Tourism Commission Meeting Agenda

Monday, November 02, 2026 at 6:00 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 meeting minutes from October 5, 2026

Public Comment

New Business

2. Staff update regarding the 2027 Tourism Budget
3. Consider and take possible action regarding bringing Mad Dog and Merrill's TV show taping of Midwest Grill'n to Redbud Days
4. Discussion regarding the 2026 Holiday Train

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.

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 05, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Walcott at 6:21 pm. A quorum of commissions included Hammer, Famularo, Roelke, and Walcott. Staff liaison Bennett was also present.

Notice of Open Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was posted 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 meeting minutes from September 14, 2026

   Famularo motioned to approve as presented, the meeting minutes from September 14, 2026; seconded by Hammer. 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. Discussion regarding planning for 2027 National Night Out participation

   The commission discussed planning for participation in the 2027 National Night Out (NNO) hosted by the Columbus Police Department and includes various other City departments, committees and local organizations.

   Members of the Tourism Commission would host a booth to gauge the public's interest in tourism events and to distribute flyers with a QR code that goes to the local online events calendar. Ideas were brought up regarding providing games such as ring-toss, guessing how many redbuds in a jar, etc. Other possible activities included a meet the staff bingo card and historic Columbus trivia game. It was discussed that a canopy may be needed if space under a shelter isn't available.

   No action was taken, but staff will be in touch with the Police Chief to indicate the commission's interest in participating in NNO.

3. Discuss and take possible action regarding collaboration with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce for Redbud Days for hosting an attraction

   Bennett brought to the commission's attention about a grilling competition event hosted by Mad Dog and Merrill. The event is currently booking for 2027 locations and Bennett wanted to gauge the commission's interest in possibly bringing them to Columbus as part of a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.

The commission asked about any details, but Bennett hasn't reached out to their event promote for information yet. The commission noted the success and popularity of the BBQ cooking competition several years ago and would like to see something similar again.

Bennett will reach out the Mad Dog and Merrill event promoter for additional information and will be gauging the Chamber's interest in the event as well.

Adjourn

The Commission wanted to get some ideas on how to bring in visitors to Columbus during the slower months, specifically January through April along with June. Additionally, they wanted to have the Holiday Train and Parade as part of a future agenda and to invite the new Recreation Director, the City Administrator, and Community Center Director to a future meeting to discuss events during those months.

The next meeting will be November 2nd at 6:00pm in the 2nd Ward room due to the Council Chamber being set up for elections.

Hammer motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Famularo. There was no additional discussion, and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm.

*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 **

2027 Budget Summary

TOURISM REVENUES

Account & Description	2026 Budget	2026 Projected^	2027 Budget*
250-00-41210-000-000 Room Tax Contribution	$33,000.00	$ 35,213.57	$ 34,800.00
250-00-48110-000-000 Fund Balance Interest	$ 75.00	$ 101.27	$ 100.00
250-00-41215-000-000 Kayak Rentals	$ 1,000.00	$ 127.50	$ 100.00
250-00-49300-000-000 P.Y. Applied Carryover	$20,000.00	$ -	$ -
TOTALS	$54,075.00	$ 35,442.34	$ 35,000.00

TOURISM EXPENDITURES

Account & Description	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	$ -	$ 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	$ -	$ -
TOTALS	$54,075.00	$ 17,556.75	$ 35,000.00

FUND BALANCE

Account & Description	2026 Budget	2026 Projected^	2027 Budget*
250-00-34100-000-000 Fund Balance	$61,421.31	$ 61,421.31	$ 61,421.31

^pending year-end audit
*pending Council approval

2027 Budget Notes

Special Events Line Item:

($5,000) Not likely to see a match towards 4th of July Festivities

($10,000) Used for tourism events, marketing, and venues

Fund Balance:

Intentional growth of up to 5% of budget each year as budgeted funds are available

Agenda Item Report

Meeting Type: Tourism Commission

Meeting Date: November 2, 2026

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

Submitted By: David Bennett, Communications & Economic Development Coordinator

Detailed Description of Subject Matter:

At the October 5th Tourism Commission meeting, staff gauged the commission regarding interest in potentially bringing Mad Dog and Merrill's Midwest Grill'n show to Columbus during the Saturday of Redbud Days. It was noted that staff had met with a representative at a Tourism conference in late 2025. Midwest Grill'n is a TV show in which former radio personalities Mad Dog and Merrill host a grilling competition around the country that showcases as an event that draws in hundreds of people at each taping. There was interest in having staff learn more about the event and to gauge if the Chamber of Commerce would be interested in partnering in bringing the event to Columbus.

