

**Tourism Board Meeting
Tuscola City Hall – 214 N Main ST
June 19, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am. In attendance: Drew Hoel, Bill Hill, Randy Hastings, Donna Kidwell, Devon Flesor-Story, Sarah Wasilosky, Michelle Black, Brian Moody, Alta Long and Stepheny McMahon.

Drew presented the minutes of the March 19, 2024, meeting. Randy motioned to approve the minutes as presented and Bill seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion, the motion passed.

Devon motioned to approve the financial reports through May 2024 and bills list from 02/24/2024- 06/14/2024 in the amount of \$50,236.95. Randy seconded the motion. Alta noted many Sparks in the Park bills are on this listing including fireworks All were in favor, motion passed.

Old Business:

Drew presented a grant request for the Tuscola Alumni Association for their Homecoming celebration. The request is for up to \$800 for entertainment and \$500 for advertising. Randy motioned to approve the request and Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion, the motion passed.

Stepheny, Alta and Drew updated on the efforts at the new park next to the community building. Flower planting has been done and maintenance is on-going. There is one planting bed being managed by Cindy Pringle as a butterfly garden. Signage will go up explaining the natural habitat. Lighting displays are being evaluated to try to get something that stays up year round and changes color with seasons or holidays. Stepheny is working with community members on mural possibilities. Drew mentioned he is researching irrigation systems for the park.

New Business:

Alta gave an update on the community ambassador program. Michelle Black has accepted a PT position as ambassador to assist with events. The City council has approved that personnel appointment. As a result of that appointment, Michelle informed the board of her resignation from her board position.

Stepheny and Brian gave an update of the transition of their organization from Tuscola Economic Development to Douglas County Economic Development. They are working on many initiatives including a new website. Brian updated the board generally on several development prospects he is working with.

Stepheny updated the board on tourism efforts, including looking at marketing firms to help with new ad designs; Chamber membership drive; new Christmas tree décor for downtown planters; and Downtown history walking tour signage.

Devon and Bill mentioned that next Halloween (2025) will mark the 50th anniversary of the Douglas Hotel Fire.

Bill introduced the idea of OPEN flags for downtown businesses. He thinks that uniform flags for each business would be beneficial so that visitors would know when a business is open. Bill proposes tourism provide these flags. Staff will do a bit of research on this idea.

Devon opened discussion on the Flesor's Candy Kitchen 20th anniversary coming this August and their on-going building rehabilitation project. Devon asked for more signage directing traffic to alternate downtown parking areas. Flesor's is asking the board to approve a grant to them in the amount of \$20,000-25,000 for their anniversary street party and fundraiser. As Devon is also a board member, she will read a statement and then leave the meeting so the request can be discussed. Sarah Wasiloski, also with Flesor's Candy Kitchen, will remain to answer any board questions. Devon read a statement about Flesor's contribution to the community and the excitement they hope to generate. Devon Flesor-Story left the meeting. Sarah Wasiloski addressed the board and explained what she is planning and what they are requesting for the anniversary party. Discussion was held. Alta mentioned that the entire grant budget for the fiscal year that just began May 1 is \$12,000 and that this request is for more than the Sparks in the Park celebration costs, not including fireworks. It was mentioned that the board has denied grant requests in the past for organizational fundraising events, as recently as its last meeting. Sarah explained that she has contacted other downtown businesses and several are planning to be involved in the event and they feel it would be a community celebration that tourism dollars should support. Specific requests are \$8,000 for bands and \$11,032.50 for kids inflatable type entertainment. Randy stated the board cannot support the request in the amount requested and suggested Sarah work with Stepheny and Michelle to refine the request.

Drew motioned to continue the meeting to June 25 at 8:30 am so that Flesor's has time to revise their request. Randy seconded the motion. All were in favor so the motion carried.

Meeting is adjourned until June 25, 2024 at 8:30 am.

The continued meeting was called to order by Drew Hoel on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 8:30am

Members present: Randy Hastings, Bill Hill, Donna Kidwell, Devon Story

Staff present: Drew Hoel, Brian Moody, Stepheny McMahon

Guests present: Michelle Black, Sarah Wasiloski

Sarah Wasiloski gave handouts to everyone outlining new plans for the Tuscola Family Fun Day to be held on August 31st. She shared information about the bands, participating businesses, games and activities for the one-day event. Family friendly activities will take place during the day with adult activities/beer tent in the evening. Sarah's request was for \$13,310.81 without paying workers to run the inflatables and \$15,290.81 if we paid workers to run the inflatables. Her request also included \$5,000 for radio marketing.

Randy said he had spoken to several downtown businesses and they were very excited about the event. He said one upcoming business plans to be open and doing something special for the

event though he couldn't say what that business would be. Another potential new business has shared they will not be ready to open by the 8/31 deadline.

Bill suggested the event organizers install some temporary vinyl banners on Route 36 and Main to attract and direct people. He also suggested that date would be a good time to introduce the new "Open" flags at all businesses to display when open for business.

It was asked if the Family Fun Day could participate in cooperative advertising with the Cheese Festival to show there will be more happening in Douglas County Labor Day Weekend.

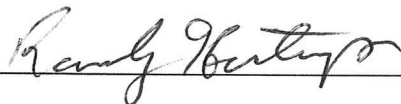
The group discussed that there will also be a wedding happening at the Community Center so the festival promoters need to be aware of parking, etc.

Allowing for-profit and non-profit vendors to attend was also discussed. Devon liked the idea of letting all attend for free instead of charging a vendor fee.

Drew made a suggestion that the city grant \$8500 for the festival and another \$3000 for marketing. After some discussion, Randy motioned to grant \$12,000: \$8500 for the festival and \$3500 for marketing. Bill seconded and the motion passed unanimously with Devon Story abstaining.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: **To be determined as needed and notice provided as necessary**

Approved:  Randy Hastings, President