Tourism Commission Meeting Agenda

Monday, September 14, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call to Order

Notice of Open Meeting

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes

1. Consider and take action to approve the Tourism Commission meeting minutes from August 3, 2026

Public Comment

New Business

2. Staff update regarding the 2027 budget
3. Discuss and take possible action regarding 2027 contribution towards the 4th of July festivities
4. Discuss possible partnerships for tourism marketing and distribution

Adjourn

*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.

COLUMBUS
WISCONSIN

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 03, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33pm by Walcott.

A quorum of commissioners in attendance included Walcott, Hammer, Famularo, and Roelke. Staff liaison Bennett was also present.

Notice of Open Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was noticed according to law.

Approval of Agenda

Hammer motioned to approve the meeting agenda as presented; Seconded by Famularo. There was no discussion. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Approval of Minutes

1. Consider and take action to approve the Tourism Commission meeting minutes from July 6, 2026.

   Roelke motioned to approve as presented, the Tourism Commission meeting minutes from July 6, 2026; Seconded by Famularo. There was no discussion. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present for comment. No correspondence was received.

New Business

2. Consider and take action regarding the 2027 budget and capital improvement projects

   Bennett highlighted the past two years compared to current spending along with providing a proposed 2027 budget and compared it to the 2026 budget.

   There was discussion about a possible designated tourism entity. The designation would align with State Statute, but there seems to be no enforcement or timeline. Famularo noted the combination of Chamber/Tourism/Main Street as Watertown's tourism entity.

   There was discussion about the tourism grant and the possibility of dividing it into three separate grants; one for events, one for marketing, and one for venues. Roelke expressed disinterest in having a separate venue grant due to other City support available and would like to divide majority of Tourism funding towards events and marketing and not venues. The commission agreed and would like to leave the grant as-is with events, marketing, and venues as categories.

   Walcott asked about the room tax contributions of the Hotel in town. Bennett noted that it has historically been delayed but was paid up from 2025 in the first quarter of 2026. Due to new accounting software again, staff wasn't able to get the latest numbers. Bennett noted that projected revenue from room tax should be higher than in 2025.

The Commission inquired as to any updates regarding the digital signage project. Bennett noted that it was assigned to the Public Spaces Committee but hasn't been given any updates. It is possible that the digital signage might not happen in 2026

Bennett highlighted the website contribution impact as there are plans to combine media resources into a single line item in the City's General Fund. This would include removing the website contributions from City departments and bodies to make the accounting easier for the Finance Department. If Tourism would like "bells and whistles" on the City website, or uses a 3rd party platform, it would be responsible for those costs separately.

Discussion of banners such as the ones on the downtown light poles were continued from the last meeting. The Commission is interested in partnering with other City committees and local organizations to create a variety of banners that can be swapped seasonally along with hardware to maintain and expand the banners. If the Commission would pursue this, funding could be from the materials & services line item.

There was brief discussion regarding digital marketing & A.I. itinerary development. Currently, the community calendar of events is being promoted on both the City and Chamber of Commerce websites. Additionally, there has been a consistent Google Ads campaign to promote the calendar of events along with Tourism webpages.

Search optimization terminology was brought up and Commission members mentioned events, restaurants, etc. when visiting other places.

Roelke noted the advertiser’s row at Mallards game, where marketing materials and booths were available. Brochures and booklets could be distributed at large events such as the 4th of July festival. It was noted that it would take volunteers. Walcott asked about utilizing local businesses that attend events outside the community to distribute tourism materials. Options included renting booths at the County fairs and providing swag and promotional items.

Bennett will take the comments and suggestions from this meeting and update the proposed budget for review at the September Tourism Commission meeting. No timeline on the budget has been given, but the commission and staff would like to get ahead in case of any time constrictions.

Adjourn

The next meeting switched to September 14 due to Labor Day.

Famularo motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Roelke.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.

*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 **

Proposed 2027 Tourism Budget

Account & Desc.	2026 Budget	2026 Projected^	2027 Budget*
250-00-41210-000-000 Room Tax	$ 33,000.00	$ 35,213.57	$ 34,800.00
250-00-48110-000-000 Fund Balance Interest	$ 75.00	$ 119.31	$ 100.00
250-00-41215-000-000 Kayak Rentals	$ 1,000.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
250-00-49300-000-000 P.Y. Applied Carryover	$ 20,000.00	$ 0.00	$ 0.00
TOTAL REVENUES	**$ 54, 075.00**	**$ 35,432.88**	**$ 35,000.00**

Account & Desc.	2026 Budget	2026 Projected^	2027 Budget*
250-00-55575-242-000 Media/Web/Misc.	$ 2,000.00	$ 1,682.09	$ 500.00
250-00-55575-322-000 Ads/Marketing	$ 6,000.00	$ 6,746.00	$ 9,500.00
250-00-55575-324-000 Materials/Services	$ 20,325.00	$ 0.00	$ 10,000.00
250-00-55575-374-000 Special Events	$ 10,000.00	$ 9,128.66	$ 15,000.00
250-00-59200-000-000 Transfer to Other Funds	$ 15,750.00	$0.00	$ 0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 54,075.00**	**$ 17,556.75**	**$ 35,000.00**

Account & Desc.	2026 Budget	2026 Projected^	2027 Budget^
250-00-55575-242-000 Fund Balance	$ 61,421.31	$ 79, 297.44	$ 81,029.44

*pending Council approval

^pending end-of-year numbers

ALLOCATIONS

Media / Web / Misc. ($500)

- $500 for various tourism-related domains and recurring DNS from a previous 3rd party website setup.

Ads / Marketing (9,500)

- $9,500 towards general tourism marketing. Primarily for digital marketing, this may include print ads and in-event marketing materials.

Materials / Services ($10,000)

- $10,000 allocated toward banners, signage, and a future designated tourism entity. The Tourism Commission would like to team up with the Public Spaces Committee regarding additional light pole banners. The Public Spaces Committee is working on the new welcome and downtown digital signage. The tourism entity is mandated by State Statutes, but work is needed to prepare an organization to serve in that role. There is a longer-term plan to have the tourism entity funds as a separate line item once that role is developed with assistance from the Tourism Fund Balance.

Special Events ($15,000)

- $15,000 for Special Events which includes the Tourism Grant ($10,000 min.) and 4th of July sponsorship (up to $5,000). The 4th of July sponsorship, if entirely funded by Tourism, would require coordination with the 4th of July Organization to help with tourism efforts during the event. Any additional City contributions can be housed here.

FUND BALANCE

Staff recommends growing the Tourism Fund Balance to be used for either or both of the following purposes:

- Attracting a recurring large event
- Designating funds for a future Designated Tourism Entity

The fund balance can grow each year by staying under budget. Staff recommends remaining at least 5% under budget to grow the balance and as padding in case room tax falls short.