

**Tourism Board Meeting
Tuscola City Hall – 214 N Main ST
July 23, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am. In attendance:, Bill Hill, Devon Flesor-Story, Michelle Black, Brian Moody, Alta Long and Stepheny McMahon.

Stepheny shared that the minutes of the June 19, 2024, meeting were in the packet but as there was not a quorum present a vote could not be taken.

The financial reports through June 2024 and bills list from 06/15/2024-07/18/2024 in the amount of \$15,414.88 were included in the packet but as there was not a quorum present a vote could not be taken.

Old Business:

Stepheny shared that the packet included a schedule of the remaining 2024 tourism meetings.

Stepheny then shared a report on the 2024 Sparks in the Park activities. All agreed it was a successful day. Stepheny pointed out that there were three new food vendors that Michelle recruited. She also shared that a soccer parent had shared their surprise that there were so many activities and planned to attend next year. Bill shared that the Fireworks were great and that he heard feedback from participants that they would like to see live music back in the future.

Stepheny shared research she had done on the “open” flags for businesses that Bill had mentioned at the previous meeting. The cost per flag would be approximately \$100. Stepheny had listed twelve downtown businesses that would appeal to tourists and noted to add Calf’s Western Wear to the list. After discussing the group agreed that all of the downtown businesses, including services, should be included in the offer for flags and selected a black and gold option where the word “open” was written on the diagonal. Steph asked if tourism dollars could pay for flags for non-tourist businesses and Alta explained that 1% of the hotel/motel tax can be used to help all Tuscola businesses. Alta pointed out that the businesses would need to install the flag brackets themselves. Bill added that he could probably help. Bill pointed out that if a business closed they should be required to return the flag. Steph mentioned that they should also order a few extra for new businesses and replacements and noted that these will need to be replaced periodically due to fading, wear and tear. It was decided that Stepheny would reach out to all of the downtown businesses to learn of their willingness to participate and bring that back to the group before ordering.

Devon shared that she is ordering a nice plaque for the Flesor’s building that will say “made possible for Friends of Flesors 2024.”

Stepheny reported that she was working with Ainslie Heilich on murals for the downtown. The first will be replacing the Coca Cola mural installed on Flesor’s east wall beginning on 8/31. Steph asked Devon if she had planned to pay for the mural or if she was wanting the city to pay for. Devon said it had been discussed previously and that she hoped the City would pay for it.

Steph noted that Ainslie had quoted \$3000 but could do the work for \$2500. Steph recommended we pay \$3000 as that is still a very fair price and all agreed.

Steph shared conceptual drawings Ainslie had produced of a mural for the back of the Township building, the exterior of which is owned by the City. All really liked the concept and feedback included a desire for fewer black birds and the addition of more color perhaps by adding a dragonfly, bee, hummingbird, finch or other colorful bird. Steph also discussed the idea that the planter boxes on Main and Sale could be painted to look like faux architectural detail. Devon suggested having them done with masonry with real detail but the group agreed the cost and maintenance would be higher and that by painting them it could be easily recovered in future.

Steph mentioned that Kelsey's furniture is interested in having the mural in festival corner redone but that Ainslie believes the wall will need to be tuckpointed and prepared before it can be painted upon. Alta mentioned that there is also a need for landscape updates in the park and that this can be a future project to begin planning. The existing mural on the wall depicts the Douglas hotel that burned down 50 years ago on Halloween. Alta said we'll need to check with Drew to see if any sort of agreement needs to be signed between the City and property owners as these murals are installed. Alta mentioned having a family member who had a great experience with Kelsey's give a marketing testimonial of how good their prices are. Finally, Steph mentioned that the Senior Center's west wall might also be a site for a future mural. And Bill mentioned the Kelsey Warehouse that faces Main Street might be another option. Bill shared that the Lumpkin Foundation has grants for murals and that Steph could reach out to Linda Hantz

Steph reported that plans for the Family Fun Day on 8/31 are well underway and that she and Michelle had shared vendor and entertainment options. Sarah Witkowski has most of it planned now but more vendors and organizations are reaching out to participate. Alta shared that the council passed the request for road closure and logistics assistance at council last night. They questioned Kelsey's closing due to the event but Steph shared Kelsey's always closes on Labor Day weekend so it's not due to the event. Bill suggested signage from the downtown through the mini-alley so that people would know there is more happening at the park. He then asked if the City intended to name the park and Alta responded it is something she would like council to do. It was suggested that someone reach out to the wedding contact who has rented the Community Center that night to share info about the festival. Alta said she would ask Ann to do so.

New Business:

Steph reported she is waiting on a proposal from Clanin Marketing for drone footage, advertising that could accompany the Enjoy Illinois Great Pumpkin Patch add this fall, and a concept for a shop Tuscola campaign for all of next year.

The agenda listed several events that are happening now through the end of the year. The RC Fest at Wimple Park is this coming weekend. It was pointed out that Wimple Park will be 50 years old this September. Bill asked if there couldn't be bigger signage installed off of Egyptian Trail Road at Church Street to direct people to Wimple Park.

Devon shared that Flesor's has won three new wholesale accounts: Mackinaw Winery, a Coffee Shop in Bloomington and the Willard Airport.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: August 20, 2024

Approved: Randy Hastings Randy Hastings, President