

Tourism Commission Meeting Review Minutes
November 7, 2023
Held at the Merrill Chamber of Commerce

Members Present: Dan Wendorf, Sue Kunkel, Sara Gilbert, Nate Meyer

Absent: Jeremy Ratliff, Kathy Lezotte

Staff Present: Clyde Nelson, Cheryl Skoug

Others Present: MP3

Called to order: 12:03pm by Dan Wendorf

Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes from last meeting reviewed, and a motion to approve meeting minutes as written was made by Sue Kunkel, seconded by Nate Meyer, voted, and carried.

Report that was provided to the Common Council – Holding this meeting to review the 2024 Budget and review 2024 Grant applications. We will not be able to have a complete motion to approve the Budget today, will have to hold another meeting. We did not have enough voting members, for two of the voting members would have reframed from voting at the Lincoln County Fair for their involvement with the Fair.

- Money that did not go out in 2023: Barleyfest (cancelled), Lion's Club Car Show, Merrill Youth Hockey Bantam and Squirt Tournaments did not use all the granted funds.
- In the current budget the amount for Tradeshows is higher because we are going to four different trade shows in 2024 that we had to pay to reserve the booth space.
- We will be attending trade shows in Iowa, Green Bay, Lacrosse, Madison, Tomahawk and possibly the State Fair.
- Still missing is the 3rd Quarter payment from Room Tax. The money will be sent in December.
- 2024 Visitor Guide will be changing to hit on more of the silent (biking, hiking, kayaking, etc.) sports.
- We are following in the State's footsteps by going to Iowa to reach more people to bring them here for vacation.
- The Merrill Chamber is down to 50 visitor guides out of 10,000 that were printed for 2023.
- We have used a local printer for the printing of the visitor guides, but this year we will be using a different printer. The new printer is \$5,000 less than the local printer. No money will be used from the room tax to pay for the guide.

Budget – Numbers for the budget that are presented to the Chamber for the 2024 budget look good but will need to be voted on by more members.

Grant Applications –

- Sled Dogs – This is a unique ever to Merrill. Would like to see them use the funds to advertise outside of the Merrill area. Asking for \$400, suggested grant \$400.
- Lion's Car Show – A lot of their budget goes to printing postcards and posters that get mailed and handed out to past registered participants, and to different shows that are attended. Will need to highly encourage them to hit outside a 50-mile radius. Asking \$1500, suggested grant: \$1200.

- Lincoln County Fair – Lodging is almost always full during the fair. Class & family reunions are happening during this time. Posters that are printed go up around Lincoln County along with the booklets. Money from the grant is not supposed to pay for the general advertising in the Merrill Foto News. They use the WJMT, WJJQ and Midwest Communications for radio advertisers. Off the Clock – is a place that is used to advertise the music that will be at the fair. Will be holding another meeting to review amounts. One of the bigger events for Merrill. Was informed that a public comment was made to one of the commissioners on why does the fair and rodeo get the same amount granted to them? The fair is five days, and the rodeo is 3 days. Do not have enough voting members to vote.
- Wisconsin Pro Rodeo – Another big event in Merrill. Brings a lot of people to our community. Asking for \$20,000, suggested to go with \$16,000 – same as the Fair.
- Merrill Concertina – Great event for the area. Funding used for posters, membership to have been able to advertise on a certain Concertina website. Asking for \$450, granted \$450.
- Underdown Trail Ride – great event. Asking for \$850, granted \$850.
- Black Squirrel Scurry – growing event for silent sports. Asking for \$1,000, granted \$1,000.
- Underdown Fat Bike Races – Badger State Games event in February. Brings a lot of people to our community. Asking \$250, granted \$250.
- Carry the Cross – currently asking for \$1,000 to \$10,000. The commission agrees they cannot grant any money to this application without a plan in place. No information was given about how funds would be used. This application was late to be turned in. Once they can give more information to the commission, if funds are available in 2024, they could reapply.
- Ice Drags- if they have money left over, they donate it to a non-profit in Merrill. Asking for \$5,000, granted \$4,000.
- Question was asked if there is a way to educate the Grantees about using their funds wisely? Maybe we could get the grantees together for a marketing educational meeting through the Chamber. Provide resources for people to contact for advertising outside of Merrill.
- Would like to find out how many rooms are used for the Rodeo and the Fair directly.
- The Chamber will be focus on advertising on silent sports in 2024. The city is adding kayak outlets along the Wisconsin River.
- Will need to have an in-person meeting with the commission to finalize the 2024 Budget and Granted amounts.
- A motion to table the 2024 Grants and budget until next meeting was made by Nate Meyer, seconded by Sarah Gilbert, voted, motion carried.

Next meeting will be TBA but will be held no later than November 15, 2024, at the Merrill Chamber office. Email will be sent out at least 24 hours prior to a meeting.

A motion to adjourn at 1:38pm was made by Sue Kunkel, seconded by Nate Meyer, voted and motion carried.