

McCurtain County Tourism Authority Minutes

Held Tuesday, September 17, 2024 - 1:00 PM

The meeting was held in the Broken Bow Area Chamber of Commerce Board Room at 113 West Martin Luther King Drive in Broken Bow.

Chairman Dave Smulyan called the meeting to order at 1:05 P.M.

Board Members present: Dave Smulyan, Wenda Blankenship, Jerry Don Smith, and Ed Fulmer. **Absent Board Members:** Amy Keeling and Tommy Julian. Executive Director, Charity O'Donnell was also present. Guests in attendance were Vickie Smith with the Idabel Arts Council, Matt Farley with ICG, and Haley Harris from the Beavers Bend State Park.

Dave Smulyan skipped down to agenda item 6. Agenda item 6 was Discussion, consideration, and possible action to approve the Special Project Grant for Idabel Regional Arts Council's Christmas Walk in the Park project. Vickie Smith stated it is a free event happening December 11-14th, which may be extended later. She stated that the event has been going on since 2015 and they needed funds to spruce up some of the lighting displays. They also need a new tent, speakers, extension cords, a new nativity scene, and several light displays were discussed. Vickie stated that they serve free hot cocoa and cookies, and Santa will be there as well. She asked for \$13,162.43 to get the proposed items. The board thanked her for coming then she left.

Dave went back to item 3 on the agenda.

Minutes: Jerry Don Smith motioned to approve the July meeting minutes as presented. Ed Fulmer seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes: and Ed Fuler, yes.

Financial Report: Charity O'Donnell presented the financial report Ed Fulmer motioned to approve the Financial Report as presented, seconded by Jerry Don Smith. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes: and Ed Fuler, yes.

Purchase Orders: Purchase Order amounts for July and August were presented and reviewed. Ed Fulmer made the motion to approve as presented and seconded by Wenda Blankenship. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes: and Ed Fuler, yes.

Discussion and possible action to approve the Special Project Grant for Idabel Regional Arts Council's Christmas Walk in the Park Project:

A motion was made by Wenda Blankenship for \$13,162.43 for the special projects grant and seconded by Ed Fulmer. Motion passed 3-0. Dave Smulyan abstained because he is also on that board; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Ed Fuler, yes.

Discussion and possible action on DA's opinion on the Trash Project:

Dave and Wenda stated that were told the trash project cannot be done because we cannot transfer money from one tax-based entity to another to fund this. Dave stated that we were told we could not do this and that nothing had been given to us in writing yet stating what we were told.

Discussion and possible action to amend budget policy on the Trash

Project: Dave explained three years ago that the board voted to earmark 10% of annual income to this trash project, it's been a little over \$300,000 annually for the past three years. And since we cannot do this project, we no longer need to earmark this in the budget this way. Jerry Don Smith asked if we can't do anything with the current plan, is there any way the board can use that money for funding the pickup of trash another way? Maybe through local projects, maybe through a grant. The others liked that idea. Charity stated we would have to ask the DA and get his opinion on this idea. Dave stated maybe we need to discuss this with John Williams and maybe change the focus on this project. Everyone agreed. Ed Fulmer made the motion to no longer withhold 10% in the budget policy each year for trash project. Wenda Blankenship seconded it. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Ed Fuler, yes.

Discussion and possible action to amend budget to align with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and to reallocate funds going to trash project:

The board agreed they wanted to hold on to the funds earmarked for Trash for now \$1,117, 307.00. So, they had Charity adjust the numbers to reflect that. Charity read off the changes and the new numbers. Charity stated she would amend it and send it to the board so they would have it. A motion was made by Wenda Blankenship made the motion to approve the budget and not reallocate the funds for the trash project. Ed Fulmer seconded it. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; and Ed Fuler, yes.

Advertising Update: Matt from ICG was here so he gave a report. He spoke about the new billboard projects in Texas, he stated creatives, and billboards

are rotating out. Three commercials are running right now. He mentioned print ads, social media content and videos in the works. Matt mentioned we have over 30,000 followers on Instagram right now. He then told the board about all the updates to the website. The events page received an overhaul, a new homepage, new layouts, and new search features on several pages. App is getting updated with curated tours and such. A local impact story is in the works and a long version of a commercial is being filmed. He spoke about Teddy Owens; he is working on a new video. Teddy is now an educated tourism expert for our area. Dave mentioned the numbers have been up 10-12% consistently for 7 months. He said the marketing seems to be working. Wenda and Dave thanked Matt for all the work that ICG is doing.

Tourism Economics: Matt states this is a global company that does tourism impact studies. He stated they do 3 things, economic impact, data crunching and forecasting. He stated that the impact study goes back 5 years and breaks down all kinds of categories, the number of jobs impacted by tourism, the number of tax dollars brought in by category. How many cities around our county are being impacted by tourism. It looks at indirect services that are impacted also. Total dollars spent by the companies supported by tourism. Matt stated we already do the numbers data. However, the other option is forecasting, and it seems to be very accurate of what to expect going forward. He stated it would be an investment to be able to estimate the total impact for our area. Matt stated if you took the advertising spend away how much of an impact would it have on our county. This would tell us and everyone else this. This information could be presented at a tourism summit and would be permanently on our website for anyone who needed to use it. Matt asked if the board would be interested in doing the impact study and forecasting. 2024 going back five years. The board asked questions and discussed the possibility of this data. A motion was made by Jerry Don Smith and seconded by Ed Fulmer to move forward with tourism economics impact study and forecasting. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes: and Ed Fuler, yes

Adjournment: A motion was made by Wenda Blankenship to adjourn the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Ed Fulmer. The meeting ended around 2:15 pm. Motion passed 4-0. Dave Smulyan, yes; Wenda Blankenship, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes: and Ed Fuler, yes.