

CITY OF VERONA
MINUTES
TOURISM COMMISSION
May 21, 2019
Verona City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Jason Hunt called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.
2. **Roll Call:** Sara Hoechst, Jason Hunt, and Charlotte Jerney were present. Also present: Adam Sayre, Interim City Administrator/Director of Planning and Development; Dayna Sarver, Economic Development Manager; Brian Lamers, Finance Director; Ellen Clark, City Clerk; Le Jordan, Executive Director of the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce (VACC); and Halley Jones, VACC Tourism Coordinator. Charlie Eggen and Pat Wehrley were absent.
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **Minutes:** Motion by Jerney, seconded by Hoescht, to approve the April 16, 2019 Tourism Commission minutes. Motion carried 3-0.

5. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: 2019 1st Quarter Hotel Room Tax Revenue Report.**

Lamers presented the 2019 1st quarter hotel room tax revenue report:

Room Tax Paid to City	\$ 131,235.57
Chamber Payment	(70,000.00)
Convention Bureau 6% Payment	(7,874.13)
Sports Commission 10% Payment	(13,123.56)
Excess to be Retained	867.21

Accumulated excess is \$151,166.

2:04 p.m. - Charlie Eggen now present.

6. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: Tourism Commission Reserve Fund Policy**

Sarver explained that at the last meeting we talked about setting aside \$100,000 of the accumulated excess funds to ensure that the Commission would have money to make the quarterly payment to the Chamber of Commerce in the event of an economic downturn. Options for utilizing the funds were also discussed. A Reserve Fund Policy was drafted with longevity in mind, so it would not have to be updated on an annual basis. Sarver asked the Commission for comments or requests for changes to the policy.

Hunt commented that he is glad to see that the policy states that the Commission will strive to reserve a minimum of \$100,000.

Motion by Jerney, seconded by Eggen, to approve the City of Verona Tourism Commission Policy No. 1 – Reserve Funds. Motion carried 4-0.

7. **Uses for excess room tax funds in reserve**

Sarver stated that the City now has \$151,166 in the reserve fund. Staff is asking for direction from the Commission on how the excess \$51,166 should be treated. What are

the Commission's short and long-term goals for the use of that money? Should we let the fund continue to grow, or should we begin investing in larger events?

Eggen stated he would like to see both things happen. Opportunities are going to come that will be above what the Chamber will be able to handle with the grants portion of the budget. New lights at Redden Park are an example. We need to determine how we can develop new events and incentivize the creation of those events, and still keep some assets. He does not think we would be able to grow the fund large enough to help pay for a big development.

Sarver stated that was true, but the Tourism Commission could be asked to participate in a larger project like the Confluence in Eau Claire. That project had multiple local and state funding sources. Sarver suggested that a five-year strategic plan would be a good idea in an effort to plan for both short-term and long term projects and limit the risk of funds being whittled down by unplanned projects that don't help the commission reach its goals. Sarver asked if over the next 6 months, the Commission would like Staff to plan on having a budgeted amount of money to spend, or simply use what money is there.

Sayre asked the Commission Members what Staff can do to help them. We want to work together, so that what Staff brings to the Commission is valuable to them. Sayre stated Staff can only recommend options for using the reserve fund. The Commission is the ultimate authority. The more specific criteria we have, the easier it will be to efficiently use time and resources proposing events and projects that have a higher likelihood of approval by the commission.

Hunt stated that investment in capital projects is more long term. He does not think that the Commission wants to get into that. He stated he would like to keep the funds to create flexibility for non-routine things that might come in.

Eggen stated a rainy day fund could be \$50,000. We could do a lot with that. Beyond that, anything built up could be used for development.

Hunt would rather use the seed money we have to entice an event to the City.

Hoescht stated there are existing places in town that could use some help with updating or expanding.

Hunt stated when the Commission began, we did not have an economic development staff person with the City or a Tourism Coordinator with VACC. He would like to see the Commission use the Staff it has.

Jones stated we are starting to create Verona as its own experience. Here is what you can do in Verona; a day or a weekend in Verona.

Eggen stated we need to change the conversation. Why can't there be day trips from Verona to Madison or New Glarus? It is important for Staff to have the tools at their disposal to be able to work with event organizers and developers.

Jones and Sarver will work together to draft a plan for the commission by the end of the year.

8. Reports and Comments from the Tourism Coordinator

Jones stated her goal is to go to every business in Verona with the new tourism brochures, tell them how the brochures will be utilized, and talk to them about what they are planning to do with their businesses in the next few years. In addition, she was trained on how to use an extranet list from Destination Madison, which consists of 36 pages of upcoming events scheduled in the area. We could reach out to some of these people. If a convention center is built here, we may be able to start reaching out to larger entities. The reserve money may help us out with enticing entities to come to Verona. Jones also reported that she has been hearing from parents that they would like to see artificial turf on the baseball fields at the new high school, as it may attract more tournaments to Verona. Maybe an area business or businesses would like to sponsor the turf in exchange for advertising at the fields.

9. Reports and Comments from Staff

Sarver reported that in 2018, tourism had a total economic impact of \$2.2 billion in Dane County.

Bike Week is June 2 – 9, 2019. Several businesses are offering discounts to people that bike to their business.

It is important that people and businesses planning an event complete a Special Event Permit application at least 45 days before the event. Surrounding businesses should be notified at least 30 days in advance of the event date if parking in the area will be impacted.

Discussion followed regarding Destination Madison's "Bring Your Meeting Home" project; the possibility of hosting the regional or state portion of a national sports competition; hosting smaller weekend gatherings that may grow over the years to something larger; partnering with restaurants, the winery, hotels, etc. to entice event organizers; and offering time plans for smaller events.

10. Reports and Comments from Commission Members

None

11. Adjournment

Motion by Jerney, seconded by Eggen, to adjourn at 3:08 p.m. Motion carried 4-0.

Ellen Clark, City Clerk