

McCurtain County Tourism Authority Minutes

Thursday, May 25, 2023 - 10:00 AM

Meeting held at Beavers Bend State Park at Forest Heritage Center at the Carl Albert Meeting Room

Chairman Aron Maib called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.

Members present: Aron Maib, Vic Clay, Jerry Don Smith, and Debbie Elliot. **Absent Board Members:** Teresa Mullins, Tommy Julian, Craig Young. Executive Director Charity O'Donnell and Communications Specialist Laura Lester were also present. Guests present were Dave Smulyan, Loretha Caldwell, Cheryl Sims, Junine Whitley, Bobby Long, Ray Bamburg, Tommy McDaniel, Haley Harris, Brenda Walters, Jerry Speck, Maria Hernandez, Jennifer Higgins, Erin Acuff, Rusty Duncan, Reagan Morin, Matt Farley, and Joe Yates.

Grant Proposals: The following proposals were presented and questions were asked: Beavers Bend Folk Festival, Idabel Fall Festival, Dogwood Days, Wright City Rodeo, McCurtain County Rodeo and Fair. No one was present to present the OMA Museum Conference proposal.

Special Projects presentations: None were presented.

Those presenting left at 10:55 and the others took a break while ICG set up they ate lunch in the room. The meeting reconvened at 11:50 with the following present: **Members present:** Aron Maib, Vic Clay, Jerry Don Smith, and Debbie Elliot. Executive Director Charity O'Donnell and Communications Specialist Laura Lester were also present. Guests present were Dave Smulyan, Ray Bamburg, Tommy McDaniel, Brenda Walters, Erin Acuff, Rusty Duncan, Reagan Morin, and Matt Farley.

Advertising Update and ICG annual marketing presentation and proposal for the July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, fiscal year: Matt Farley, Erin Acuff, and Rusty Duncan and Reagan Morin presented. Matt went over the past year, what worked, what didn't, and why. He reported that lodging tax was comparable to the previous year, however we had one month with the highest revenue collected ever. And months where we had challenges such as: burn ban, bad weather, water issues, bad county publicity etc.

Matt with ICG reported that Instagram was the highest performing social media channel of all social platforms. He briefly spoke about the other platforms and the heavy usage of video content people. Website visitation has

decreased slightly this year. Matt mentioned that if people can gather all information from the social channels, then they may not need to go to the website for more information. He said the app is continuing to perform well. Data shows guests utilize the app to help plan their visit and direct them while they are here.

Video content has performed very well, and we plan to still do more video next year. Matt mentioned our billboards, and gas station ads, including print ads and everything that won the seven ADDY awards. He discussed all media streaming, network, and digital ads and where all they ran.

Erin Acuff then moved on to travel predictions for 2023 and 2024. They discussed the importance of sustainability. Studies show that local sustainability practices have become a factor visitors look into when deciding where to go. Sustainability practices are important to younger travelers. Matt stated we need to use these items to continue to promote our area.

Matt discussed the negative effects of the bad press that McCurtain County has received lately. Then with our name being “Visit McCurtain County” it had a negative effect on our brand. That many guests cancelled their vacations because of the perceptions of others actions.

Erin mentioned that the target audience will shift slightly in the next year. Instead of focusing on those who would be wanting to take a 5–7-day vacation, we will be focusing on the people who want a 2–3-day getaway. She also mentioned that even though we have additional markets we still get the most exposure in the Dallas-Fort Worth market. So, we plan to do more in the Dallas market next year. More people are continuing to move to Dallas, and we haven’t even saturated the full market there.

Then ICG began to pitch a rebranding effort, and explained why it would be beneficial to the brand. Since the negative publicity our county has gotten recently when you search the internet for McCurtain County the first things that pop up are in regard to the negativity. Matt then stated that studies show people refer to the area as Broken Bow or Beavers Bend, not McCurtain County.

ICG pitched that we rebrand to “Beavers Bend: Cabin Country.” People are not familiar enough with the area to know where McCurtain County is. But when people say they are going to Beavers Bend, people are more likely to be familiar with the state park. Then the “Cabin Country” tagline helps describe what guests should experience when they come.

