

## TUSCOLA TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 21, 2025

### Meeting Minutes

Present were Board Members: Randy Hastings, Drew Hoel, Devon Flesor-Story, Bill Hill, and staff Alta Long and Stepheny McMahon

Drew called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Randy made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 19, 2024 meeting. Bill seconded and the motion passed.

Randy made a motion to accept the financial statements and tourism bills. Devon seconded and the motion passed.

Drew excused himself for a conflicting meeting.

Steph shared a DRAFT of a revised tourism grant application for the board to review. She pointed out the addition of a budget template and also a rubrik for scoring grant applications which can be used as a guideline. Board members asked if she could send them the previous tourism grant application so they could compare the two for differences. Steph shared that once a grant application is approved she will market it to all Tuscola businesses with a reminder to apply in advance of their event or promotion.

Steph presented the DRAFT 2025 Calendar of Events even though many dates are still to be confirmed. It was mentioned that a car show previously in Newman, IL will be coming to Tuscola. Alta said it was discussed at City Council in late December or early January.

Steph mentioned that she is working on a regional shop hop event called Small Shop Stroll and that Shimmer & Sheek expressed interest in working together on a wine walk for this summer. There was discussion about liquor license for a wine walk at which time Alta shared that the city cannot sponsor the liquor but can support and market the event.

Steph shared that it was shared by Teri Baxter of the Tuscola hotels that they are sold out the weekend of 2/20-2/22 for a Christian High School sports tournament. Devon was glad to have this information.

Steph shared that the Annual Tourism report to the City Council had been drafted and was included in the packet for the board to review. Alta suggested board members take a look and send any comments or edits. Devon stated that we could have added much more. Alta said two pages is plenty for the council.

Alta mentioned that we need to add new members to the board. Steph had invited Jennifer Reifsteck to participate as she had expressed interest last year. She will follow-up with Jennifer. Any others the board considers are welcome to come visit at a meeting and see what is discussed before being officially appointed.

Steph shared three options for "Open" flags which could be switched out seasonally. It was suggested she wait until warmer weather to see who all is still participating and hanging their flags before purchasing more.

Steph asked for feedback on Christmastown 2024. A few suggestions included:

- The need for signage to the vendor fair
- Parade barricades
  - Maybe even changeable signs
- Three more lighted boxes from Marmion to install in the planters
- Photo opportunity for kids to put their faces through

Bill brought up that 2026 is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States so we might want to start thinking about ways to celebrate that year.

Flesors will be on CI Living next week to talk about chocolate.

Steph shared the new “Choose Unexpected” tagline and how Clanin Creative came up with it. All were asked to share anything they deem is “unexpected” about Tuscola to use in marketing. Steph also shared that Clanin has given us a Casting Breakdown for the videos we plan to shoot this summer. Steph will update the social media notice asking for models with the new specifics. Devon suggested that the models should be out of towners as they are “tourists”.

Bill brought up that the signage on I-57 could list more businesses and possibly attractions such as our Historic Downtown, Iron Horse Golf Course, Douglas County Museum, Sweet Petunias. Steph will look into requirements to learn more about eligibility.

Devon suggested that we include more children in our marketing photos.

Flesor’s is hosting the Family Fun Day again this year and suggested using the event to dedicate and name the new downtown park. The event is tentatively scheduled for Labor Day weekend.

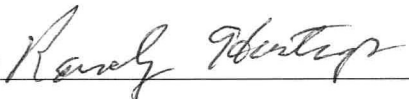
Steph shared that planning for Sparks 2025 is underway. Members of the board suggested that we add more live music for all day entertainment. Alta shared that the infrastructure at the park isn’t suitable for large bands without a stage, green room, crowded ingress/egress. Alta also brought up that it takes a lot of manpower to manage live entertainment all day. The group felt this was worth looking into hiring an event planner to make this happen.

The group discussed concerns about empty buildings downtown and businesses that aren’t open regular hours and how that frustrates visitors.

Devon made a motion to adjourn. Randy seconded and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stepheny McMahon, Tourism Director

Approved  Date 2-17-26