

**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Tourism Committee, Park & Rec Committee
And Harbor Commission Held
On Tuesday, August 23, 2016 Pursuant to Notice Duly Given**

1. Meeting called to order by Mayor Heier at 5:00 p.m.
2. Roll Call: Jean Feldt, Doug Thompson, Dale Mohr, Ron Hayes, John Wittkopf, Dean Reed, Todd Hearley (excused at 6:10 p.m.), Diane Motiff, Nancy Rhode, Ellis Mercier
Excused: Sue Anderson, Beth Aubut, Roger Reed, Dick Olson
Absent: Diane Le Breck, Tracey Bostedt, Nathan Figueira, Butch Mehlberg
Also Present: Mayor Heier, Alderperson Le Breck, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Lauren Resch, Administrator Sara Perrizo as recording secretary and other interested parties
3. Approval of Agenda
Moved by Wittkopf, seconded by Motiff to approve the agenda as presented. M/C
4. Public Input/Correspondence
None.
5. Discussion/Possible Recommendation on:
 - a. Promotion and Marketing of the City of Oconto
Feldt handed out a document titled "City of Oconto Marketing Goals" that was drafted by the Tourism Committee based on information obtained from the First Impressions report submitted by Algoma. Mohr explained that last year the Tourism Committee wanted to find out if an impact was being made outside of the City, so they teamed up with Algoma and did a "secret shopper" exchange. Algoma first gave their thoughts on Oconto before arriving, then went online to view all City social media sites and finally made a visit here.

Feldt stated that one of the main goals is to develop a marketing plan for the City. She then proceeded to go over the Goals document, beginning with the goal of strengthening the downtown business district development and attraction program. One of the concerns that was identified is that when a business puts up a new sign, they are charged a fee for a permit and that fee is based on the size of the sign. The preference would be to give an incentive for putting up a new sign, rather than penalizing the business by charging a fee. Hayes asked why the fee is based on the size of the sign. Perrizo stated that is unknown. We require a permit to ensure that the signs are constructed adequately and there is a cost to reviewing that, but the fee structure could be changed. Hearley opined that it would make more sense to charge a flat fee. Hayes stated that we are asking people to improve their properties, but then are penalizing them for doing so. Perrizo noted that there are other strange things in the sign ordinance, such as not allowing signs to be lighted, but allowing neon lights. Hearley suggested a sign which would list all of the businesses that are located in the City, so people coming into the City know what is available here. Thompson noted that Algoma also has signs that protrude out from the buildings, which make it easy to tell what is located there.

Mohr suggested that the Tourism Committee draft the recommended amendments to the sign ordinance and then it can be sent to the Building Inspection Ad-Hoc Committee. Incentives could

be offered, such as waiving all fees for one year, to get people motivated to make improvements. Perrizo will put this on the next Tourism Committee agenda.

Reed suggested having a board with all business names on it located at the entrance to the City. Hayes stated that maintenance and updating tasks would need to be assigned to someone. Also, many people will use technology to find what they are looking for. Mohr suggested putting QR codes on the signs, but Rhode stated that she has learned in training that people are more likely to Google what they are looking for versus scanning a code.

Rhode would like to see the City promote a façade program. This is one of the eligible uses for OCEDC's new microloan program.

Feldt went through the remainder of the list of marketing goals. Discussion ensued regarding an adopt a storefront program, which would entail community groups setting up displays in empty storefronts to make the downtown feel more welcoming. Hayes noted that this would require contact with the owners of the buildings, which may give them incentive to do something on their own. Rhode suggested continuing the flower pot program into the Fall and Winter, adding decorations for each season, or to have each business adopt a light pole and decorate it. Discussion ensued regarding the prevention of vandalism and the possibility of installing security cameras. Another suggestion for downtown is to create incentives for businesses to adhere to City codes.

The next item on the list is to put Oconto on the map. Possible ideas include a comprehensive community calendar, identifying places to go and things to do, incentives for community groups to develop activities and heavily promoting each of these through social media. Hearley suggested music and craft festivals on a larger scale, similar to those held in Greenville and Lakewood. Rhode informed that the Wisconsin Department of Tourism has grants available to help sponsor new events. Mohr opined that Oconto does events well, but people need to know what to do when there are no events going on. Algoma has their own guide for this. Le Breck stated that we need to use our websites and other avenues to reach out to people. Thompson suggested that a marquis calendar of events would be a good idea. Motiff noted that the calendar on the City website needs to be updated. Perrizo and Rhode both pointed out that the information on events has to get to the City in order for it to be put on the calendar. Hayes feels as though having something to put into people's hands will have a great impact and Rhode noted that a printed guide can also be placed on a website.

The third item on the list is to polish Oconto's gems. Ideas include continued investment to highlight our best assets, enhancing the riverfront and improving the connection between downtown and the Harbor. Feldt commented that once people are in the 45 mile per hour speed limit area, they are out of town in their minds. Mayor Heier stated that the County Highway Commission was approached about lowering the speed limit on County Y between the Harbor and the City limits and they refused. Discussion ensued regarding attending more meetings of the Highway Commission and reiterating this request.

Feldt was informed that kayaks and other equipment is not available for rent at the Campground on Sunday afternoons because there is no staff on duty. This doesn't make sense to the Committee and Reed will investigate and find out why this is.

The final item on the goals list is to improve the walkability of the neighborhoods. Perrizo stated that at one time there was some uncertainty regarding the future of sidewalks in the City because it was being considered to tear them out of one side of each street. Now that we know that this is not going to happen, the Public Works Department is working on making repairs to the sidewalks. Hayes noted that there is an influx of traffic on Holtwood Way from the campground and that road needs repairs. Also, the campground showers and bathrooms need to be replaced. Reed and Motiff informed the committee that the Park & Rec Committee is working on a grant to replace those structures, as well as add a storm shelter.

6. Next Meeting Date – October 20, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.

7. Adjourn

Moved by Reed, seconded by Feldt to adjourn.

Motion carried upon verbal voice vote.

10 ayes

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sara J. Perrizo, CPA

Administrator