

CITY OF VERONA
MINUTES
TOURISM COMMISSION
September 17, 2019
Verona City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Jason Hunt called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call:** Sara Hoechst, Jason Hunt, Charlotte Jerney and Patricia Wehrley were present. Also present: Adam Sayre, City Administrator; Dayna Sarver, Economic Development Manager; Brian Lamers, Finance Director; Ellen Clark, City Clerk; Le Jordan, Verona Area Chamber of Commerce (VACC) Executive Director; Halley Jones, VACC Tourism Coordinator; Jill Skowronski, 6AM Marketing; Lisa Beck, Discover Wisconsin; and Jesse Charles, Verona Area Historical Society. Charlie Eggen was absent.

3. **Public Comment:**

- Pat Wehrley presented flyers for the Verona Area Performing Arts Series (VAPAS). They are looking forward to a great season.
- Jesse Charles explained the Historical Society has never had a place to store artifacts. A homeowner of a small historical home on East Park Lane is offering the Society a chance to purchase the house to use as a history center. He asked the committee members if they think this would fit the Tourism Commission’s mission, and if so, what the next steps should be for the Historical Society.
Sayre asked Charles to put together as much information as possible on this item, so we can put it on the next agenda.

2:05 p.m. – Charlie Eggen now present.

4. **Minutes:** Motion by Jerney, seconded by Wehrley, to approve the May 21, 2019 Tourism Commission minutes. Motion carried 5-0.
5. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: 2019 2nd Quarter Hotel Room Tax Revenue Report.** Lamers presented the 2019 2nd quarter hotel room tax revenue report:

Room Tax Paid to City	\$169,384.26
Chamber Payment	(\$ 70,000.00)
Convention Bureau 6% Payment	(\$ 10,163.06)
Sports Commission 10% Payment	(\$ 16,938.43)
Excess to be Retained	\$ 21,467.50

Accumulated excess is \$172,634.33

Eggen stated there are not as many Epic travelers during the week. There are 10,200 hotel rooms in the Madison market now.

6. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: Year in Review presentation by Jill Skowronski, 6 AM Marketing**

Skowronski explained 6AM’s January – September 2019 marketing plans for the City of Verona. The winter campaign, “Play Your Way, Stay Our Way” was designed to attract outdoor enthusiasts to Verona. Snowmobiling, skiing, etc. were emphasized with a target market of ages 35-55. The highest performing ads were about snowmobiling.

The spring campaign emphasized “Gal pal” weekends. The target audience was women looking for an inexpensive travel destination with lots of things to do. The results from this campaign were the most impressive of the year. Two summer campaigns, “Our Trail Mix Has Something for Everyone” and “The Ideal Hub for your Golf Trip”, targeted higher income biking, golfing and outdoor enthusiasts.

A paid search campaign was conducted for people visiting Epic for any reason, and looking for a place to stay.

Jerney asked if there is a rate comparison between Madison & Verona.

Skowronski answered they are comparable, depending on what is going on in the city.

There were also ads featuring Hometown Days and the Ironman Triathlon . 6AM will be targeting social events through the fall. They will also continue to run the paid search for Epic visitors.

Wehrley asked if it would be possible to do videos for upcoming shows.

Skowronski replied that would be called pre-roll. The customer pays an amount per month to target people who like the theater, and similar pass times.

7. Discussion: Discover Wisconsin and potential Verona participation

Lisa Beck explained how Discover Wisconsin partners with communities to bring tourism to their area.

Discover Wisconsin is privately owned by Mark & Lisa Rose, and is the longest running tourism show in the nation. The goal of the program is to bring people here to spend money.

This would be a 2-year campaign – 2020-2021. Filming would take place in 2020, with the episode releasing in the spring of 2021 and airing one more time during 2021. The program runs in eight states, reaching 11.5 million homes. Five radio programs are also part of the package, airing on 40+ stations in 70 counties. Streaming using apps such as Roku and AppleTV is also available. The discoverwisconsin.com website has over 1.5 million visits annually. Each community is featured for five weeks on the site. Media relations are also included.

Full campaign investment is \$45,000, payable over three years. Smaller campaigns dedicated to specific mediums are also available at lower cost.

Eggen stated 6AM has delivered professional marketing materials and campaigns that we cannot do on our own. He feels good about what they have been building for us.

Jordan stated some other marketing firms have come in, and they have not been able to live up to what 6AM is doing for us. We will not stop taking those meetings, but for now 6AM is doing a good job.

Halley has started a weekly live Facebook interview program. The Sow’s Ear was featured in the first edition of the program. She will be interviewing a different business each week.

Eggen stated we have the money set aside for big things like Discover Wisconsin; we should get on the bandwagon with them. The environment in Wisconsin is very competitive now.

Hoescht stated the streaming is a great asset. It will always be there, and people can search for it. It is not a one and done thing.

Hunt stated they have a system in place already. It would be good for us to jump on.

Hunt asked if the Commission's extra money could be used to participate in Discover Wisconsin.

Sayre replied we would have to put that on the agenda and vote on it.

Eggen stated it should be in the form of a request from the Chamber for additional money to be used for Discover Wisconsin.

Sayre emphasized that it should be a separate proposal, not part of the annual budget.

Reports and Comments from the Tourism Coordinator

Jones presented a tourism video produced by the nephew of one of her contacts at Close Publications. He is just getting started as a videographer. She had been looking for someone to do a tourism video for Verona, so she asked him to create one. He produced a two minute video at a fraction of the cost of other videographers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pnc1UAe1e0c>

Reports and Comments from Staff

None

8. Reports and Comments from Commission Members

Jordan stated they plan on having a draft budget ready to present at the October meeting.

Eggen commented that the way that our room tax commission budgets are structured, the Chamber has a hard dollar budget agreement, and all the other entities are on a percentage basis.

Eggen stated Madison is in the same situation we are, but they have more money. Some is hard dollar, and some is percentage. When there is a downturn, you have to decide who does not get their share. The Chamber is going to get short changed at some point. It may be better to structure it as a percentage of room tax revenues. The Commission can still hold a reserve. The entities should also maintain their own reserves, so it does not all fall back on the Commission.

Jordan stated we used to have a percentage, but the Commission asked to have that changed.

Sayre stated part of the challenge was the fluctuation in room tax revenues, so they did not know how much they were going to have to work with from one quarter to the next.

Hunt stated we should also talk about scheduling meetings, so we all know when meetings will be held.

Sayre recommended that they keep a monthly meeting on the schedule.

The consensus of the Commission was to schedule the next meeting for October 29th

9. Adjournment

Motion by Eggen, seconded by Hoescht, to adjourn at 3:45 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.

Ellen Clark, City Clerk