Staff ran the idea through the Chamber of Commerce board, and they seemed very receptive as well.

Staff met with a representative on Midwest Grill'n and learned the following:

- Cost is $7,250 plus mileage ($3.04) for the talent to travel from DePere, WI. Payment is 50% deposit and 50% paid day of event. **Total cost is estimated to be $7,876.24**
    - Costs may be offset by sponsors, partners, and possible ticket sales
- We will provide 8-10 talking points highlighting the area and can provide 8-10 talking points from sponsors/partners to promote them
- They will capture drone b-roll of the city-wide Redbud Days event (including Food Truck Fest, redbud trees in bloom, etc.) and use in the TV show production
- We can sell tickets to directly attend, as the event provides samples from the grilling competition
- There are additional advertising opportunities within the edited show.
- Mad Dog & Merrill team will leverage their marketing for the event in addition to our own

Staff may follow up with the Chamber regarding this event if Tourism would like to move forward.

Staff recommends additional key partnerships, maybe with the Odd Fellows, 4th of July Organization, etc. Other partners would be welcomed.

List all Supporting Documentation Attached:

- Mad Dog & Merrill slide deck

Action Requested of the Tourism Commission:

Decide if brining the event to Columbus, determine payment, and pending partnerships, proceed to book the event for May 8th, 2027

Strategic Plan Objective:


Schuetzy's Tavern, Chippewa Falls, WI

Mad Dog & Merrill® MIDWEST GRILL'N


Enjoy Mount Pleasant, WI

A year-round television series filmed before a live audience, showcasing recipes as unique as the destinations we explore. Each week, live audiences and TV viewers will enjoy lively music, plenty of laughs, and a journey to a new destination, along with a closer look at the art of grilling.

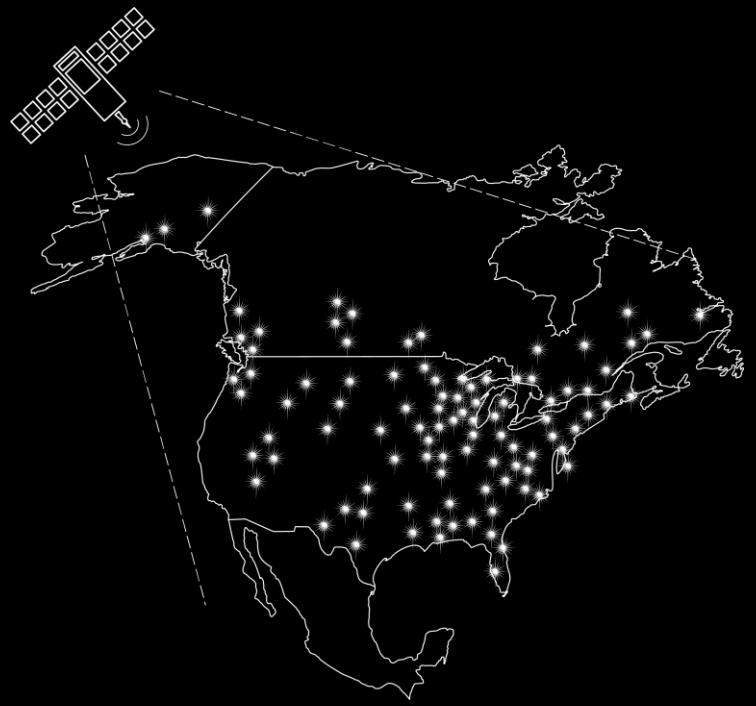

Village of Kekoskee, WI



www.MadDogandMerrill.com


Shooting Star Casino, Mahnomen, MN





Airs on over 140 Markets throughout the United States and Canada.

Airs on 160+ VOD and streaming platforms throughout the world.

26 episodes produced/year.

Each episode airs twice (52 weeks per year).

In and Out in 4-5 hours!
- Arrive 2 hours prior to set up
- 1½ hours to record a show
- 1 hour to pack up

(drone footage and ground b-roll before, during, and/or after recording)





<u>After the second airing:</u>

Each episode becomes part of our growing library of past episodes
- Airing Monday-Friday in select markets
- VOD & Streaming Services
- Mad Dog & Merrill® Web Site & YouTube

Destination Sponsors are provided YouTube links for their own use on the web, social media, trade shows, e

Complete Local Listings are available at MadDogandMerrill.com

Mad Dog & Merrill®
MIDWEST GRILL'N



This episode featured Hall of Famers
Robin Yount (Milwaukee Brewers)
and LeRoy Butler (Green Bay Packers)

