

TUSCOLA TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

April 15 18, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Present were Board Members: Randy Hastings, Drew Hoel, Bill Hill, Donna Kidwell, Devon Flesor-Story, future member Jennifer Reifsteck and staff Alta Long and Stepheny McMahon.

Drew called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Randy made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 18, 2025 meeting. Donna seconded and the motion passed.

Drew made a motion to accept the financial statements and tourism bills. Donna seconded and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Steph gave an update on IDOT signage for attractions. As of right now Sweet Petunias is the only eligible attraction we have and Zena Ostott shared that they could afford the annual maintenance for the signs. There is no signage category for The Vault. Douglas County Museum does not meet the attendance minimums. The downtown currently does not have regular entertainment (100 nights minimum) and does not have the minimum required seven shops downtown which are open regular hours a minimum of 100 days per year. The Board asked Steph to share a grant application with Sweet Petunias in case they would like to apply for assistance in obtaining IDOT signage.

Steph presented an invoice for IDOT signage that Flesor's had asked the city to reimburse the \$140. Randy asked if this had been done previously which Alta confirmed. Randy made a motion to reimburse Flesor's \$140 for the signage cost. Bill seconded and the motion passed.

Jennifer Reifsteck praised Steph and Shelly for doing a good job on the Small Shop Stroll and shared that her business, Shimmer & Sheek, had a wonderful sales weekend. Devon Flesor-Story seconded the compliment.

The Odd Fellows had updated the budget on their grant application for the Odd Fellows Market in October. Members of the Odd Fellows were present to answer questions including Ainslie Heilich, Rain Martin and Dani Kusman. The Tourism Committee thanked the Odd Fellows for their event and for a thorough grant application. It was discussed that the health dept permit fees had not been eligible in the past for reimbursement. Drew suggested that the hotel rooms be exchanged for the permit fees. Drew made a motion to approve up to \$3000 reimbursement of eligible expenses for the Odd Market. Randy seconded. The Motion passed.

Ainslie Heilich gave an update on the mural project which will be installed on the back of the township building. Ainslie showed updated drawings of the mural to the tourism committee. It was discussed that barricades could be needed to block the alley so that overspray from the paint doesn't get on cars.

Steph shared we will have a small event on May 10th to roll out the mural. Paul Nau will be playing live music, sidewalk chalk for the kids, and a ribbon cutting with the Mayor. Drew stated that he has written an ordinance to create a special permit for an entertainment district for open carry of alcohol. That ordinance is in legal review so won't be done in time for the May 10th event. It was

asked if the new park will be named. Drew shared that the plan was to name it for Mayor Kleiss although he was against that idea until he was officially reelected for his last term which will begin May 1, 2025.

Becky's Buddies is still seeking someone to take on their vendor fair. All agree that it is a great event that brings a lot of people to the downtown. There is some debate that the nighttime Christmas parade takes away from people visiting the vendor fair. The board briefly discussed the pros/cons of a daytime vs. nighttime parade. Is there perhaps a way to do both? Jennifer Reifsteck said if it came down to it, she and Taylor would take it on but they would prefer not to as that is such a busy time of year for them. It was asked if the City could hire someone to run the event. This would be preferable if it were a non-profit group looking to raise funds. Steph will reach out to Heather Brown to get more information and report back to the group. Becky's Buddies usually started booking vendors in June/July so a decision needs to be made soon.

Sparks in the Park planning for Saturday, July 5th is well underway. Most activities are planned as usual except for Mud Volleyball as we don't currently have anyone to facilitate the tournament. Ideas were proposed of possible people or groups who might be interested. The City would pay a group a donation to take it on.

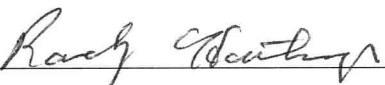
Advertising ideas for a variety of purposes were discussed. Bill Hill proposed the group advertising in the News Gazette, which is now being done county-wide, might be a good thing to start again. Devon and Jennifer shared that radio and TV work better for them. Devon is working with 94.5 radio and receives two editorial spots a week which are bringing in business. Devon reported that Hardy's Reindeer Ranch is planning a few bus tours with stops at Flesor's this year. Steph reported that she had visited Emerald Acres which when finished is expected to welcome 500,000 athletes and their families a year. Bill had spoken to Mr. Patel who said his hotel bookings are currently up. DCEDC has purchased Placer.ai software and will track where visitors to Emerald Acres are coming from and going to.

Steph stated that the May Tourism meeting is cancelled as she will be on vacation. The next regular meeting will be June 17 at 8:30 a.m.

Bill made a motion to adjourn. Donna seconded. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stepheny McMahon, Tourism Director

Approved  Date 2-17-26