

Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee Minutes for July 10, 2014

Chair Karen Dahl called the Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development Committee to order at 2:32 p.m. on Thursday, July 10, 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, Bernie Arena, Adam Sonntag, Greg Lunde, Patrick Reinsma, Marie Cimino, and Linda Morrison.

Proper public notice was confirmed.

Dahl moved to item number three (3) on the agenda- Dahl proceeded with the roll call.

Dahl moved to item number four (4) on the agenda-Review/Approve Minutes for the June 23, 2014 meeting. **Motion by Nickelatti, 2nd by Amelse to approve the minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Dahl proceeded with the introduction of visitors.

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

Dahl moved on to item number six (6) on the agenda - Finance Statement. Dahl gave the finance report. Dahl stated that they have \$253.64.

Dahl moved to item number seven (7) on the agenda-Reports of Various Tourism Entities.
7(a). Vernon County Tourism-Marie Cimino – She stated that she is anxious to work with the new Tourism board with all the new faces and new entities involved. The County Tourism Council has done a lot of things beyond the normal things that were done in the past. The maps have been a great success showing Vernon County, Crawford County and the Kickapoo Valley. There is also a great website, www.visitwisconsin.com. They have been able to advertise more in the last several years in places they've never been able to because of the money received from the Tourism Committee over the years and also the Ho-Chunk Funding Committee. She said that they have partnered up with the Department of Tourism and they are doing three shows with them. They do the Milwaukee Sports show, the State Fair and the Chicago Travel Show. These are all a part of the budget that was presented to the Committee today. Another market that they would like to try and target is the Green Bay – Appleton area. They are planning to do this through the social media (Face Book) and ads. This is in the 2015 budget as well. They do support a lot of local events in the County and those are a part of the budget, too. She stated that the budget she submitted does include the \$12,500 that they have been getting for the last two years. Amelse had a question on the dollar amount that was submitted for requests. It was explained that they are asking for \$10,500 and the regular \$12,500. The budget presented is for

\$23,000.00 total. Cimino explained that the \$10,500 comes at one time in a check and then they submit bills for the \$12,500.

7(b) Wisconsin Department of Tourism - Patrick Reinsma - He stated that one of the things they are doing that is new is “badges” through the social media. There are two sites in Vernon County. It is basically a “virtual” badge. So, if you have a Travel Wisconsin app on a smart phone, you have to have that app. When you go by either of these locations in Vernon County, it will send out a ping letting you know that you need to visit this place and you can get your virtual badge. It’s a new experiment that they are trying for the summer and are not sure if they’ll keep going with it. Reinsma invited everyone to send him a “friend” request on social media. He said it’s a good way to find out what is going on in the area. He spoke about the movie “Fort McCoy” that will be coming out soon. Dahl said that some people around here were extras in the movie. He said he watched the trailer and that it is a truly amazing film. It was made in 2011 and hasn’t been officially released yet. It will be released in August of 2014. It received the best drama award at Cannes Film Festival. It’s based on a true story of a German POW in Wisconsin. He’s not sure where the premier is going to be but he will be finding that out. He asked if anybody had seen the Tourism Economic Impact Chart. The sheet he had was from May of 2013, but, Vernon County was up 4.19%. Dahl stated that Vernon County was 51st in the State as far as tourism dollars. Amelse stated that this was really good data and when presented to the Finance Committee it should be highlighted that with the money that has been spent, although Vernon County is up 4.19%, it is growing quite rapidly and it’s a wise investment. Dahl said she did research on what impact the Arts had on the economics of tourism and the community. She said she would like to see what the Arts generate in tax revenue for the State. There was some discussion on the Arts. Reinsma sent a sheet around for anybody who was interested to sign up for the monthly e-newsletter. There wouldn’t be any spam and they could be kept up to date on what’s going on

7(c). Hidden Valleys President-Bernie Arena – She stated that 2015 would be their 38th year of partnership of nine southwest counties and they are very proud of that. She said if anybody is doing shows, they would like to partner more on them. They could save a lot on the postage of the Hidden Valleys Books and they do have some that do deliveries. She has 10 cases of books with her today. She said they have a very good network going. They meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month and at the next meeting they would be electing a new board. They would be also making plans and working on the budget for next year and looking forward to new members coming in. They are a “print component”. They are happy for the support and that print is not dead. People are certainly looking for this and they want to have the best impact they can. They have currently sent over 30 cases already to the Menomonie rest areas on I-94 and they are asking for more. She would like to do some kind of show up in that area and they are looking into that. They would like to network as much as they can.

7(d). Driftless Destinations – Tim Hyma & Adam Sonntag – Hyma stated that Sparta is known as the bicycle capital of America, but, biking has been down slightly this year. He stated that part of that was due to the long, cold winter and then 2 months of rain after that and all the flooding. Some of the trails in La Crosse and Onalaska were actually under water for a while. Everything is good now and things are starting to pick up again. On the plus side, when they created Driftless Destinations, you now can’t go down a rode without seeing a motorcycle. A lot of that has to do with the Discover Wisconsin television show that aired in early May. They started to do a weekend craft fair in their downtown area and it is free for vendors to set up.

It's on the last weekend of each month during the summer and that is starting to take hold now. It runs from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning. It coincides with their women's softball tournament. They have 32 teams playing and also that's when the downtown does their crazy days sidewalk sales. They did about 20,000 brochures, about half of those are out for the Sparta visitor guide. They did 20,000 of the Driftless brochures and they have less than 700 of those left. Hyma stated that they received a \$34,000 grant from the Department of Tourism last year.

Adam Sonntag – Sonntag gave his perspective on what they were asking for. He said the city of Hillsboro has already kicked in close to \$12,000 and they were seeing a huge impact. He stated that they were approached, luckily, by Tim, Tomah, La Crosse, Onalaska, and Black River and that they were really just small fish, but, it has been nothing but positive. They want to expand the motorcycle route here in Vernon County because of what it has to offer. They have invested in TV shows and he has been seeing the results come through their town every day with the motorcycles. Motorcycles are definitely a niche market throughout the entire state and the region. He said they have gone out on a limb with this and would like the county's support because they are a part of Vernon County and they are kicking money in all the time. They are also supporting other entities as well.

7(e). Mississippi River Parkway Commission – Alan Lorenz – He stated that they are the overseers, supporters and promoters of the Great River Road. He said that Anne Muirhead is their Vernon County Commissioner and will remain in that position until the end of the year. They will need a new Commissioner for Vernon County early next year. Governor Walker only requires one nominee. Lorenz asked everybody if they were aware of anybody that might be interested in being a Commissioner for Vernon County. If so, he would be very interested to hear about it. It was asked what the Commissioner does and Lorenz explained that the position is appointed by the Governor and they meet quarterly. They have a variety of committees that people are involved with. There are two national meetings a year and there are ten states that are involved in the Great River Road. He said that the Commissioners do attend the national meetings from time to time, but it's not necessary. Dahl asked if expenses were provided. Lorenz said the Commissioners are reimbursed 75% of travel expense. They are all volunteers and there are no per diems. He stated there are eight County Commissioners and four Legislators. Legislator Nerison is the representative for this area and is the most active of the four Legislators. They are looking for a representative for their Promotion Committee for Vernon County. He stated they exist primarily on donations from the eight counties and committees. The Department of Transportation does pay a certain percentage of the actual expenses and they have a wonderful partnership with the Department of Tourism. The Governor's Conference is being held March 15th through the 17th. They have partnerships with a variety of organizations and with the river being so important, there is a close relationship with Fish and Wildlife. There is a wide range of people who are advising and assisting. Dahl asked if there were brochures and if they had gone out to the various tourism entities. Lorenz stated that currently they are in bad need of producing additional information, both nationally and for the State of Wisconsin. Dahl asked just how strongly they have pushed the Genoa Fish Hatchery since it is one of the biggest and most significant ones in the country. Lorenz stated that the groundbreaking was quite an event last year. He said they received about 1.2 million of scenic highway funds towards their project. He said that bids are being left and if they are

successful in getting good bids, construction should be beginning on the new museum and aquarium and there will also be a site featuring the history of the Blackhawk War. He said the Genoa Fish Hatchery is kind of a treasure that people really don't know about, so, this will really bring it to the public's attention. Doug Aloisi is the Director of the Hatchery and the point person. His email address is: dougaloisi@fws.dob. Lorenz stated that this year they are asking for \$2000 from each of the eight counties and he submitted his request for monies. He said it pretty much features their marketing program. There was a discussion on the Visitor's Guide.

7(f). Vernon County Historical Society – Maynard Cox – He stated that they have Blackhawk trail markers on the Western side of the County and the number one area for handing out brochures is by the Fish Hatchery. Since March 31st, they have gone through over 900 brochures. He said they had a very successful 4th of July with the Sherry Butt Strawberry Shortcake event. It was well received by the community. Also, the postponed Viroqua Cemetery Walk is going to take place on Sunday the 13th at 4:00 p.m. They are still in the middle of their campaign for the elevator at the museum. They have had some pledges and donations. They are looking at doing co-ops since they are big in Vernon County. He stated they are just like everybody else in struggling with funding. Their membership is down a little bit. They found out that the schools in Vernon County have a program where you can do community service that is available for those who are close to graduating. They are doing a pilot program in De Soto Schools where they are encouraging the young people to come and visit the museum and help them out with some of the things that need to be done. Amelse brought up the budget and there was a discussion on that.

7(g). Vernon Tel – Deann Horack – She stated she did a lot of videos for different things for Vernon County last year and some of them have been for fundraising. There were two kick starter funds that she designed a campaign for and those have brought in over \$56,000.00 in the last five months. She said that Vernon Tel will let her make a television show on channel 14. There is a good example there of what might be useful and how she might be able to help with Tourism if the committee decides to do any budgeting for video work. Dahl stated that she felt that video is a good way to go and that it doesn't have to be a long presentation. She feels that they need to have a staff videographer and that Horack has 19 years of experience. Dahl said they are working with the IT Department on the website: www.vernoncounty.org and Tourism will be launching the videos soon. Vernon Tel has set programs now that they broadcast and they will be able to have that as a link on the County website. She has also been in touch with David Macasaet who did a video on the round barns of Vernon County. He gave her permission to put that video on the County website. She invited all to share any videos that they have and to be sure to send it to cmccullick@vernoncounty.org for the website. Horack said that she submitted a proposal for people who would be interested in making use of her field for their own purposes. She also had a business card to give for anyone who had any ideas on things they would like to do. Horack can also be reached at deannhorack@gmail.com.

8. Dahl moved to item number eight (8) on the agenda - Cheyenne Valley Grant Application Update - Dahl stated that the Cheyenne Valley Grant Application is in the mail. They are working on it through the Federal Government.

9. Dahl moved to item number nine (9) on the agenda - Sub-Committees of VCTPED Comm. – Discussion on who would be working on the different committees.

10. Dahl moved to item number ten (10) on the agenda - Vernon County Government Website – Dahl said this is being worked on and reminded everybody to get their website info to Connie in the IT Department.

11. Dahl moved to item number eleven (11) on the agenda - Budget Preparation – There will be a meeting after the regular meeting to discuss the budget.

12. Dahl moved to item number twelve (12) on the agenda - Old Business – There was none.

13. Dahl moved to item number thirteen (13) on the agenda - Set date for next meeting. The next meeting will be on August 12, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.

Motion by Amelse, second by Nickelatti to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m. All in favor.

Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Morrison, County Clerk's Office.