

Tourism Commission
April 11, 2014
Merrill Chamber Office

Attending: Dan Wendorf, Lauree O'Day, Russ Grefe, Chris Malm Mayor Bill Bialecki, Debbe Kinsey

Absent: Jim Arndt

Called to Order: 12:05pm

Public Comment: No public was in attendance.

Review of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes from April and June 2013 meetings was made by Malm, seconded by Grefe, voted and carried.

Budget Review: Overview of 2013/14 budget. Prior to review of applications the fund administrator went over the current budget. We are currently under budget and had a couple of good quarters with increased overnight stays. Part of this was due to the construction that was taking place during the summer and fall. We discussed the upcoming events in Merrill for the next cycle/year and with continued construction occurring this summer, we should see a couple of large quarters of room tax again. Based on events and construction the budget would increase for the 2014-15 funding cycle.

Funding Application: Fund administrator went over the applications with the committee and gave brief overview of how they spent prior year funding. Also reviewed the number of overnight stays that each applicant indicated their events drew. Our hotel member gave indication of accuracy based on previous year's overnight stays. Committee reviewed and discussed each applicant event. One application was submitted but was not completed. They were given the opportunity to complete the application and did not follow through.

Applicants for 2014/15 Cycle:

1. Merrill Lion's Labor Day Car Show requested amount - \$1,800; reviewed and amount granted - \$1,350. *Discussion – big event, but not a lot of overnight stays.*
2. Lincoln County Fair requested amount -\$1,500; reviewed and amount granted- \$1,500. *Discussion- big draw, mostly regional, some overnight stays due to workers.*
3. Merrill Airport Days requested amount - \$2,000; reviewed and amount granted - \$900. *Discussion-committee would like to see them advertise in a larger radius outside the Merrill area. There is a potential for larger crowds with the new runways and new terminal.*
4. Pork in the Park RibFest requested amount - \$1,500; reviewed and amount granted - \$1,500. *Discussion- very well attended event regionally with 1500 attendees. Advertised in 16 print areas, along with Harley ads/maps and television. If attendance continues to be largely regionally rather than cyclists from the Fall Ride, committee would like to see them move the event to the weekend prior to draw more room tax potential.*
5. WI River Pro Rodeo requested amount \$4,500; reviewed and amount granted \$4,500. *Discussion – this is the 2nd biggest event based on overnight stays. Do a good job advertising to draw visitors into community.*
6. Ice Drags requested amount - \$5,000; reviewed and amount granted \$1,800. *Discussion- This is a weather permitted event. Overnight stays are limited as most attendees seem to be regional.*
7. Dog Sled Race requested amount- \$1,000; reviewed and amount granted \$900. *Discussion- mushers do stay overnight as they come from all over the Midwest and Canada. This is a weather permitted event.*
8. Barleyfest requested amount - \$2,500; reviewed and amount granted \$2,500. *Discussion- works with the hotels offering Bed & Brew overnight packages. There are no other Merrill events competing that weekend (like Homecoming) this year and Wausau's event is the weekend before.*
9. Ladies Lifestyle Expo requested amount - \$1,000; reviewed and amount granted \$450. *Discussion- good local event but they do not advertise outside of the area. Grant dollars are to be used outside of Merrill. To grow they must advertise regionally. Organizers also did not include the mandated visitor's information on their advertising, per the grant guidelines. In order to be funded in the future, all guidelines must be followed.*
10. Concertina Festival requested amount - \$380; reviewed and amount granted - \$380

2014/15 Budget:

Committee reviewed the administrative portion of the budget. Fund administrator reviewed line items with committee and explained what bills were outstanding and will be paid when the 1st Q funds arrive in June. Based on new cycle spending some line item funding was moved around to cover all proposed current and new expenditures without increasing the 2014/15 administrative budget. Following discussion based on average annual overnight stays and the increase of stays from the ongoing summer and fall construction seasons, the committee was comfortable in granting additional funds to the grant applicant events. Committee approved an additional \$2682 in event funding for a total of \$15,780.

The administrative budget was funded as followed: Other Promotions \$3,000, Contingency \$1,500, Conferences \$3,000, Additional Advertising \$15,000, Administration & Rent \$7,000 and Marketing Support \$4,700 for a total of \$34,200. The total budget for 2014/15 cycle is \$49,980. A motion to approve the budget and funding of the grant applications was made by O'Day, and seconded by Malm, voted and carried.

No public comment.

Mayor Bill Bialecki thanked Lauree O'Day, Russ Grefe, and Jim Arndt for continuing their roles on the Commission.

Fund administrator will submit a report on the 2013/14 budget cycle following the release of the Lincoln County tourism report by the WI Dept. of Tourism.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 1:30pm by Grefe, and seconded by Malm.
Next meeting will be planned via email at a later date.