

Western Iowa Tourism Region Annual Meeting June 7, 2017 • Convention Center • Sioux City

Call the meeting to order: President Erika Newton called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. and welcomed everyone to Sioux City. Many projects are taking place around Sioux City right now with plans to build a \$20.2 million hotel to connect to the convention center. The landscape will also change as work has begun on a greenspace project just to the east of the Convention Center. Many events are happening in the near future with Awesome Biker Nights, the Farmers Market is open, many entertainment venues have been booked and happening all the time.

She also welcomed Shawna Lode from the Iowa Tourism Office who was joining us for the day.

President Newton explained that the Silent Auction was set up in the back of the room and bidding will continue after lunch until the speaker begins.

Approval of the agenda: James Kessler moved to approve the agenda with Lana White seconding the motion. Motion carried.

Approval of the June 2016 Annual Meeting Minutes: Kenner Baxter moved to approve the minutes with Lisa Riggs seconding the motion. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Freda Damman presented the financial report and reviewed a number of items on the report. We are fortunate to have all 36 counties pay their dues this year. We have one more payment from the state office. The final year report will be given at the July 26th meeting in Clarinda. The books will again be reviewed by an accounting firm and submit the report to the state. Everyone worked hard this year to end the 2017 year with a balanced budget. President Newton thanked Freda for the report. Pat Fleshner moved to approve the report with Kathy Dirks seconding the motion. Motion carried.

State Tourism Office Report: Shawna Lode was on hand to report the following:

National Tourism Week (May 8 -12):The Iowa Tourism Office staff spent several days traveling Iowa to meet with partners in every county (about 213 meetings.) It was a great chance to see long-time friends and meet new partners. The goal of the meeting was to remind/educate partners on how they can connect with our programming. Please let us know anytime we can come to your destination.

FY18 budget: The Iowa Tourism Office will see about a \$317,000 reduction in programming funds in FY18. The tourism office is losing five FTE, \$250k from the marketing budget, \$45 from the regions, \$9k from grants. (IEDA's budget is down from \$15.5 million in FY16 to \$13.4 million in FY18.)

FY18 co-op: Budget for this program is not cut in FY18. Reservations opened June 6. Thanks to the committee that helped us create the program: Charlotte Doehler-Morrison, Mark Eckman (Council Bluffs) , Erin Haines, Laurie Haman, Heidi Kelley, Jennifer Pickar

Iowa Travel Guide: We will produce an Iowa Travel Guide in 2018. Ad info is available now.

Regional Sports Authority: Applications were out on June 1 and due July 7th. By law, only Convention & Visitors Bureaus are eligible applicants.

Iowa Tourism Grant Program: There will be a new process in FY18, per industry feedback. Applications will be available August 21st and due October 2nd. The program will NOT use iowagrants.gov beginning in FY18.

Instafam: The Tourism Office is hosting their first Instafam June 5-9. Unlike traditional media fam, this fam brings in six Instagrammers from around the country. They have been vetted for quality images and strong Instagram followings. Participants are required to post about Iowa from their accounts during the fam and to use #thisisiowa and will provide their images after the

fam. Fam visits central and western Iowa, primarily with the visit in Western Iowa at the Garst White rock Conservancy.

Iowa Tourism Conference: October 25-27 in Sioux City. Save the date postcards are in the mail. Registration opens June 28. Award nominations available July 1. Per industry feedback, beginning in 2018 the Iowa Tourism Conference will annually take place in Des Moines to align with TFI's legislative event(s). A smaller fall event may travel around the state. Thanks to everyone who gave feedback about this. Continued input is welcome as we begin to build this out.

President Newton thanked Shawna for the report and said that we would find a way to handle the budget cuts. She encouraged everyone to apply for the grants.

Iowa Tourism Conference: In the packets was a sheet of information about the upcoming conference Oct. 25 - 27 in Sioux City. Early registration opens June 28th and runs until Sept. 21st. Hotel information is included on the sheet and reservations can be made now.

Tourism Conference Scholarships are available now and applications were in the packets. Potential applicants are asked to contact the office so they can receive the application electronically and it will be sent out in the weekly emails. There is funding for 10 scholarships and they are due August 11th.

The **Silent Auction** will be held again at the annual conference and helps to hold down the cost of registration, so please consider donating to it. This can be done online.

Tourism Award Nominations are also explained in the packet. We encourage many nominations from Western Iowa. Please take some time to submit your attraction, community, event, or marketing projects.

The next Iowa Tourism Conference is expected to be held in January or February of 2019 so be sure to take advantage of the conference in Sioux City this year. We have a great roster of speakers.

Travel Federation of Iowa: Andy Milam restated that budgets were cut this year across the board and we need to be talking to our legislators. The regional marketing funds did not survive in the standings bill this year. We have to remember that we are an \$8.6 billion industry and we generate \$466.7 million in tax revenue - far more than most industries. We need to convince our legislators that we need \$2 million from those taxes generated to assist with marketing our great state. This should be our key issue this year.

Andy encouraged everyone to be a **District Leader** so establish a relationship with your legislator and continue this through the session. District Leaders will be asked to sign up before the Tourism Conference in October so go out and introduce yourself to your legislator this summer.

