts. Last week he received a complimentary copy of the book produced from the 2009 contest winners, along with a new proposal. Kevin passed the book around and stated the cost to participate in this year's contest was dropped from \$5000 to \$3800; Pure Michigan found the poor economic climate was limiting the number of communities who could participate. Kevin believes this is a great project that we could make a strong business case to the County to receive funds specifically taken from the Economic Development account.

This would be a tremendous promotion for the County; with no other form of advertising could we get this amount of fantastic exposure. Looking at the 11" X 17" book published from last year's contest photos shot in the spring; Kevin stated this year's contest will be in the fall, our most beautiful season. The cost paid to enter the contest goes to a professional photographer who will take pictures between September 1 and mid November. We would have some control of the photo shoots that would include the place, subject, and time of day. Although the number of photos that are published are limited to the top ten (most likely determined by the photographer), we would own the rights to all of the photos to use as we wish. Once published, the book is sold for \$17.95 and there is a special promotion through Travel Michigan magazine; there is also a cash prize for the contest winner. Kevin will have to sell the idea to the Board of Commissioners and we must respond to Pure Michigan with an answer if we will participate by May 15, 2010.

A motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by RJ Peterson to approve Kevin approaching the Allegan County Administration on behalf of the Tourist Council to request \$3800 to enter the Pure Michigan 2010 fall photo contest with funds coming from the Economic Development budget. The motion carried by everyone present.

Norm also brought two books to pass around titled 'Through the Years' and 'Looking Back' that were published by Kalamazoo County and contain photos taken throughout the county. He stated this might be an opportunity for revenue to consider; the books are sold in advance and would cost us nothing to publish. We would take orders at the recommended pre-sell price of \$24 (price per book based on a minimum order of 500 books), although we could sell them for more. According to Norm, Kalamazoo County netted approximately \$10,000 profit for each book. Norm wanted to bring this opportunity to the TC's attention. Kevin commented that although it sounds great, when something has to be pre-sold problems arise; everyone would have to be committed to selling the book without an actual copy. After much discussion everyone agreed to resume the conversation at a later date and concentrate on the Pure Michigan contest first.

## TOURIST COUNCIL GOALS, OBJECTIVES & CORE SERVICES – REVIEW

Included in the agenda packets is the 2010 Budget Worksheet to use as a guide to determine the goals, objectives, and core services of the Tourist Council for 2011. Kevin stated this is a requirement of the budget process and this year we are starting earlier than normal; it is due by April 16 and each department must give a presentation to the Board of Commissioners. Kevin asked the group to review the worksheet and provide some input for the 2011 budget; this is not to be used for marketing or selling, it's about selling the value of core services the TC provides to the County and attempt to get some funding reinstated. There is a faction growing in the BOC who wants to promote a County Visitor's Bureau, although there are some who are against it. If anyone comes up with more suggestions or modifications, let Kevin know by April 1 so he has time to incorporate them into the document.

## 2011 VISITORS GUIDE – EMMET COUNTY EXAMPLE

Kevin announced it is not too early to start thinking about the 2011 visitor's guide and the subjects to target for the written content. As examples of what other counties are doing, Kevin and Betsy had a variety of guides to pass around for everyone to peruse. This will be a topic of discussion at next month's meeting, so everyone was asked to think about ideas.

## HERITAGE TRAIL GUIDEBOOK DISCUSSION

Kevin stated there is a township clerk who has raised the question of why the Heritage Trail guidebook is not available online for folks to download and print for themselves. He explained to her about the value of the guide and apparently not liking his answer, she contacted Commissioner Max Thiele who called to ask the same question. Kevin wanted to discuss the issue and has no opinion either way; would the Council like to leave it the way it is or put it online for folks to download themselves.

After some discussion a motion was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by RJ Peterson to leave the Heritage Trail book and CD sales as they are without making them available online for download and will review the idea annually. The motion passed by everyone present.

## NEXT MEETING – APRIL 20, 2010 @ 10AM IN THE SPARTAN CONFERENCE ROOM

### ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

**Al Weener** stated the Sturgeon for Tomorrow program, along with the Hamilton and Fennville Boy Scouts, will set up a display at the New Richmond Bridge Park ribbon cutting ceremony.

**RJ Peterson** is attending a meeting next week in Lansing with the DEQ regarding the delisting of the Kalamazoo River; he will let them know they are supported by the Tourist Council.

**Stephanie Peterson** announced the B-93 Birthday Bash is coming to US131 Motorsports Park on June 19-20. The track will not allow overnight camping for the event, which will be held in the parking lot. The country music show should draw more than 80,000 people over two days. Although the concert is free, attendees must pay for parking.

**Kevin Ricco** asked the Council if it would help them to attend meetings if their mileage is paid; he may be able to take from somewhere else. Everyone was in agreement; Kevin will see what he can do.

**Norm Smith** stated there was an article in the Travel section of last Sunday's newspaper that announced that on May 23 and 24, the Grand Hotel at Mackinac Island will offer rooms for \$75 per night, which is a great deal compared to \$300-400 per night; the rooms sold out in a matter of hours.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by RJ Peterson, seconded by Larry Johnson to adjourn the meeting at 12:21am. The motion carried by all present.

Minutes Submitted By: Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk