Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 02, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Walcott.

A quorum of commissioners that were present included Hammer, Walcott, Famularo, and Roelke.

Staff liaison Bennett was also present.

Notice of Open Meeting

It was noted the meeting was noticed according to law.

Approval of Agenda

Famularo motioned to approve the agenda; seconded by Roelke.

There was no discussion and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Approval of Minutes

1. Consider and take action to approve the Tourism meeting minutes from October 5, 2026

   Hammer motioned to approve the meeting minutes as presented from October 5, 2026; seconded by Famularo.

   There was no discussion and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public in attendance for comment and there was no correspondence.

New Business

2. Staff update regarding the 2027 Tourism Budget

   Bennett gave an update that there were no changes to the 2027 Tourism draft budget after the Council's review. Bennett noted that the Common Council will hold its budget public hearing and final approval at its November 17th meeting.

   It was brought to attention that changes could still be made, but the commission took no action.

3. Consider and take possible action regarding bringing Mad Dog and Merrill's TV show taping of Midwest Grill'n to Redbud Days

   Commission discussed hosting the Mad Dog and Merrill event during the Redbud Days. There were concerns about backup locations to weather for May 9th and concerns about competition with food trucks and non-profit food fundraisers. Commission would rather have the grilling event at a different date.

   Possibility for June event? Walcott suggested Meister Park, as part of a proposed event highlighting watersports/regatta in the Crawfish River, and tying it to a Crawdads baseball game. Walcott suggested not having the event when other communities are not having events. Roelke

suggested partnering with other local groups to increase audience. Famularo asked about partnering with concerts in the park. Walcott will contact the New Horizons Band from Beaver Dam as a concert option.

Famularo suggested reaching out to other communities to see if the grilling competition was a solo event or if it was combined with other events. Hammer suggested checking the Recreation Department schedule for Meister Park. Bennett will check with Port Washington and Hammer will check with Waunakee.

The event could be paid for using 2026 Materials & Services line item, then use 2027 same. In addition to selling tickets, sponsorships, and partnerships.

Discussion regarding date of the event for the first weekend in June.

Hammer motioned to decline bringing the Mad Dog and Merrill's Midwest Grill'n event to Redbud Days but bring the event to June 4-6 and making the upfront deposit up to $4,000 pending taping and venue availability; seconded by Famularo. There was no additional discussion. The motion was carried by unanimous roll-call vote: Famularo - aye, Hammer - aye, Walcott - aye, and Roelke - aye.

4. Discussion regarding the 2026 Holiday Train

The CPKC Holiday Train event will take place Wednesday, December 9th. The event is a fundraiser for the Columbus/Fall River Food Pantry. Bennett noted in the memo of the activities that will take place that includes combining the tree lighting and Sparkle in the Park light display on the same night as the train. Walcott asked about bringing carolers to the tree lighting. Walcott suggested to collaborate with local restaurants and local organizations. Hammer noted various participants in previous years.

Bennett suggested a late-Spring meeting with the Recreation Department for a long-term plan for a cohesive holiday event. The commissioners were receptive of the idea.

Staff was asked to contact local lodging and restaurants to coordinate. Staff was asked to contact the Recreation Director about expanding the house decorating contest to include local businesses. Staff was asked to contact the Library about getting carolers for the tree lighting.

Adjourn

It was requested to include Redbud Days marketing at the next meeting on January 4, 2027.

Famularo motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Hammer. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02pm.

*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.

** These minutes will be approved at a future meeting and may be amended. These minutes are respectfully submitted by David Bennett, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator **