

**Minutes of Monthly Meeting – Washburn County Tourism Association
Tuesday, September 8, 2020 8:30 a.m.
Washburn County Visitor Center**

1. Meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Rene Magnuson.
2. Roll Call:

| | Sue Churchill | Nikki Janisin | Rene Magnuson | David Masterjohn | Joe McGrath | Victor Sacco | Sherry Sutton-Zanardo | Liza Temple | Colene Vivian | | |
|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|--|--|
| Present | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Absent | | | | | | | X | X | X | | |

Others present: Robin Berlin, Joel Zimmerman, Michelle Martin, Kaitlin Hanson

3. Masterjohn made a motion to approve agenda as presented, seconded by McGrath. Motion carried.
4. Minutes of the August meeting were circulated. Churchill moved to approve as presented, seconded by McGrath. Motion carried.
5. The Financial reports were circulated for review. Masterjohn moved to receive the financial report as presented, seconded by Churchill. Motion carried.
 - a. **Receipts/Reimbursements** - None
6. Citizen Comment: Michelle welcomed Robin Berlin to the meeting and thanked her for her work in our domain purchases.
7. **Correspondence:** None
8. **Board Member Application(s):** Michelle reported that Sherry is looking to resign her Stone Lake position due to her ability to make meetings; there are positions open in Birchwood and Shell Lake currently. The board reviewed the application for Robin Berlin to fill the Shell Lake seat. Masterjohn made a motion to approve Berlin’s application, seconded by Sacco. Motion carried.
9. **Wisconsin Indian Head Country, Inc. Proposal:** Michelle shared a proposal from Wisconsin Indian Head Country for a 2-page spread and sport show distribution for \$1,000 for 2021. Masterjohn made a motion to approve the proposal and place the advertising, seconded by McGrath. Motion carried.
10. **Insurance Policy Update:** Michelle shared the updated quote from Holden Insurance Agency for our liability insurance. The price is the same as State Farm; some minor additions. Discussion was had on sticking with our current provider or switching to Holden. Churchill made a motion to give State Farm the option to match the quote, seconded by Masterjohn. Motion carried.
11. **Visitor Center Upgrades:**
 - a. Lobby Plan – Michelle shared some of the proposed upgrades. Sacco asked for a rendering to share at the next meeting; Berlin offered to assist in creating a rendering for the project.
 - b. Outdoor Literature Rack Approval - McGrath made a motion to approve up to \$500 for updating the outdoor literature racks, seconded by Sacco. Motion carried.
 - c. Door Replacement Quote – Michelle received quotes on replacing the SE door; this will go through the building account.
 - d. Carpet Quote – Michelle received an initial quote on carpeting the building. The idea is to use the matching carpet tiles that the county is using, if possible, so that we can replace them as needed. More information to come on this project.
12. **Marketing & PR Plan:** As per our previous plan, our team would like to put a large emphasis on our public relations. In order to do so, they shared that it would be best to establish a Marketing & PR Committee comprised of a few board members and other interested parties. The committee would guide the staff members in brand strategy. McGrath and Berlin offered to participate on the committee. Churchill made a motion to establish a Marketing & PR Sub-committee, seconded by Masterjohn. Motion carried.
13. **Office Update:**
 - Welcome to Washburn County Sign Updates: The Highway 70 sign will be put up as soon as DOT issues the permit to work within the right-of-way if needed. We’re expecting a response on that this week. All locations will have to be on private land per our new contact at DOT.
 - Membership Update: We have received 19 renewals to date; we have through December to finish our membership drive.
 - Other:
 - Michelle’s fall schedule is two days per week in the office and three days working remotely; Kaitlin is in the office Monday-Friday at 8 a.m.; Kiley will be staying on as an occasional employee; Debbie should be back to work soon. We may need to hire someone temporarily for the remainder of September and October to get us through visitor guide production. If you know of anyone, please have them submit an application.

- Curbside pickup & the outdoor literature rack are helping to lessen our contact with walk-in traffic. The outdoor literature rack has been utilized more than ever before & needs to be re-filled often which is great for us!
- Best of WashCo 2021 Nominations have closed and voting will be put out later today.
- Michelle is headed out to a Public Property meeting regarding the Highway 63 DOT project that will affect the visitor center property
- Michelle is working with AudienceView to get the new rodeo ticketing system up and running before tickets go on sale
- **Business Outreach:**
 - Museum of Woodcarving has been moved to a new museum location in Ohio called BibleWalk
 - Prop's on Long (the restaurant) will have a new owner, Mac. Michelle has been in contact with him; closing date is October 1st.
 - McKenzie Landing is now under new ownership, a public post was put out on August 27th - the new owners are Dan & Kim from What the Heck
 - Pine Harbor Resort has sold & been condo-ed off
 - Jean's Antiques has closed
 - Thru the Woods Cafe is in the process of opening under new ownership & will be called The Blue Bobber
- **Travel WI Report:** No report

14. Marketing Report

- a. Marketing & PR Updates
 - Sales Promotion Update: Backyard Escape runs through September 30th - get your stamp card and spread the word! Pick up locations at JLAAC, Visitor Center & Shell Lake City Hall
 - Visitor Guide Update: \$15,000 current sales - about \$30,000 to go; Sample cover photos will be sent out for comments
 - Website: Switching over to a fall theme this week; fall blogs are starting to launch; Best of WashCo articles are now all linked on the site
 - Other Marketing
 1. Photo Contest judging link will come out later today; please send your response by Sunday night
 2. Fall/Winter Marketing - As we see things slowing down, staff is recommending placing strategic digital ads such as search engine marketing to keep our website performing well. These programs are easily paused if we see a spike in covid cases. Feedback from the board was to go ahead with online placements for fall and winter.
 3. 2021 Marketing - With some of our deadlines this year for next year's marketing, staff requested approval to place marketing that would occur in 2021. Feedback from the board was positive and the board encouraged the team to go ahead with those placements.
 4. Visitor Statistics & Website Analytics reports were shared for August.

15. WCEDC Discussion: Following the August meeting, follow-up questions were shared with Joel Zimmerman, Washburn County Economic Development Corporation. See Q&A below. In addition, Joel shared some positive news on the Broadband front.

- a. **Question #1** - What marketing/outreach is being done to connect with businesses OUTSIDE of our area to bring in new opportunities?
 - There isn't an ROI for economic development marketing to solely attract businesses from other areas and that focus should be on strengthening current businesses. When the local economy is strong and current businesses are doing well, that will attract other businesses more than anything else will. WCEDC's focus is on improving infrastructure. WCEDC does not have much money for marketing and relies on WCTA to market the county. Joel advised reading "Town Inc." by Andrew Davis, who will be the keynote speaker at the 2021 WCEDC Banquet.
- b. **Question #2** - We have MANY empty buildings in our county...what is being done to get that info out to businesses?
 - Many of the empty buildings are not usable or even up to code. Others are held in family trusts and aren't available for purchase.
- c. **Question #3** - With new tourism businesses coming to the Washburn County area, is there any way to share that information with WCTA prior to opening although not public information? WCTA staff, knowing the information shared would be confidential, could help with start up efforts knowing what the area has a need for in the tourism industry.
 - Tourism related businesses can be shared with Michelle and Kaitlin. Often times due to the confidentiality of starting a new business, even the WCEDC board doesn't have details in the early stages. Joel commented that he refers tourism-related businesses to speak with the WCTA team regularly.
- d. **Question #4** - Is there some way WCTA is able to help with a marketing plan to effectively reach further outside of Washburn County? Creating a strong & effective plan to create awareness of what WCEDC does & how they can help support businesses, relocate, start up, etc. is super important especially during this time.
 - WCEDC will follow WCTA's marketing lead since it is effective and established.
- e. **Question #5** - The "Why Washburn County" was a great plan, will this come to fruition? It seems like now more than ever something like that would be a super effective piece to have out for new businesses.

- Why WashCo started before Covid-19 hit and part of it is waiting on broadband infrastructure. Stay tuned!
16. Citizen Comment: Joe from Minong Flowage Association shared updates from the group and asked for a letter of support from WCTA for the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant.
 17. Possible Future Agenda Items: Visitor Center Lobby Plan
 18. Motion to adjourn was made by Magnuson, seconded by McGrath. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

Next Board Meeting Date:
Tuesday, October 13, 2020, 8:30 a.m.
Washburn County Visitor Center