

McCurtain County Tourism Authority Minutes

Tuesday, July 18, 2023 - 1:00 PM

Meeting held at Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce Board Room

Chairman Aron Maib called the meeting to order at 10:03 PM.

Members present: Aron Maib, Jerry Don Smith, Wenda Blankenship, Tommy Julian, and Dave Smulyan. **Absent Board Members:** Teresa Mullins and Craig Young. Executive Director Charity O'Donnell and Communications Specialist Laura Lester were also present. Guests present were Shellye Copeland, Howard Haggard, Janet Cress, and John Williams. Henry Moy was in attendance briefly.

Aron welcomed the new board members Wenda Blankenship and Dave Smulyan.

Special Projects presentations: Charity presented the 2024 Solar Eclipse proposal on behalf of the Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce and the county community eclipse committee. This is coming, McCurtain County is in the "Totality Zone", and we must proactively prepare for this event. Charity stated it is felt that things are going to be needed to help the county prepare. The main obstacles for our area are: education of locals and tourists, traffic, communications, and resources related to communications and emergency response. Safety, signage, barricades, radio rentals, Facebook post boosts, were mentioned that will be needed. Educational and safety awareness preparedness funding request. It was mentioned that McCurtain County Community and McCurtain County Emergency Management Response group are working together closely to proactively plan the best we can as a county. It was discussed that this is a unique situation and that more funding may be needed. A motion was made by Dave Smulyan and Tommy Julian seconded the motion; Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes.

Advertising Update: Charity reminded the board that the rebranding effort has launched and is underway. The ad agency will be down in August filming a big content grab, social videos, and Teddy Owns videos will be done then. In October the film crew will be here filming our actual commercials for network and connected TV. The Kiosk idea is about to be presented; they are finalizing those numbers. Truck idea at the state fair, food truck will look like a cabin, and the proposal says 5 consecutive days. Then the digital billboard pitch of the truck that drives around. The money for the food truck proposal seemed

high. The board wanted to entertain the digital billboard idea. They asked Charity to go back to ICG and get more information about the digital billboard truck and report back. The board decided to table it for now. A motion was made by Jerry Don Smith and seconded to table the proposal and get more information on the digital billboard portion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes.

Minutes: Jerry Don Smith made the motion to approve the July minutes as presented. Dave Smulyan seconded. Motion passed 3-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, abstained; and Wenda Blankenship, abstained since they were not at the last meeting.

Financial Report: Charity reported tax numbers to down slightly for the year for the first time ever. Dave mentioned that the changes with the collection of the tax and that he feels it isn't being collected and paid correctly. He asked how we can ensure that it is being done correctly. It was discussed, how do we know if it is being paid or not. Several agreed in the room that they are not sure all lodging businesses are paying or if Airbnb and VRBO are paying. Shellye Copeland and Janet Cress stated has Hochatown will be working on this more soon. Cabins in the non-incorporated area continued to be the discussion as well. Dave stated that he will work on this some more and report back. Everyone agreed that was a good idea and to put it in the agenda for next meeting. Jerry Don Smith, seconded by Tommy Julian, made a motion to approve the Financial Report as presented. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes. Guest Henry Moy arrived.

Special Projects Grant Proposal: Oklahoma Museums Conference at the Museum of the Red River, Henry Moy explained the proposal to the board and answered questions. A motion was made by Dave Smulyan and seconded by Tommy Julian to approve the proposal as presented. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes. Henry Moy thanked the board and left.

Purchase Orders: Purchase Order amounts were presented and reviewed. Dave Smulyan, seconded by Tommy Julian, made a motion to approve the purchase orders as presented. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes

Requisitioning officers and receiving officers and officers: A motion was made by Tommy Julian seconded by Wenda Blankenship that Dave Smulyan be elected chairman. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes. Jerry Don Smith made a motion to make Tommy Julian Vice Chairman, motion was seconded by Dave Smulyan. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes. Dave Smulyan made the motion to nominate Teresa Mullens for the position of Sec/Treasure. Jerry don Smith seconded; Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes. Tommy Julian made a motion to replace Aron Maib as requisition officer with Dave Smulyan, Jerry Don Smith seconded. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes.

Agreement with Broken Bow Chamber: A motion was made by Dave Smulyan and seconded by Jerry Don Smith to approve the contract agreement with the Broken Bow Chamber. Motion passed unanimously 5-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Aron Maib, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Tommy Julian, yes; and Wenda Blankenship, yes.

Trash contract: Aron stated he didn't have much of an update. Aron explained to Wenda what was going on and the idea behind it. That the money is earmarked with the hope to get it going soon. ODOT seemed interested as well as several other organizations in county. John Williams mentioned that he had spoken to Solid Waste, that they were going to hire someone to pick up on state highways. He found out that they are insured to pick up on state highways and that Solid Waste would like to hire some people for this with the help of this board. John mentioned that they meet the same time as the county commissioners. He recommended that we attend one and talk to them.

Unscheduled New Business:

Website: Wenda asked about the calendar of events section of the website – it needs to be a place for grand openings, anything that would bring someone to a local business or festival. Charity told the board she would double check with the ad agency about it and see if they are not using it or is it not working.

Wenda also stated that on the website can the cabin search be broken down by subdivision. She stated that are frequent visitors and more educated

guests are asking for that now. Charity stated it used to be on there that she would check on that as well.

Resignation: Aron submitted his actual resignation in writing. John Williams said they are working on replacing Aron and asked that he stay on in the meantime. It was decided that the commissioners need to change the bylaws on how to handle his. Janet Cress stated that she would like for us to consider the Mayor of Hochatown Dian Jordan to be on the board since Hochatown is now a major player. Wenda Blankenship stated that board members need to be knowledgeable about tourism. John discussed that we would work on this together after some more research can be done with the goal of having this done before the next meeting on September 19th. It was decided that we should have a joint meeting with the commissioners before the next MCTA meeting. Dave spoke about the projects that had been implemented since during the time Aron had been chairman.

Shelley encouraged that the board continue work on education locally and perception. She said they just don't know what we do and why and they don't know how much this tax has impacted our community.

Adjournment: Dave Smulyan made the motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Tommy Julian meeting adjourned at 2:59pm.

Aron Maib, Chairperson