

**VILLAGE OF FONTANA ON GENEVA LAKE
WALWORTH COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

(Final Minutes)

MEETING of the VILLAGE OF FONTANA TOURISM COMMISSION

Monday, September 18, 2023

Chairman Pat Kenny called the monthly meeting of the Tourism Commission to order at 9:00 am.

Tourism Commissioners present: Roll call: President Kenny, Maryanne Bruss, Kathie Perkins

Commissioners absent: Scott Vilona

Also present: Liz Baumann, Jennifer Edwards (Geneva Lake West Executive Director), Deanna Goodwin (Vice President of Visit Lake Geneva), Eric Johnson (Lake Geneva Regional News), Stephanie Klett (President of Visit Lake Geneva), Chase Kruser (Geneva Lake West President), Theresa Loomer, Drew Lussow, Phil Webb (Geneva Lake West Treasurer), Tom Whowell (Centennial Committee)

Visitors Heard

None

General Business

Approve Minutes from August 7, 2023, Meeting

The minutes from the August 7, 2023 meeting were distributed.

Commissioner Perkins/Commissioner Bruss 2nd made a MOTION to approve the minutes from August 7, 2023 meeting, and the MOTION carried without negative vote.

Visit Lake Geneva Presentation on Fontana's Destination Marketing Organization

Steph Klett and Deanna Goodwin on behalf of Visit Lake Geneva gave a brief overview of what they provide as one of Fontana's destination marketing organizations. Mrs. Klett provided a small background of her experience and what she does as President of Visit Lake Geneva, which she then stated is not only a destination marketing organization but also a Chamber of Commerce and a 501(c)(6). Mrs. Klett explained that currently Visit Lake Geneva is focusing on digital campaigns, but they still also advertise and take part in just about every medium available from PR, Earned Media Highlights, Broadcast, and CTV. Mrs. Klett highlighted one of their newer advertisement campaigns that features former Packer Donald Driver and mentioned that his most recent video with the Lake Geneva Mail Boats has gone viral which has led to increase foot traffic to the Visit Lake Geneva site and apps which also can lead to spikes in more tourist rooming being booked in the Lake Geneva area. Mrs. Klett then turned it over to Mrs. Goodwin who is the Vice President of Communications and Marketing for Visit Lake Geneva, and she presented a folder that contained some printouts on the tourism impacts in Walworth County as well as some information that Visit Lake Geneva provides in its visitor's guide. Mrs. Goodwin stated that tourism in Walworth County in 2022 set a new record with an estimated \$675 million dollars in economic impact. She mentioned that we are currently also on pace to track or surpass that number based on the analytics for the year 2023. Mrs. Goodwin stated that currently Walworth County sits at #6 in the state based on counties in tourism, but the goal is to become number one and compete with the likes of Milwaukee and Dane County who have triple the budget size. She also mentioned that based on their current analytics Walworth County is showing a 16% increase in travel expenditure in the area. Mrs. Goodwin also showed data that reflects that around 75% of the tourism in Walworth County can be attributed to the Geneva Lake Area (which encompasses the areas around Geneva Lake, Lake Como, and Delavan Lake). Mrs. Goodwin projects that as long as the marketing in this area remains strong that they continually build a strong tourism market for the area and will continue to push visitors and target their marketing efforts towards this. After the presentation concluded the Tourism Commission had no further questions and thanked both Mrs. Klett and Mrs. Goodwin for their terrific presentation with tons of valuable knowledge and to continue the good work, they provide for Walworth County and the Village of Fontana in drawing tourism to the Lake Geneva area.

Lake Geneva Chamber of Commerce's Request for Financial Assistance for the 2024-2025 Season

Phil Webb was present on behalf of the Geneva Lake Chamber of Commerce to request financial assistance from the Tourism Committee for the upcoming 2024-2025 season. Mr. Webb passed out a brief one-page handout that described some of the highlights that the Geneva Lake West Chamber has experienced this year such as an increase in almost 35% in membership, an internship program that supports four local area high school students and awards each with a scholarship, and continually trying to offer more and more events to the community. Mr. Webb then stated that although they've had these successes they wish to continue to grow and thrive and in order to do that they need some support. Mr. Webb mentioned that currently they are in dire need of a website restructure as well as funds to potentially support more work that could be done administratively by staff. Currently the Chamber only has one full-time employee, which is Executive Director Jennifer Edwards. Mr. Webb concluded by stating that Geneva Lake West's request is a two-year commitment from the Village of Fontana to provide funds in the amount of \$80,000.00 or \$40,000.00 each year. President Kenny thanked Mr. Webb for his presentation however mentioned that the statute ultimately determines how much of the room tax funds can be used and what they could be used for. In addition, President Kenny asked if they were receiving any funds from Williams Bay or Walworth since the amount was a lot to ask of one municipality to support especially when the Village already helps support some of the firework's costs and also since Geneva Lake West Chamber services those municipalities on this side of the lake as well. Mr. Webb stated that currently they do not receive any funds from Williams Bay and currently there is only one room tax rental in Walworth that they receive a very small portion from. Commissioner Bruss then asked if they had planned any events to be held specifically in Fontana and mentioned how it would be great to see them start hosting some local events in the "off-season" for the Village like potentially a Christmas market or something along those lines. Chase Kruser, President of Geneva Lake West Chamber stated that he agreed and would love to see more events held in Fontana and would be open to any suggestions but reiterated that while the events are great and can be accomplished by fundraising they need some assistance getting something going that people can look forward to annually that could help set the Chamber up to function at a higher quality than it currently is. Mr. Webb then asked the Commission if they currently have the amount available for the Geneva Lake West Chamber. President Kenny stated that currently they did not but again would have to look into what they could potentially provide based on the statutes. President Kenny said they appreciate the work by the Chamber but also while they look into the amount the Village might be able to provide, he would like to see the Chamber reach out to the neighboring municipalities to see if they could also contribute more to help bring down the amount the Village of Fontana might potentially contribute.

Commissioner Bruss/Commissioner Perkins 2nd made a MOTION to have staff further look into what Tourism funds could be potentially allocated to the Geneva Lake Chamber of Commerce and bring it back at the next meeting for further discussion, as presented, and the MOTION carried without negative vote.

Update on 2023 Fontana Triathlon

President Kenny provided an update on the 2023 Fontana Triathlon. He mentioned that the event went great and although the weather wasn't the best it could've been worse. Tom Whowell also mentioned that he received some feedback from attendees saying that the event felt like it ran very smoothly and that most attendees looked forward to coming back for next year's event. Commissioner Bruss added that she and her business participated at the event and said that all the vendors' sales she communicated with stated they showed an increase in sales based on last year's event numbers.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was set for October 16, 2023 at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment

Commissioner Perkins/Commissioner Bruss 2nd made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 10:03 am, and the MOTION carried without negative vote.

Minutes prepared by: Drew Lussow, Village Clerk

Note: These minutes are subject to further editing. Once approved by the Tourism Commission, the official minutes will be on file at the Village

Hall.

APPROVED: 10/23/2023