

Western Iowa Tourism Region Meeting Minutes

Feb. 21, 2018 • Boulders Conference Center, Denison

Call the meeting to order: The meeting was called to order by Vice President Freda Dammann at 10:33 a.m.

Welcome: Evan Blakely, Executive Director of the Chamber & Development Council of Crawford County, explained that five years ago there was no tourism in Crawford County and this year they have \$175,000 in hotel/motel tax. Crawford Co. is the headquarters for Boulders Inn & Suites with a 90-95% occupancy at their two properties. They boast the Donna Reed Foundation, the McHenry House, Majestic Hills Golf Course, Yellow Smoke Park, the Crawford Co. Speedway and shooting sports.

Contents of the packets: Freda explained that the packet includes an agenda, page 2 with additional information, Clay Co. Fair booth information, Power of Travel notification and upcoming meetings, minutes from our last meeting, the financial report and registration information for Roger Brooks Destination Development Summit

Approval of agenda: Kathy Dirks moved to approve the agenda with Laurie Gilbert seconding the motion. Motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes from Nov. 2017: Lana White moved to approve with Kenner Baxter seconding. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Treasurer Andy Milam presented the report and asked for questions. Pat Fleshner moved to approve with Becky Hatting seconding the motion. Motion carried.

State Tourism Report: We will wait for the Town Hall meeting after our meeting to receive an update.

Travel Federation of Iowa: President of TFI, Andy Milam, reported on the successful Legislative showcase with the new format and where some of our legislative issues stood. One of our main issues is to fund tourism. With \$502.3 million in tax generated each year, the legislators need to re-invest in tourism to help promote not only tourism, but the quality of life in Iowa. The school start date bill did not materialize this year. Iowa Water & Land Legacy still needs to be funded. It was approved in 2010 but there has been no funding provided. He also explained the DRAM shop legislation and how it affects our events and communities. He promoted advocacy and education and encouraged everyone to attend their legislative coffees or forums. Shirley explained the hotel/motel tax issue when someone stays more than 31 days in a motel, the tax ends and the community ends up losing revenue due to construction or long term stays. Watch for the Capitol Reports from our lobbyists.

Clay County Fair opportunity: Shirley told the members that the Clay County Fair is again offering free booth space to members of Western Iowa Tourism Region to promote their attractions and communities. Please see her if you would like to claim a half day or whole day during the fair, Sept. 8 -16th.

Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves and told a reason why they attend the WITR meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m. with lunch following and then the Tourism Office Town Hall Meeting followed.

Town Hall Meeting: Jenna Beary opened the discussion around the upcoming **Tourism Conference** to be held Feb. 6-8, 2019 at Prairie Meadows in Altoona. She asked about last year's conference and also about suggestions for this year's conference.

The following was suggested:

Shelly Greving - perhaps incorporate a trade show and have it open 2 hours for the public and then the legislators.

Kathy Dirks asked to keep the annual Tourism Awards.

Lisa Riggs asked how we would make sure we have time for the legislators if the showcase was held during the conference. Would they come out to Prairie Meadows instead of the Fairgrounds? If we moved it to the Iowa State Fairgrounds, would the conference provide transportation for all the attendees so they can attend as part of the conference?

If the showcase was held at Prairie Meadows, Kathy Dirks asked if we could bring in the food and beverage that we usually do at the Fairgrounds.

This is all a consideration to a successful showcase.

Andy Milam suggested that we hold it on Tuesday prior to the conference and keep the venue of the fairgrounds.

Co-op Advertising: Jenna went on to say that the cooperative advertising goes on sale May 1st so please plan accordingly.

Shirley Phillips asked about the truck wraps on the Alcohol Beverage division trucks. There will be 21 trucks this year so there will be more to bid on. The office will send information in the next week or so. Any participants must have high resolution artwork.

Shawna Lode followed up by telling us that they have **travel writers** coming to Council Bluffs in June.

The new **Iowa Visitors Guide** was passed out and many changes were noted. Kathy Dirks asked if we couldn't have camping in the guide as this and lodging had been removed this year. Many people asked why some things were included in the guide and others left out. Shawna explained that hours dictated many eliminations.

The #99Restaurants promotion is going on right now and over 1100 people have downloaded the list from the website.

We all need to use the **#thisisiowa** tagline.

Shawna also noted that the Iowa Tourism grants this year will use Jotform again instead of the lowagrants.gov.

Other discussion ensued.

Meeting adjourned.