

Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee

March 20, 2014

Chair Francis Hynek called the Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee to order at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 20, 2014 in the County Boardroom of the Courthouse Annex. Members present were Francis Hynek, JoAnn Nickelatti, and Glenda Sullivan. Others in attendance were: Al Lorenz-WIMRPC, Joseph Fisher-Hidden Valleys, Bernie Arena-Hidden Valleys, Jody Audetat and Marie Cimino-Westby House arrived at 10:30 a.m.

Proper public notice was confirmed. The committee reviewed the minutes from August 19, 2013. **Motion by Nickelatti, second by Sullivan to approve the minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Hynek moved to item number four (4) on the agenda-Introduction of Visitors. Hynek introduced himself and then had visitors around the table introduce themselves.

Hynek moved to item number five (5) on the agenda-Public Comment. There was none.

Hynek moved to item number six (6) on the agenda-Finance Statement. Audetat gave a report on items paid since the last meeting. This included the Tourism Council for \$10,500.00; Hidden Valleys for \$1,786.36; Southwest ITBEC for \$2,500.00; and Vernon County Historical Society for \$25,000.00. Budgeted items that haven't been billed as of today are Prairie du Chien Visitor's Center for \$250.00; VEDA for \$750.00; and Mississippi River Parkway for \$1,000.00. Hynek stated that the future committee should be aware of the Tourism Fund Balance Account. Nickelatti asked if that report could be included in the finance report at future meetings. Hynek stated that he would stop at the County Clerk's office to check on the Fund Balance Account. **Motion by Nickelatti, second by Sullivan to accept the finance statement. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Hynek moved ahead to item number nine until Cimino arrived at the meeting.

Hynek moved to item number nine (9) on the agenda-Bernie Arena, Hidden Valleys. Arena gave a report on Hidden Valleys. Hidden Valleys Magazine supports Southwest Wisconsin. Hidden Valleys has added driving tours and individual county maps with snowmobile trails, ATV trails and trout streams. They have formed some recent partnerships; one is with Driftless Destinations which is a motorcycle group that encompasses our northernmost tier of our area. She gave a report on which shows they had attended. They have also partnered with Wisconsin Agriculture Tourism Association this year. There was discussion on what was new at Hidden Valleys and what shows they have and will attend. Arena stated there were 5,000 maps printed this year. Marquette and McGregor in Iowa are also associate members.

Hynek moved to item number ten (10) on the agenda-Joe Fisher, Hidden Valleys Tourist Organization Representative-Maintain Website. Fisher stated that his major role at Hidden Valleys is to be involved in the website. He talked about some unique aspects of website. One is that nine counties are represented and each county was asked to come up with a keyword that would represent that county to be used in searches that will lead to Hidden Valley's website. Each county has a section on the website. Another unique aspect is that the guide is broken out into each county and specific sections can be downloaded separately. Other aspects are the calendar of county events and upgraded current maps. Fisher talked about the value of social media and would like to use social media sites to draw people to the website. Problems with social media are that in order to keep interest, constant updates must be done and the costs involved with that.

Marie Cimino arrived at meeting.

Hynek moved back to item number eight (8) on the agenda-Marie Cimino, Westby House-Request for Vernon County Tourism. Cimino gave a report on the Vernon County Tourism Council 2014 Budget. The Tourism Council receives funds from the Tourism Committee and Ho-Chunk. Mega Design, based out of Ferryville, has been hired, so they now have Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest pages. Cimino talked about tourism workshops and trade shows that are coming up. Hynek asked for suggestions to how we can partner with Hidden Valleys and their website to be more efficient and reach more people. Fisher answered that Hidden Valleys does have Facebook and Twitter pages. He stated they have been doing giveaways and E-mail signups at the shows to create more interest in the pages.

Hynek moved to item number eleven (11) on the agenda-Gary Krause, Vernon County Historical Society. Krause was absent so Hynek moved to next item.

Hynek moved to item number twelve (12) on the agenda-Patrick Reinsma, Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Reinsma was absent so Hynek moved to next item.

Hynek moved to item number thirteen (13) on the agenda-Alan Lorenz, Mississippi River Parkway Commission. Lorenz thanked the committee for the \$1,000.00 that is budgeted for his commission. Lorenz discussed the visitor's guide. The cost was covered by advertising sold. Lorenz also discussed past events along with what is planned in conjunction with this year's 75th Anniversary of the Great River Road. Lorenz asked the committee who would be a better contact person for Vernon County information; currently it is the Ag agent. There was some discussion on who could be the contact person. Lorenz stated that he appreciates the support. They are putting together an annual report on where the money goes and past/upcoming events. They rely on county support, primarily, and grants. He anticipates that they will be asking Vernon County for support again and hopes the county will possibly consider more than \$1,000.00 next year.

Hynek moved back to item number seven (7) on the agenda-Discussion-Available use of Ho-Chunk Funds for Tourism, Economic Development and Promotion. Discussed under item number fourteen (14).

Hynek moved to item number fourteen (14) on the agenda-Any new business. Under new business, Hynek suggested that the future committee see if a partnership can be made with Hidden Valleys, using Ho-Chunk funding, to develop a website and investigate costs and benefits; he feels that it's a pretty important function of the committee. Nickelatti suggested that someone could give a presentation to the board or the Finance Committee, possibly from the Parkways, to show what benefits come back to the county from what is invested. Fisher stated it is difficult to come up with a calendar of events and feels it would be beneficial to have one central contact person for everyone to report events to. This person could be introduced in a press release/advertising as the county "go to" person for all events and advertisers could easily find the calendar of events in one place. Fisher feels this should be a paid position to provide consistency that is not achieved with volunteers.

Hynek moved to item number fifteen (15) on the agenda-Any old business. Hynek stated that he would go to the Clerk's office to research the Fund Account. Nickelatti suggested adding Fund Account information to Finance Statement for future meetings. Cimino discussed the budget process. Hynek reminded the committee that they must present a request for Ho-Chunk funds ahead of time at the budget hearings. Hynek stated a previous chairman, Maynard Cox, was instrumental in the development of this committee and stated that he worked very hard to make it what it is today.

Hynek moved to item number sixteen (16) on the agenda-Set date for next meeting. That would be decided by the new chair and committee at a later date.

Hynek moved to item number seventeen (17) on the agenda-Public Comment. There was none.

The next meeting will be scheduled as needed. **Motion by Nickelatti, second by Sullivan to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 a.m. All in favor. Motion carried.**

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