

Western Iowa Tourism Region Meeting **Oct. 24, 2018 • Saints Center, Stuart**

President Freda Dammann called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and covered the packet information.

Welcome: Steve Kroeger, member of the White Pole Road Development Group and Scenic Byway, welcomed everyone to Stuart. Tom Smull then gave a brief history of the Saints Center and how it was renovated after the devastating fire. .

Approval of Agenda: Brian Kessler moved to approve with Jill Heisterkamp seconding the motion. Motion carried.

Approval of Aug. 2018 Minutes: Beth Waddle moved to approve with Sandra Leininger seconding the motion. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Kenner Baxter presented the report noting that everything is in order for this time of year and that our state review and Tax Return have been filed. Lisa Riggs moved to approve the financial report with Laurie Gilbert seconding the motion. Motion carried.

State Tourism Office Report: Jessica O'Riley gave the report.

- She introduced Kanan Kappleman who is the day-to-day manager of the Tourism Office now. Jacque Matsen is in charge of strategy and overarching operations of the department.
- **Iowa Tourism Conference:** February 6-8, 2019, at Prairie Meadows Casino, Racetrack & Hotel, Altoona
 - Registration now open at traveliowa.com/conference. Through December 31, registration is \$225. Between January 1-29, increases to \$250.
 - Award nominations start Monday, October 29. Deadline is Monday, December 3. No changes to categories.
 - Silent Auction will be coordinated by TFI this year.
- **Iowa Tourism Grants:** Grants currently with reviewers. In-person meeting scheduled for 11/9. Successful applicants will be notified by Thanksgiving.
- **Arts Build Communities Grants:** Iowa Arts Council is offering grants up to \$10,000 plus assistance from Iowa's three regent universities to Iowa nonprofits, schools and tribal governments. Learn more at iowaculture.gov.
- **TTRA:** LuAnn Reinders is in Las Vegas, Nevada, attending TTRA's Marketing Outlook Forum, the industry's leading strategic travel forecast conference. She's also attending the TTRA board meeting as the CenStates Chapter Liaison.
- **MTJA:** Jessica O'Riley will attend the fall conference of the Midwest Travel Journalists Association in Dekalb County, Georgia, next week. She will attend the board meeting (currently serving as Associate Vice-President) and meet with dozens of Midwest writers to promote Iowa destinations.

Tourism Conference Scholarships are available: Shirley reported that the applications are ready for the 2019 Iowa Tourism Conference. Registration information is now online at traveliowa.com. Please consider applying for one of these. The cost for the conference is \$225 this time and the room rates at Prairie Meadows are \$ 112 - ask for the Iowa Tourism Conference block.

We will be able to fund 10 scholarships again this year as indicated in our proposed budget. It always helps to have a couple of alternates in case of illness, etc.

Tourism Award Nominations - Last year a number of you submitted nominations and that was great and we had quite a few Western Iowa people recognized. We have a lot to brag about here in our region, so please consider this as you move through the year and start gathering your information and economic impact so you can submit the paperwork for the awards.

Travel Federation of Iowa: Andy Milam gave the TFI report.

Election Day is coming very soon – Nov. 6th. Please know who the candidates are in your area and what they support. Just a side note, remember that if there is a shift in power, that means that all the agency heads will more than likely change as well. This sometimes happens anyway, but you might want to think about this as you head to the polls.

Now is the time to establish a relationship with your legislator or candidate as soon they will be headed to the Capitol for committee meetings before the session begins on Jan. 14th.

Our identified issues for next session are:

- Language that ALL lodging/transient properties pay the applicable hotel/motel tax by requiring an audit in each community to confirm that the 50% of lodging tax mandated by statute is being designated for tourism marketing, infrastructure and related purposes. We need to strengthen enforcement language that ALL lodging/transient properties pay the applicable tax with penalties for non-compliance.
- Extend the length of stay from 31 to 90 days for when hotel/motel tax is collected. No lodging tax is collected from anyone that stays longer than 30 days, including the first 30 days of their stay.
- Funding for the state tourism office – continue to advocate for a larger budget as a return on our investment. Tourism is now an \$8.5 billion industry for Iowa with \$507.1 million in taxes generated. It only makes sense that we use some of the tax generated to continue to market Iowa. We need people to travel here, move here and work here.
- School Start Date: It's rearing its ugly head again. We have to be on our toes as some legislators are being pressured by the schools to start earlier. As you remember we compromised on the Aug. 23rd start date and worked with Save Our Summers. Education now takes 51% of Iowa's entire budget – meaning if they continue to want more money, it has to come from somewhere and tourism is a tax generator. The Iowa Association of School Boards is currently rallying support from the schools for this.
- We will continue to support IWILL, Enhance Iowa – the CAT program, and any activity involving Workforce Development.
- Eastern Iowa Tourism Assn's director, Carrie Koelker, is running for her Senate District 29 and should be an advocate for tourism.
- We are currently developing a Fast Facts booklet which will help you with the issues and they will also be distributed to all the Legislators after the election.

Clay County Fair: Shirley reported that the total attendance for the 2018 Fair was 308,603 so there was a large audience for our booth. The dates for next year's Clay County Fair is Sept. 7 – 15, 2019, so mark your calendars.

Freedom Rock Brochures: Shirley reported that we printed 1,000 brochures for the Clay County Fair and they were very popular. Harrison County's rock was painted the week of Sept. 19th and the Buena Vista County rock was being painted Oct. 15th. We have two more rocks in Western Iowa to be painted and then all 36 counties will have their rocks. Then we will reprint the brochure. It is online now on our website and has also been sent to every county with a Freedom Rock. Please help boost the link.

Economic Impact Statements: Many of you as well as your county representatives have been sent the latest Economic Impact Statements showing the past 15 years. These are also sent to the county supervisors when we ask for their investment in the region. The whole region report is posted on our website so you can compare your figures with the others.

Roger Brooks Destination Development Summit 2.0: April 23 & 24, 2019 at the Carrollton Inn in Carroll. Gather a team from your community. We will be picking up where we left off in Manning and developing an Action Plan for your Unique Selling Proposition for those participating. Shirley is working on registration information.

Next meeting: Our next meeting is December 12th in Holstein at Boulders Inn & Suites Event Center. Our speaker will be Kathy Peterson with a thoughtful humorous speech on "Working with you is killing me."

President Dammann also suggested we work on itineraries at our December meeting so bring ideas and we'll fill out information at the meeting.

Adjourn: Andy Milam moved to adjourn at 11:30 a.m. with Brian Kessler seconding. Meeting adjourned.

Presentations were given by Brad Riphagen, Field Coordinator for Trees Forever on Community & Trails Visioning and Bethany Waltersdorf, Right of Way Agent for the Iowa DOT on signing available for communities and tourism entities.

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Phillips