

Watertown Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes May 14, 2026 8am

The following Tourism Commission members were present at Watertown City Hall: Courtney Krause, Steven Board, Ken Berg, Vick Patel, Melissa Lampe

Also present; Tourism Director Robin Kaufmann, Park, Rec, and Forestry Director of Senior & Enrichment Services/Office Manager Andrea Draeger, Park, Rec, and Forestry Director Ryan Schmidt, Citizen Margaret Jaberg, Watertown Main Street Program Executive Director Stefanie Broere, Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Director Linden Peacey.

1. The meeting was called to order by Courtney Krause at 8:00 a.m.
2. Review & Approve September Minutes. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Steven Board and seconded by Ken Berg. The Commission voted to approve the minutes.
3. Old Business:
 - a. Approve Financial Report: Motion to approve the financials was made by Melissa Lampe and seconded by Courtney Krause. The Commission voted to approve the financials.
 - b. Marketing Plan – review and act on marketing plan.
 1. Visitor Guides – April was a busy month of mailing guides. Individual requests have slowed down. One business already needed a replenishment.
 2. Ad opportunities – nothing to report.
 3. Update on billboard commitment – Several commitments remain before the end of the annual subscription. The vast majority of space was reserved. Tourism far exceeded its budgeted expected commitments.
 4. Placer.ai usage updates – Robin stated that Placer’s map is very user friendly to identify individual businesses on Main Street and used it for that purpose when working on a recent project for a downtown event.
 5. Review and act on mural restoration projects. – Melissa Lampe will discuss the possibility of restoring the “Willkommen” mural with the owner of the 5 E. Main building. Tourism has \$3,500 designated for the project. Robin will connect the owner with the artist to discuss its completion. Tourism will not guide the project.
 - c. Discuss Hotel stay updates: Vick from Best Western provided an update. As of May 13, occupancy was 56.25%, up 1% to LY. Weekdays have been busy with a CKPC project. Weekends continue to be slow. A baseball tournament was canceled for July. Best Western has concerns about a new car wash being constructed in front of its businesses, affecting the comfort of guests. Ken Berg stated he will work with Vick to discuss the plans.
4. New Business
 - a. Discuss and take possible action on Wisconsin Outlawz grant request – Wisconsin Outlawz is based out of Neenah, Wisconsin and will be hosting two, possibly three tournaments in the city over the summer and potentially fall. 60 teams (40 from a distance) will be participating, coming from 6 states and Canada. Robin discussed the importance of the tournaments to economic vitality in the summertime, particularly for downtown businesses. Steve Board motioned to approve the \$1,000 request. Courtney seconded the motion. All approved.
 - b. Discuss and take possible action on AutoFest grant request – Ryan Jones will be hosting a large car show at the Watertown Municipal Airport during the normal Riverfest Car Show Sunday on August 9. The event is expected to see over 300-500 cars, and includes live music, food and beverages, and more. Melissa Lampe made a motion to approve the \$1,000 request. Courtney Krause seconded the motion. All approved.

- c. Discuss and take possible action on The BIG Pop-Up funding request. – Watertown Tourism, Watertown Main Street Program, and the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce are teaming up to create a one-day event that take place on what is normally Saturday of Watertown Riverfest on August 8. The event is a vendor/street fair that has already recruited over 100 vendors, a climbing wall, live music, and more planning in the works. The group would like to see seed money of \$1,000 committed. The funds would be used if the group is not approved for the Beltz Foundation Downtown Watertown Special Events Grant Program grant it recently applied for. Ken Berg motioned to approve the \$1,000 contingent that funds will be paid if the RDA Grant is denied. Melissa Lampe seconded the motion. All approved. Robin was also asked to add the funding request to the June agenda to discuss any remaining needs.
- d. Discuss and take possible action on Watertown Tennis grant request – A grant was not submitted. No action taken.
- e. Discuss and take possible action on Annual Billboard Commitment – Watertown Tourism’s annual billboard space expires in mid-June. Signs-R-Us would like to continue the partnership at the same cost. \$8,000 is paid in advance to reserve the space for 12 full months. It is not the desire to earn money on the program, but also not take a steep loss when the space isn’t utilized. Steve Board made a motion to approve the commitment for a year and raise the price to \$170 per week for participating businesses. Ken Berg seconded the motion. All approved.
- f. Discuss Bentzin Family Town Square marketing commitment. – Robin has been handling marketing for BFTS events and as a venue. She created the Music on Main Street flyer and Facebook event covers and has been posting regularly to the Facebook page. She asked that Park & Rec provide any rental or sponsorship needs for her to promote.
- g. Review Manager’s report of previous month’s tasks – Robin provided the report to the group.
- h. Commission Members’ report.
 - a. Discuss upcoming and past events – WUSD is getting ready for graduation and final spring concerts. The Octagon House Museum opened the first weekend of May and had a strong Mother’s Day Sunday. Their Music at the Museum concerts start in June. MBU students graduated last week. The school will host a LEAD conference in July with 200 high school students on campus. Their summer sports and music camps run throughout the summer. The Watertown Aquatic Center opens June 13, with expected hours of noon-6pm. They will host an open house for staffing needs. The 4th Annual Senior Care Fair took place last week with good attendance. Several family events were hosted. World Migratory Bird Day is tentatively scheduled for May 30 with assistance from Horicon Marsh volunteers. An annual cookout day is being planned, Rock River Day Camp will start soon. Park & Rec would like assistance in promoting the bike and kayak rentals.

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 am was made by Steven Board and seconded by Melissa Lampe. Meeting adjourned.

Agenda items:

A reminder from Robin to have all requests for additions to the next meeting’s agenda to her by Tuesday, the week before the meeting.

The next meeting will be at 8 am on June 11, in person at Watertown City Hall

NOTE: These minutes are uncorrected, and any corrections made thereto will be noted in the proceedings at which these minutes are approved.

Submitted by,
Robin Kaufmann, Director of Watertown Tourism

Social Media Report

Facebook: 12,320 followers (Post views 507,900)

Visitwatertownwi.com: 1818 Users – 3259 views

Instagram: 1238 followers

- Regularly created content and posted to social media (now including BFTS)
- Updated events and business listings on visitwatertownwi.com
- Worked on billboard commitments (including graphic work)
- Attended Main Street Promotions Committee meeting
- Attended W.I.S.E. Chamber event
- Created marketing materials for Music on Main Concert Series
- Created marketing materials for The BIG Pop-Up
- Created marketing materials for Watertown AutoFest
- Coordinated multiple Watertown Tourism grant requests
- Met with Steve Zillmer for Veterans Memorial update
- Presented Tourism updates at EAA Chapter 320 monthly meeting
- Submitted Tourism's Annual Report to City for Department of Revenue
- Second meeting with Watertown Daily Times advertising group
- Met with MBU Marketing team to discuss promotion opportunities
- Met with Hiawatha West Service Planning Coordinators to discuss Watertown stop
- Created marketing materials for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall
- Attended Chamber Marketing meeting
- Visited businesses/events for promotional purposes:
 - Eleven East Bakehouse & Mercantile
 - Fiesta Las Margaritas
 - Sarah's Boutique
 - Silver Moon Watertown
 - Ebert's Greenhouse Village
 - MBU Spring Play – Little Women
 - Rock River
 - Goose & Gander Pub and Grill
 - Sake House