Election of Board Members and Officers: Julie Hering-Kent, chairperson of the nominating committee reported that we have several board positions up for re-election: Kathy Dirks from Harrison Co. Historical Village and Welcome Center and Jessica Brownmiller of the Le Mars CVB have agreed to serve another term of 3 years. Andy Milam from the Grotto in West Bend was fulfilling a one year term from last year so he was nominated for a 3 year term on the board. Kenner Baxter from Cass County was nominated for a 3 year term and Meredith Maranville of Clarinda has agreed to serve a two year term to fill out the term of Sarah Gomez.

Officers nominated for a one year term: Erika Newton has agreed to serve another year as president (because of Evan Blakley's resignation from the board), Freda Dammann has agreed to Vice President and Andy Milam will serve as Finance Officer.

President Newton asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, James Kessler moved to elect the slate of Directors and Officers as presented, with Pat Fleshner seconding the motion. Motion carried.

President Newton congratulated all those elected and thanked them for representing the region.

Recognition of board members and committees: Success depends on the level of commitment, creativity and effectiveness of communication with each other, government leaders and visitors. She thanked everyone who had served on the board this past year and presented them with a gift.

Julie Hering Kent, Executive Director of the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce.

Jessica Brownmiller, Le Mars Convention & Visitors Bureau

Freda Dammann, from the Manning Haubarn/Heritage Park.

Evan Blakley, Chamber and Development Council of Crawford County.

Pat Hume, Southern Loess Hills Welcome Center .

Sarah Gomez, Midwest Partnership

Cora Lahr, Hart Family Hotels.

Kathy Dirks: Harrison Co. Historical Village & Welcome Center

Andy Milam: The Shrine of the Grotto of Redemption.

Committee members were also awarded gifts:

2016 Iowa Tourism Awards - Kiana Johnson, O'Brien County Economic Development & Tourism

Iowa Tourism Grant Committee - Julie Hering Kent, Cherokee Chamber of Commerce

The Iowa Tourism grant review committee - Annette Deakins, Missouri Valley Chamber of Commerce and **Lynsi Pasutti**: Midwest Partnership

TFI Sector Plan - Mark Eckman, Council Bluffs CVB, **Andy Milam**, The Shrine of the Grotto of Redemption, & Shirley also served on this committee

TFI Board Members- Lisa Riggs, Danish Windmill Corporation, **Kathy Dirks**, Harrison Co. Historical Village & Iowa Welcome Center, **Andy Milam**, Shrine of the Grotto of Redemption

Rebecca Peters: Okoboji Tourism, and Shirley also serves on TFI.

Iowa Group Travel Association Board- Meredith Maranville, Clarinda Chamber of Commerce, **Linda Underwood**, Holiday Inn Express Council Bluffs & **Andy Milam**, Shrine of the Grotto of Redemption

Website Taskforce - Erika Newton, Sioux City Convention Center, **Evan Blakley**, Chamber & Development Council of Crawford Co. & **Jessica Brownmiller**, Le Mars CVB

Membership Taskforce - Patsy Hume, Southern Loess Hills Welcome Center

2017 Iowa Tourism Conference committee - Kathy Dirks, Harrison Co. Historical Village & Welcome Center, **Andy Milam**, Shrine of the Grotto of Redemption, **Erika Newton**, City of Sioux City, **Brent Stockton**, Sioux City Convention Center & Shirley serves on this committee as well.

Iowa DOT TODS Committee - Shirley Phillips, Western Iowa Tourism Region

Nominating Committee:- Julie Hering Kent, Cherokee Chamber of Commerce, **Elaine Farwell**, Clarinda Chamber of Commerce, **Josee Beier**, Council Bluffs CVB, **Kiana Johnson**, O'Brien Co. Economic Development & **Laurie Westergaard**, City of Lake View.

We're grateful for our volunteers and hope that you will want to serve our region as volunteers in the future. If there are any committees that you are interested in, please let Shirley know.

President Newton also thanked the staff - Shirley & Jane - for all their work this year.

Freda Dammann presented **Erika Newton** with her president's gift and thanked her on behalf of the region and industry for her leadership and dedication and wished her well for the next year.

Best of's - Shirley Phillips reported the reason we asked everyone to submit their "Best Of's" to us so they can be considered for a video project. She explained how to fill out the sheet which will be sent to everyone in a Weekly Email.

She also reported that we are finalizing one of our special projects this year of building **itineraries** which could also be an option for the videos. These will appear on our website, social media and also on the state website.

Annual Report: President Newton called attention to the annual report in the packets. Please share them with your supervisors and your boards.

Introductions were held with people telling about one summer event they are looking forward to this season.

Everyone was encouraged to put the **next meeting** on their calendars: July 26th at the Nodaway Museum in Clarinda.

Adjourn: Andy Milam moved to adjourn the meeting with Julie Hering Kent seconding the motion. Meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Following lunch our speaker was Diane Amundson from Winona, Minnesota, on "Networking for the People who Hate Networking."

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Silent Auction and also to those purchasing the items.