

Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee

June 23, 2014

Chair Karen Dahl called the Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee to order at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 23, 2014 in the County Boardroom of the Courthouse Annex. Members present were Karen Dahl, JoAnn Nickelatti, Glenda Sullivan, Gail Muller, and Adrian Amelse. Others in attendance were: Tim Hyma, Deann Horack, Al Lorenz, Maynard Cox, Sue Noble, Kevin Alderson, Ruth Gerber Rupp, Anne Muirhead, Connie McCullick, Michele Engh, and Jody Audetat. Proper public notice was confirmed.

Dahl moved to item number three (3) on the agenda-Roll call/Introduction of Visitors. Dahl had visitors introduce themselves and then introduced herself.

Dahl moved to item number four (4) on the agenda-Review/Approve Minutes for the May 20, 2014 meeting. Motion by Sullivan, second by Nickelatti to approve the minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Dahl moved to item number five (5) on the agenda-Public Comment and Remonstrances. There were none.

Dahl moved back to item number six (6) on the agenda-Finance Statement. Dahl gave the finance report. **Motion by Nickelatti, second by Sullivan to approve the vouchers that were submitted for payment. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Dahl moved to item number seven (7) on the agenda-Reports of Various Tourism Entities. 7a. Vernon County Tourism-Marie Cimino, not present. 7b. Hidden Valleys-Bernie Arena and Joe Fisher, not present. 7c. County Historical Society-Gary Krause. Maynard Cox, who is replacing Gary Krause, gave the report and museum updates. Cox stated that they just got done retrofitting the electricity at the museum and most was paid for by grants. They are working with the county and received grants from Ho-Chunk to pay for improvements. They did new concrete for the church and school and will also be painting both this year. He wanted to thank the county. Cox announced that the Sherry Butt House will be having Strawberry Shortcake Social on July 4th. He stated the capital campaign to raise money for an elevator for the museum has begun. He feels it is important for everyone to be able to access the 2nd and 3rd floors. Dahl asked how much has been raised already and what is the goal. Cox stated they have raised \$125,000.00 and the goal is a little over \$300,000.00. The elevator will be on the outside of the building on the south side. They wanted to have the ability to go all the way to the attic as there are a lot of records there belonging to Vernon County. He extended a welcome to anyone who wishes to visit the museum or the other buildings. Alderson stated that the museum is hosting "Business after Five" on July 2nd from 5:00-6:30 with refreshments and tours. 7d. Wisconsin Department of Tourism-Patrick Reinsma, not present. 7e. Alan Lorenz,

Mississippi River Parkway Commission. Lorenz stated their new visitor travel guide book is out. Agri-Tourism still needs a contact person for Vernon County. The group went through the Great River Road Wisconsin book and discussed the contents. Lorenz stated they still need to continue to identify sites for Vernon County. Lorenz stated it is the 75th anniversary of the Great River Road. Sullivan suggested including Wild Cat Mountain in the guide. Rupp asked what the best way to communicate with MRPC is if they have something to add. Lorenz stated there are a variety of people to contact or email, they could also call Lorenz until Vernon County gets a contact person. Lorenz asked if there was anyone interested in being a commissioner for Vernon County to replace Anne Muirhead. It is a 4-year term. They would serve out the rest of her term; term goes until February 1, 2016. Sullivan asked who to contact if someone wants to place an ad. Lorenz stated to contact him for 2015 ads. Dahl stated from her experience, this is the time when people gather data for next year's maps and publications. Lorenz stated they went from a 28 page to a 40 page guide with all of the interest and 50,000 guides get printed.

Dahl moved to item number eight (8) on the agenda-Driftless Destinations-Adam Sonntag and Tim Hyma. Hyma stated this is a motorcycle awareness campaign that was started a little over a year ago. They have created five routes in five counties with 65 destinations. It includes La Crosse, Trempealeau, Black River Falls, Sparta, Tomah, and Hillsboro and now looking to expand into southern Vernon County. If funding is available, Hyma wants to cover the entire Driftless region to attract people going to Sturgis, SD. There are 8,000 hits per month on their website, www.driftlessdestinations.com. Hyma received a \$34,000 grant from the Department of Tourism used to continue the process for this year. The brochures include no advertising; costs are covered by partnerships created. Hyma is requesting \$4,000.00 from Vernon County for a partnership. Partnership packages are priced at \$500-\$10,000. John Severson, Viroqua City Administrator, is interested in sponsoring with Vernon County to fill a \$4,000 spot. Hyma stated that he estimated an \$800,000 impact for the region they are promoting for 2015.

Dahl moved to item number nine (9) on the agenda-Cheyenne Valley Grant Application update. Engh gave an update on the application. Dahl stated she invited Alderson as he is the local authority on Cheyenne Valley and the round barns. Alderson gave a report about the area and the round barns. Alderson has done historical research on the area. Because of the Indian Removal Act in 1832, many tribes fled Georgia and Tennessee, moved west to avoid the Removal Act, and eventually relocated in this area. Many had African roots from slaves. It was the largest population in the state other than Milwaukee at one time. It also had some of the first desegregated schools, churches and cemeteries. The first postmaster in the Town of Forest was a black man and might have been the first in the U.S. The Cheyenne Valley Heritage Association is the organization of descendants and should be included in this process. Engh stated the state will be working with them. Engh stated that most of the structures are gone but there are funds available if we want to try to renovate a structure. Alderson stated there are two or three houses remaining and a cemetery. Engh stated valuable resources for oral history are the descendants who are available that lived in the desegregated community. Dahl stated you can research Cheyenne Valley, WI online and there is a lot of data including maps of the area.

Dahl moved back to item number seven (7) on the agenda-Sue Noble-VEDA. Noble gave an update and reported on grants that were received recently. Noble added that the Wisco Pop business was one of four top finalists to be the hottest young entrepreneur in Wisconsin.

Dahl moved to item number ten (10) on the agenda-New Business. There was none.

Dahl moved to item number eleven (11) on the agenda-Subcommittees of VCTPED Comm. Dahl stated for areas like Agri-Tourism, motorcycles, and the silent sports, etc., she would like to see subcommittees within this committee to concentrate on those items for the Vernon County Tourism website. Amelse asked what the subcommittees would be. Dahl stated they would be created and gave examples. Dahl asked visitors for their suggestions. She would like to see a map done and links for those activities on the Tourism page. Muirhead stated that De Soto is now a bird city. Alderson stated he feels there has been an absence of networking and would like a way for businesses to refer business to each other. Noble stated the Tourism Council is trying to find a way to address that issue. Dahl talked about the Vernon County website and her ideas for a home page. McCullick stated she can build a tourism website within the Vernon County website and gave hot spot ideas. Dahl stated she would like involve Horack and have her input putting the website together as she is a videographer. Dahl would like to work the economic development aspect with a link to available residential and commercial real estate in this area. McCullick stated she would gather ideas and bring back to committee.

Dahl moved to item number twelve (12) on the agenda-Vernon County Government Website, www.vernoncounty.org: 12a. Tourism: i. Narrative. Dahl asked for volunteers to work on narrative and video work-McCullick and Horack. Amelse said he is also willing to work with video and anywhere else they could apply his I.T. experience. Dahl agreed. ii. Graphics. Dahl asked for someone to do art. No one is an artist so Dahl will check on this outside the meeting. iii. Site Maintenance. Dahl asked for volunteers to work in Site Maintenance and asked Amelse to work in this area with McCullick. Amelse agreed. iv. All tourism entities listed. 12b. Community Inventories. i. Real Estate-Brokers.

Dahl moved to item number thirteen (13) on the agenda-Budget preparation for August-Finance Committee. Dahl asked visitors to gather information and give Dahl requests for funding for next year's budget before the next meeting for consideration. The committee will discuss and prepare the budget at the next meeting.

Dahl moved to item number fourteen (14) on the agenda-Old Business.

Dahl moved to item number fifteen (15) on the agenda-Set date for next meeting. The next meeting will be on Thursday, July 10, 2014 at 2:30 p.m.

Motion by Nickelatti, second by Amelse to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jody Audetat, County Clerk's Office.