

MCCURTAIN COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY MINUTES

TUESDAY JULY 20, 2021 - 1:00 PM

MEETING HELD AT BROKEN BOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING ROOM

Having noted a quorum, Vice Chairman Aron Maib called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

New board member Craig Young brought his papers showing he had been sworn in. Everyone welcomed Craig to the board.

Members present: Aron Maib, Joe Silk, Vic Clay, Teresa Mullens, and Craig Young. Absent was Tommy Julian and Debbie Elliot. Executive Director Charity O'Donnell was also present. Guest present was Dave Smulyan.

Joe Silk made the motion to approve the minutes of the May meeting. Vic Clay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Aron Maib, yes; Joe Silk, yes; Teresa Mullens, yes; Craig Young, yes and Vic Clay, yes.

Financial Report: Vic Clay, seconded by Teresa Mullens, made a motion to approve the Financial Report as presented. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Aron Maib, yes; Joe Silk, yes; Teresa Mullens, yes; Craig Young, yes and Vic Clay, yes.

Purchase Orders: Purchase Order amounts were presented and reviewed. Vic Clay made a motion to approve the purchase orders as presented, Joe Silk seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Aron Maib, yes; Joe Silk, yes; Teresa Mullens, yes; Craig Young, yes and Vic Clay, yes. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

ADVERTISING COMMITTEE REPORT: Charity asked if anyone wanted to serve on the advertising committee to please let her know. Aron Maib said he did. Dave Smulyan asked the board if he could continue to serve on this committee. The board told him that would be fine. Charity stated she would have to check bylaws to make sure that it is okay for him to and she would let them all know if she finds anything saying he can't. Then Charity showed the board the changes to the campaign that they had previously discussed and said she would email full copies to them in color. Charity showed and explained to Craig some of the things they were doing and told him not to

hesitate if he has any questions. She also mentioned the KTBS tower cam project and the advertising around it, asked them if they wanted to proceed forward. Everyone agreed they liked the idea and to move forward. Aron stated he would meet with them and discuss details. She went over the NBC Texas Today promotion and a few other things. Charity also mentioned that a new free state wide training program is currently being offered through Oklahoma Travel Industry Association. She said they told her it is open to anyone in tourism related business within the state for free. She stated normally these webinars are over \$100 each. She said the program consists of 35 one-hour webinars and at the end once completed, you receive a Digital Marketing Certification. She said she would send the information to them via email so they could forward it on to anyone they think would have an interest in taking it.

NEW BUSINESS:

Elect Chairman: A motion was made by Vic Clay to make Aron Maib Chairman, motion was seconded by Joe Silk. The motion passed unanimously 5-0. Aron Maib, yes; Joe Silk, yes; Teresa Mullens, yes; Craig Young, yes and Vic Clay, yes.

Bylaws change: Charity stated she had asked some questions about how to correctly record the recent changes and it was encouraged that she and the board attend county training. She stated that Open Meetings and Open Records Training is being taught before our next meeting, and asked if she could attend. They told her it would be okay for her to sign up for and attend any trainings she felt her help her know how to better do her job. Aron stated he wanted to go to Open Meetings/Open Records training in August when it was offered. Vic asked her to send him information on when it is taught again because he had a conflict and couldn't attend in August. She told them she would send them an email with information and links along with a list of those she planned to take. They agreed it was a good idea.

Dave Smulyan: Dave stated that he wanted to be on the agenda so this information would be recorded in the minutes. He then read to the board a letter that he said he gave to the county commissioners at their meeting when he wasn't reappointed on June 28, 2021. He gave every board member present a copy of the letter. Dave stated that he will stay involved as it is

important to keep it going. Dave told the board about the history of getting the tax passed and how it was all Terry Walkers idea and he quickly signed up to help. He told them that it wasn't easy getting it passed that it took many years, starting back to Jack Bell refusing to carry the bill to change the legislation needed to pass the tax because he was up for reelection. When Bell wasn't re-elected, they got Jeff Rabon to carry the bill and get it passed. He stated it took some time. He gave them an overview of Terry's intent in getting all this done for our area and that he hoped we would stay true to the reason's it was developed. The board members told him "Thank You" for serving. They each in their own words thanked him and told them he and Terry would be missed.

Letter Dave read will be scanned and attached to these minutes.

Adjourn: Vic Clay made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:45pm. Joe Silk seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Aron Maib, yes; Joe Silk, yes; Teresa Mullens, yes; Craig Young, yes and Vic Clay, yes.

Aron Maib, Chairperson

Mark Jennings
Jimmy Westbrook
Chris White
McCurtain County Commissioners
108 N. Central Ave
Idabel, OK 74745

June 28, 2021

Re: McCurtain County Tourism Authority
Position Re-Appointment

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to have served on the McCurtain County Tourism Authority board for the past 18 years. It has been an amazing adventure. As a board member, and for many years as the board chairman, I am proud to have worked alongside the excellent, professional staff and the many different people from within the County who have served on the board.

The Tourism Board has always strived to act in accordance with the legal intent of the ballot measure approved by the voters, while also working diligently to follow the rules and regulations of the State of Oklahoma. Our efforts were and continue to be transparent, with open board meetings and publicly available meeting minutes. The Tourism Authority is audited every year, and the staff are always in contact with the County Court House to make certain paperwork is being done correctly and that our books are reconciled with the Court House. As chairman, it has been my responsibility to run the board meetings smoothly and professionally. (And to clarify, that while serving as chairman, I am not allowed to make motions regarding any board actions.)

The success of the Tourism Authority has been due in large part to the hard work completed by entire board and for the decisions they have made as a group. I remember our very first year, the board made a key decision to hold back and not spend a nickel of the tax revenue, so that our annual budget would always be what we knew we had in the bank from the previous year. And, after 10 years of the temporary bed tax, I remember working with members of the board and the community to go back to the voters of McCurtain County to make the 3% tax permanent, which was approved. In that same ballot measure, the voters approved the allocation of 5% of the bed tax for the Fair Board, and continued the 10% already allocated to the County general fund. It made me proud to see how the Fair Board has used their tax dollars to improve the fairgrounds buildings and rodeo arena, allowing new events to utilize the facilities and attract many visitors to the area.

One of the many responsibilities of the Tourism Board is to interview advertising agencies to find the best match to get our message out to potential visitors (i.e., an RFP process is conducted every three years, in accordance with state statute, in order to select a new ad agency or renew the contract with the existing ad agency). The ad agencies that have been

selected over the years have all developed professional, high quality, creative media campaigns, some of which were even award winning. And, in part due to those successful ad campaigns, the revenue from the bed tax has grown from less than \$100,000 per year to now, over \$3,000,000 a year.

It has been an honor to have been a part of the Tourism Authority board to help create the top industry in McCurtain County, to have watched the County sales tax revenues more than double, to see hundreds if not thousands of new jobs created in the County, to watch new businesses spring up, to watch construction boom, to watch one of the poorest Counties in the State thrive during a once in a lifetime pandemic, to watch utility companies expand, banks lending money, and there's no telling how many realtors we now have in the County. I remember when we had only a handful. These are all the things I'm proud of and I thank you for the opportunity to have been a part of them.

With that said, I do have a final comment. While I respect that you have the ability to appoint who you deem best to serve on the Tourism Board, I have been disappointed by the way my potential re-appointment has been handled over the past few weeks. An apparent campaign to discredit me by questioning whether I had been sworn in years ago, or somehow benefitted from the advertising, is beneath you and has been deeply hurtful to me. I have served to the best of my ability for eighteen years and have been re-appointed multiple times by the Commissioners without question. I would have hoped for, and expected, the same level of professionalism and transparency from the Commissioners, as the Tourism Authority Board has worked to exhibit during its existence.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve on this board. I have been truly blessed by this experience.

Respectfully,

Dave Smulyan
Idabel, OK