

Rescheduled Regular November Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, November 9, 2023

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

Members present, Lenny Schaub, Dennis Fry, Karen Tepley, Christy Adsit and Candace Fagerlind

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

Tourism Grant Applications:

There were no Grant Applications to review.

2023 Budget Review:

Director Richards reviewed the 2023 budget categories and shared with the Commission members that all expenditures were within the approved amounts. This also included approved grants and capitol expenditures to Gray Media and Lamar Advertising.

Director Richards also reviewed the tax revenues. In 2022 we had projected tax revenues of \$60,064. The actual tax revenue, including the last 4 quarters from all sources was \$102,744. Richards gave several reasons for the difference including, that the previous projections were not based on any previous collections as the Town of Eagle was still ramping up, the City of Richland Center's room tax revenues have grown considerably with increased occupancies and increased short-term rental locations in 2023.

Discussion and Action on the 2024 Annual Budget of Regular Operations

Director Richards presented a projected 2024 budget (attached) with total 2024 Basic Budget Expenditures projected at \$22,600, director salary and benefit expenses at \$30,028, with a total Annual Operating Budget of \$52,628. There was substantial discussion regarding the format of presenting the budget and it was explained that Greater Richland Tourism and the Richland Center Tourism Commission do not have access to the accounting software to present the budget items in the same format as other city departments. Director Richards mentioned that he can investigate the option of a better format and find a program that better displays the budget in a more transparent manner beginning in 2024.

Member Fagerlind made a motion to approve the Annual Operating Budget for 2024 at \$52,628 as presented. Member Tepley seconded the motion. A voice vote was held, Schaub-yes, Adsit-yes, Fagerlind-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes.

Discussion and Action on the 2024 Travel Guide

Director Richards explained that the previous travel guide which was first produced in 2022 has been exhausted. This matched up perfectly with revising the guide and producing a new one for 2024. He received two quotes for producing the guide. Unfortunately, there was a question on the one quote regarding the guide sizing for printing purposes and the discussion was tabled for the next meeting and clarification on the quote.

Discussion and Possible Action on Pine River Trailhead Signage

Member Karin Tepley explained there has been considerable work done to design and locate signage that will help users of the city portion of the Pine River Trail locate trailheads and navigate the trail through the city portion. Director Richards confirmed there has been confusion as to the location of the trailheads and specifically navigating the intersection of US Hwy 14 and 80 at the end of Orange and Main Streets. Member Tepley presented examples of the locations and formats of the signs that are intended to remedy this concern.

Member Adsit questioned why the city, specifically Parks and Recreation which is responsible for maintaining and improving that portion of the trail wasn't purchasing the signs. Additionally, Chair Lenny Schaub questioned if Richland Center room tax dollars were appropriate for this effort citing the allowable expenditures as set forth by the Wisconsin Legislature. After a short discussion, this item was tabled.

Director Richards offered short updates and reports on several efforts:

1. Richards shared that the recent Center Colorfest and Pumpkinfest events were extremely successful with high occupancy rates on overnight lodging and many guests and visitors enjoying the events.
2. Richards also provided a quick notice that he had been contacted by 3 Sheep's Brewing from Sturgeon Bay regarding their Regional City Label Project. From their discussion, it is likely Richland Center and the Mapleside Footbridge will be featured on a label of 3 Sheep's Beer in 2024.
3. Richards quickly explained that website traffic is still very strong and we continue to develop the winter marketing content for Gray Media and our streaming campaign.
4. Richards explained that lodging occupancies in the City of Richland Center for the 3rd quarter appeared to be as high as they have ever been in the past. It looks like 2023 will be one of our best ever for occupancy.
5. Richards also explained he is assisting with the Richland County Resiliency Project which may also pay some dividends for our tourism efforts.

Future Meeting Topics

Director Richards asked about any future meeting topics the members would like to discuss. Next month's meeting will bring back the 2024 Travel Guide discussion and possible action with verified parameters, Chair Lenny Schaub brought forward that we should elect a Vice-Chair for the Tourism Commission in the event the Chair is not able to attend a meeting.

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Christy, 2nd by Tepley. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:06pm.