



EXPLORE TWO RIVERS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

Committee Meeting Room
3rd floor Two Rivers City Hall
1717 E. Park Street
Two Rivers, WI 54241

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:05 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present (In Person): Todd Nilson, John Wyrstek, Erin Dembski, Curt Andrews, Michael Ditmer, Joe Metzen, Mike Mathis

Absent: Melissa Nyssen, Tonya Prosser

Zoom: None

3. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES (*Action Item*)

Motion to approve the April 2025 Board meeting minutes made by Curt Andrews, seconded by Michael Ditmer.

Motion carried.

4. TREASURER REPORT (*Action Item*)

a. Budget to Actual Report YTD April 2025

b. 2025 Room Tax Year over Year Comparison

Curt Andrews and Joe Metzen presented the report. Highlights included:

- A 6.8% increase over last year.
- 34 concerts scheduled for Bands on the Beach, exceeding prior years.
- Sepia Chapel is hosting 55 weddings in 2025.
- Schwartz House tours are booking well; guests are trending demographically from Wisconsin.
- Significant local demand for logo wear exceeded expectations, resulting in a second reorder. Joe noted new retail partners are requesting inventory.

Board discussed seasonal financial patterns. Expenditures are occurring during low revenue months, suggesting a potential shift to a July 1 fiscal year may be beneficial.

Joe will prepare a graphic comparing 2025 vs. 2024 financial trends for the next meeting.

Motion to accept the Treasurer Report made by John Wyrstek, seconded by Todd Nilson.

Motion carried.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion of the Remaining ETR Board Seat

- Amanda Verhelst (TR Police Department) was nominated. She has three STR properties and was highly recommended by Chief Meinnert, who supports her board participation during duty hours.
- Sherry (last name not provided) has STRs in Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and the UP and expressed strong interest.
- The board is currently limited to nine members. If Tanya steps down, there would be two vacancies.

Todd raised a question about city employee participation on the board. Joe shared legal guidance from West & Dunn, confirming no conflict exists if there's no personal financial interest.

Motion to invite Amanda Verhelst to join the board made by Mike Mathis, seconded by Michael Ditmer. Motion carried.

Joe will coordinate her onboarding and assign a one-and-a-half-year term to stagger expiration dates.

b. National Travel and Tourism Week Event Review

The event at Sepia Chapel was positively received.

- Participating restaurants were enthusiastic.
- Linda Loves Cheesecake discovered new exposure; Casa Mexico tested and will now feature a new dish.
- Suggestions for next year included more display signage, interactive games to encourage socializing, and better visual presence from nonprofits and Main Street businesses.
- The board agreed the event should become an annual spring celebration of tourism.
- Curt and others offered to assist Joe in planning next year's event.

c. Joint Meeting with Room Tax Commission

- The board aims to hold a joint meeting with the Room Tax Commission after the new City Manager is hired.
- Preferred date is Tuesday, July 29 at 6:00 p.m., with Tuesday, July 22 as the backup.

d. Update on Hiring of City Manager

- Final interviews are expected in late May.
- A candidate will likely be selected by June with a start date in July, allowing for transition time with current manager Greg Buckley.

e. Review of Draft Explore Two Rivers Tourism Survey

The purpose of the survey is to gather data and stories about the impact of tourism across all sectors.

- Melissa Nyssen and Joe Metzen are developing online, postcard, and in-person formats.
- Volunteers will canvas businesses to understand tourism's year-round impact.

- Initial survey results are targeted for the July joint meeting; full analysis by Labor Day.
- Opportunities were discussed to promote the survey via the Raider Reporter, utility bill inserts, and Explore Two Rivers website.

Joe is also evaluating geofencing tools (e.g., Placer AI) to enhance visitor analytics. Subscription models and potential shared costs with Main Street, TRBA, or others were discussed.

6. TOURISM DIRECTOR REPORT

Joe Metzen presented his report, now featuring photos per council request.

- Logo wear sales are strong and expanding to more retail locations.
- Dynamic QR codes are providing valuable data and remain updateable.
- ExploreTwoRivers.com analytics show growth in Parks & Rec and tourism page views.
- Planning is underway to better attribute ROI to marketing initiatives and optimize next year's strategy.

7. NEXT MEETINGS

- The board agreed to skip June unless needed for survey planning.
- The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 29, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., with July 22 as backup.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Erin Dembski, seconded by Michael Ditmer.

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:27 a.m.

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It is possible that members of and possibly a quorum of governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information; no other action will be taken by any governmental body at the above-stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice