

Regular August Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, August 28, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lenny Schaub at 4:00pm.

Members present, Lenny Schaub, Dennis Fry, Karen Tepley, Christy Adsit. Candace Fagerlind was absent.

Dennis Fry made the motion to approve the minutes from the July Richland Center Tourism Commission, member Christy Adsit seconded that motion. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Tourism Grant Applications:

The Wheels of Time-Hill Country Classic Power Show submitted a grant application for \$1,500 to support its October 2023 show at the Richland County Fairgrounds. Their application indicated they attract an audience from a Midwestern multi-state area and have been long-time recipients of a Tourism Grant. Member Christy Adsit made the motion to approve this grant, Member Dennis Fry seconded that motion. A roll call vote was held: Chair Schaub-yes, Dennis Fry-yes, Karen Tepley-yes, Christy Adsit-yes.

La Fritanga Latin America Restaurant applied for a grant of \$1,500 to support their 09/30 Nicaraguan Concert at the White House/Ramada Inn Hotel. Their application stated the event would attract visitors from a 3-state area for this cultural event. Director Richards pointed out the organizers of the event, and the purpose of the event, are concerning a for-profit business. Several members of the Commission expressed concern with approving a grant request for a for-profit entity and their wish that the grant program remain committed to non-profit organizations. After much discussion, this request was tabled for lack of a motion.

Gray Media Streaming Advertising Discussion and Possible Action:

Gray Media Representative Brady Nordenstrom attended the meeting and reviewed the results of our streaming advertising campaign so far. The streaming advertising campaign has focused primarily on the Riverwest and Walker's Point areas of Milwaukee. The completion rate of those ads by viewers has been extremely high and the saturation point of potential viewers is still low, meaning there is still more room to continue targeting these areas as people who do see the advertising are reacting positively but there are more potential visitors to yet get this messaging.

Brady then moved on to show our website traffic history since we have switched to our new website. The website traffic for Greater Richland Tourism has taken drastic upswings since the inception of streaming advertising and since the rollout of our new website. After some explanation, it was pointed out that our current year-to-date increase in traffic from 2022 is over 122%. This relates directly to the inception of our streaming advertising.

Commission member Tepley had previously had the question, "Should the streaming advertising target be broadened, or should new locations be added to the effort?" Brady was able to explain that we have not hit a point of saturation in our target area. More people have not heard the message often enough to expand the target area at this time.

With all of this discussion in place Director Richards asked the Commission to commit another \$5,000 towards streaming advertising with Gray Media. Our summer and fall occupancy rates are very strong

for our lodging businesses. However, there is more room for improved lodging occupancy rates in the winter and a move to a 4-seasons destination brand.

Member Tepley made the motion to approve the additional \$5,000 investment in digital billboard advertising with Lamar Advertising, and member Fry 2nd that motion. A roll call vote was taken, Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes. The motion unanimously passed.

2024 Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide Ad Placement

Director Richards brought forward the opportunity to be included in the Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide that is sent to anyone who contacts Wisconsin Tourism directly for travel information. It is a standard bearer for everything Wisconsin tourism related. Richards presented two options, #1. ¼ Page placement at \$2,145 for the year or #2. A ½ page placement at \$3,185 for the year. There was significant discussion regarding the second option. Member Christy Adsit mentioned the break between ½ page to ¼ page was not as significant as expected and suggested that would be the best investment.

Adsit made a motion to approve the ½ page placement in the Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide at \$3,185 for the year, Member Tepley seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held: Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes.

Director Richards offered updates and reports on several efforts:

1. Richards discussed there has been an ongoing, intensive, effort to get Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and other third-party rental platforms to confirm they are aware of Eagle, Ithaca, and Forest Township's Room Tax Ordinances, and their responsibility to collect room tax in those municipalities. After an 8-month effort it has been confirmed by these STR platforms and their contractors that retro-active to the date of the ordinance's adoption in the respective townships they indeed are to collect and remit the room tax.
2. Richards also provided a very quick update that Center Colorfest planning and parade registration was well underway. Also, there was a brief update regarding a new event for late October, Pumpkinfest. Director Richards mentioned that he will be helping with marketing and planning of the new event.

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Tepley, 2nd by Fry. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:08pm.