Then we went into the marketing and advertising plan for next year. Most of the media buys will be in the Dallas region. ICG also discussed how the market is changing. With the influx of cabins built within the past 3 years, visitors no longer need to book their stay months in advance. They can now decide they want to come on a Thursday, find and book their cabin that night, then be checking into their cabin on Friday. The approach and message need to change as our market has changed.

Multiple touch points are still very important. Erin discussed ad supported streaming platforms we will advertise in. She talked about Prime and Peacock and broadcast media buys. YouTube is still very effective, data shows. Quantcast is a good full service targeting platform.

Concentrating in the Dallas market we will do OTT, digital and standard billboards, and run advertisements in music platforms like Spotify, Pandora, and iHeart Radio. Rusty mentioned a State Fair activation of having a pop-up cabin to promote our area, kiosks in market were also discussed. Basically, a media mix and marketing mix was presented along with a media budget breakdown.

ICG answered questions and left at 1:36. At 12:09 Jim Yates from KTAL out of Texarkana came in the room. Commissioner Ray Bamburg left during their presentation at 12:57. Blue McDaniel left at 1:03pm as well. At 1:35 Jim Yates left; the meeting continued at 1:36 with the following people still in attendance. **Members present:** Aron Maib, Vic Clay, Jerry Don Smith, and Debbie Elliot. Executive Director Charity O'Donnell and Communications Specialist Laura Lester were also present. The guests present were Dave Smulyan and Brenda Walters.

Minutes: Jerry Don Smith made the motion to approve the March minutes as presented. Vic Clay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Financial Report: Vic Clay, seconded by Debbie Elliot, made a motion to approve the Financial Report as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Purchase Orders: Purchase Order amounts were presented and reviewed. Debbie Elliot, seconded by Jerry Don Smith, made a motion to approve the purchase orders as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Local Grant Proposals: A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Debbie Elliot to approve the Beavers Bend Folk Festival Grant as presented. Motion passed unanimously 3-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, abstained; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Debbie Elliot to approve the Fall Festival grant as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Debbie Elliot and seconded by Vic Clay to approve the Dogwood Days grant as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Jerry Don Smith and seconded by Vic Clay to approve the Wight City Rodeo grant as presented adding an additional \$1,000 for the trailer advertising. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Jerry Don Smith to approve the McCurtain County Fair and Rodeo as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Debbie Elliot to table the Oklahoma Museum Assoc. request. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Special Projects Grant Proposal: There were not any to consider.

Budget: A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Jerry Don Smith to approve the budget for fiscal year July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, as presented. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Marketing plan: A motion was made by Debbie Elliot and seconded by Vic Clay to approve the marketing plan for FYE June 30, 2024, Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Meeting Dates for next fiscal year: A motion was made by Jerry Don Smith and seconded by Debbie Elliot to approve the meeting dates for next fiscal

year. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Resignations: A motion was made by Vic Clay and seconded by Jerry Don Smith to accept the resignation of Debbie Elliot effective July 1, 2023. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Debbie Elliot and seconded by Jerry Don Smith to accept the resignation of Vic Clay. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

A motion was made by Vic Clay to table the resignation of Aron Maib for the time while they determine how to proceed. Vic Clay recommended in his motion that the commissioners give the power to Aron to appoint a park employee to fulfill that position on the board. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Requisitioning officers and receiving officers and officers: A motion was made by Jerry Don Smith and seconded by Vic Clay to keep requisitioning officers as is for now and to table officers until the next meeting. Currently the Requisitioning officers are Charity O'Donnell and Aron Maib. Receiving is Jerry Don Smith and Tommy Julian. Motion passed unanimously 4-0. Debbie Elliot, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Vic Clay, yes.

Trash contract: Aron stated ODOT seemed interested, however the meeting to discuss everything had been canceled due to other problems in the county. At this time, it has not been rescheduled.

Adjournment: Debbie Elliot made the motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Jerry Don Smith meeting adjourned at 3:45pm.

Aron Maib, Chairperson