

**City of Faribault
Tourism Commission Minutes
Monday, January 23, 2017 at 4:30 p.m.
Faribault City Hall – Public Meeting Room**

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Kevin Voracek called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room of the Faribault City Hall.

Commissioners present: Rod Gramse, Tami Schluter, Erin Sellner-Honken, Kevin Voracek, and Jana Woodside (arrived late). Commissioners absent: Susan Garwood and John Sheesley. Also present: Director of Community Marketing Nort Johnson, Jana Viscomi, City Administrator Brian J. Anderson, and Administrative Assistant II Gina Carlson.

2. Routine Business

A. Minutes

Commissioner Voracek noted a typographical error in the minutes. The title of item #5 *2917 EMT Grant Success* should be corrected to read *2017 EMT Grant Success*.

Motion by Commissioner Sellner-Honken, second by Commissioner Gramse, to approve the November 28, 2016 Tourism Commission minutes with the noted correction. Motion carried.

B. Financial Reports:

The monthly paid bills report, monthly P & L, and current Budget vs. Actual financial reports were submitted for approval. Director Johnson indicated the year-end wrap-up is on track with the projections and some additional funds will be coming in from the 2016 State Grant. He anticipates the amount will be in excess of \$3,000.

Motion by Commissioner Gramse, second by Commissioner Sellner-Honken, to approve the financial reports as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Requests to Be Heard – None

4. Review Visitor Guide

Director Johnson noted that materials had been laid out for review prior to the meeting. The image on the cover was selected based upon feedback from the previous review by the Commission. Commissioner Schluter requested that all of the content pages be made available to the Commission for additional review.

Johnson highlighted some of the photos that were used. He noted the size of the food listings was reduced and the bottom of the page is reserved for advertising. Advertisement sales are presently flat, but that is normal for this time of year. Johnson asked for feedback on the two-page map layout and indicated that markers will be added for F-Town Brewery (tours), Donahue's, and biking trails. Johnson indicated the top images from the visitor guide will be utilized on the webpage.

5. Review New Website

Director Johnson presented the new website to the Commission. A new icon was added that allows the visitor to “hover” over the menu. The website was modified so the historic downtown lodging is now separated from the Interstate lodging.

Jana Viscomi stated there is an issue when using the website on a mobile device. Viscomi stated the photos do not represent the listing correctly; when you click “next”, it displays a photo not pertaining to the listing. Commissioners Voracek and Gramse stated that when you click “next”, the website is advancing to a photo of the next location, and not another photo for the listing. Director Johnson stated he will look into the issue but believes it will need to be fixed by Josh Elwood with KeyMedia Solutions.

6. Director’s Report

Director Johnson presented his report. Updates included:

A. Lodging Tax Breakdowns:

Director Johnson gave a breakdown of the lodging tax collected for 2016. 97% of the revenue collected was from Interstate lodging facilities and 3% of the revenue collected was from downtown lodging facilities.

B. 2016 Revenue Comparisons

Director Johnson presented a spreadsheet of the 2016 Lodging Tax Revenues collected in comparison to previous years.

C. MACVB Update

Director Johnson stated he is working on the placement of Faribault tourism materials within the metro Twin Cities publication. The Southern MN Tourism Association (SMTA) also has publications for advertising.

Johnson indicated the Main Street program would like to see a stronger Wi-Fi presence in Faribault. Data shows that visitors demanding Wi-Fi has increased from 53% to 79%. Commissioner Gramse did not feel that stronger Wi-Fi presence is a driving force for tourism in Faribault but feels it may make for a more enjoyable visit for tourists.

D. Tourism Conference

Director Johnson noted that the 2017 Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference will be held January 30- February 1, 2017, at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront in downtown St. Paul. He invited members of the Commission to stop by the booth if they are in attendance.

E. Blogging Schedule

Director Johnson stated that content with keywords and photograph suggestions have been compiled for the blog. He indicated there is a blog post for almost every event and several article ideas have been generated. A story will be added to the blog weekly. Currently, there are 12 – 15 stories with room for 15 – 18. Johnson asked Commissioners to email him any story ideas they may have. From April through September, the blogs will feature heavy content. Traffic will be measured during that timeframe.

Commissioner Schluter asked who will be doing the blogging. Johnson stated the bloggers will be Sam Thorson and Audrey Hepling. To qualify for grant funding, an outside agency must be utilized to do the blogging.

F. Hospitality Group Feedback

Director Johnson stated the hospitality group met at the Faribault Chamber of Commerce last week. The group would like to find a better way to engage groups coming to Faribault for high school events. Johnson indicated the group discussed advertising. Commissioner Gramse suggested the hospitality group contact the Faribault Booster Club and work with them directly. Gramse recommended advertising by the scoreboard rather than within the printed program. Commissioner Sellner-Honken wanted to see all of the sporting groups included in the effort. Johnson will research available options.

7. Miscellaneous

Director Johnson thanked the Commission for its support during the difficult past month at the Chamber of Commerce. He stated that the support of the Commission and the community has been greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Voracek asked Commissioner Woodside for a status update on her time remaining on the Commission. Woodside stated she believes she will remain on the Commission into March of 2017. Voracek stated there was a typographical error as it pertains to the length of Woodside's term on the Commission. Technically, the term expires on January 31, 2019. When the vacancy is opened, the term will be staggered and a determination made if the appointment will be for two or three years.

Director Johnson stated he will have a 2016 year-end financial report and a dashboard report for the website available at the next meeting.

Director Johnson reported that as of January 23, 2017, the number of likes on Facebook had grown to 1,327.

Director Johnson gave an update on the visitor center at the Paradise Center for the Arts. Signage has been placed and a literature rack has been set up. Johnson stated he is looking into having an on-site television that will play a continuous loop of tourism information. He noted that the visitor center is open on Sundays only when an event is taking place at the Paradise Center for the Arts.

Director Johnson noted that the MinneRoad Trip will be promoted at the Rochester Home Show, Iowa Home & Garden Show, Minnesota Tourism Show, and through the partnerships with Faribault, Owatonna, and Northfield.

Director Johnson reported that the distribution of magazines is up 25% and the pick-up rate for the tri-fold publications doubled over that of magazines.

Commissioner Voracek requested a correction be made to the website listing for the Blue Collar BBQ event. Voracek requested "PCA" be added before Blue Collar BBQ to clearly indicate the event is run by the Paradise Center for the Arts.

Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Sellner-Honken, seconded by Commissioner Gramse, to adjourn the meeting at 5:19 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Carlson

**Gina Carlson, Administration
Administrative Assistant II**