2026 Destinations

Rondele Ranch in Harshaw, WI
Timber Rattler Stadium in the Fox Cities, WI
Between the Bluffs in La Crosse, WI
Village of Waunakee, WI
Port Washington, WI
Bridgewood Resort in Neenah, WI
American Family Field in Milwaukee, WI
Twig's Beverage in Shawano, WI
Old Glory Honor Flights in Oshkosh, WI
Village of Mount Pleasant, WI
Musky Fest in Hayward, WI
Bicentennial in Cassville, WI
Oneida Nation Farmer's Market, Oneida, WI
Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomen, MN
Antique Outboard Boat Show in Tomahawk, WI
XRoads41 in Oshkosh, WI
Cranberry Innovation Center in Black River Falls, WI
Big Top Chautauqua Lake Effect Music Festival in Bayfield, WI
Schuetzy's Tavern in Chippewa, Falls, WI
Village of Kekoskee, WI
Wisconsin Lion's Camp in Rosholt, WI
Christmas in the Dells, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Mad Dog & Merrill®
MIDWEST GRILL'N

Destination Sponsorship

$5,250.00 airing twice on the network of stations if filmed on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

$7,250.00 airing twice on the network of stations if filmed on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

*Plus expenses… $3.04/mile ONE WAY (+tolls) from De Pere, WI, and 4 single hotel rooms if further than 4 hours from De Pere, Wisconsin.



*How To Calculate Expenses:

Mileage is $.76/mile x 2 vehicles = 1.52 x 2 ways = $3.04 per mile (one-way)

Tu/We/Th: $5,250 + $3.04/mile + 4 single rooms (if needed)

Fr/Sa/Su: $7,250 + $3.04/mile + 4 single rooms (if needed)

Mad Dog & Merrill®
MIDWEST GRILL'N

Off-Setting the Cost

Cover charge (watch the taping of the show, maybe a band plays after)

Charge for food and beverages (food trucks or catered)

Local Convention and Visitors Bureau (hotel tax and tourism dollars)

Local Chamber of Commerce (resource for local business partners)

Local Sponsors (product placement and mentions on the television show, on-site activation and listings in all media leading up to the event)

State Joint Event Marketing (JEM) grants



Local Non-Profit Tie-In

Not only do we love to support local non-profits, but our live audiences and local businesses love to support them too!

Example: During a taping in 2026, we promoted Sleep In Heavenly Peace. A non-profit that builds and delivers beds for children who don't have one. The one-day event was promoted as a "100 Bed Build". Local media (and our TV broadcast partner), not only covered the "100 Bed Build", but also covered the entire event… giving even more publicity to the sponsors!

Mad Dog & Merrill®
MIDWEST GRILL'N



Annual Sponsorships

$5,000
Logo/Mention in the Opening Credits, Product Placement and/or mentions in 3 or more episodes, and ongoing social media and web site link throughout the year

$8,000
Logo/Mention in the Opening Credits, Product Placement and/or mentions in 3 or more episodes, :15 TV ad airing ½ the year (13 episodes), and social media and web site link

$12,000
Logo/Mention in the Opening Credits, Product Placement and/or mentions in 4 or more episodes, :15 TV ad airing ½ the year (13 episodes), one full episode and social media and web site link

$16,000
Logo/Mention in the Opening Credits, Product Placement in 4 or more episodes, :15 TV ad airing full year (26 episodes), one full episode, and social media and web site link

$20,000 (Title Sponsorship)
Logo/Mention in Opening Credits, Product Placement in all episodes, :30 TV ad airing full year, one full episode, and social media and web site link

Agenda Item Report

Meeting Type: Tourism Commission

Meeting Date: November 2, 2026

Item Title: Discussion regarding the 2026 Holiday Train

Submitted By: David Bennett, Communications & Economic Development Coordinator

Detailed Description of Subject Matter:

The 2026 CPKC Holiday Train will be in Columbus Wednesday, December 9, 2026, from 9:15pm – 9:45pm. The featured musical artist performing holiday hits will be Allen Stone.

The City's Police, Fire, and Utilities/Public Works departments will be designating parking with barricades in select areas.

Augmenting events on December 9th include:

- 7:30 PM – Tree Lighting at the Library lawn with Holiday Crafts afterward in the Library
- 9:15 PM – Holiday Train arrival and concert
- 9:45 PM – Sparkle in the Park holiday display in Fireman's Park

Due to the train arriving mid-week, attendance and participation will likely be smaller than on a weekend. Taking this into consideration, Staff recommends minimal advertising of the event.

List all Supporting Documentation Attached:

Action Requested of the Tourism Commission:

Discussion

Strategic Plan Objective: