

MEETING AGENDA

COMMITTEE: ONEIDA COUNTY TOURISM COUNCIL

DATE/TIME: Monday, June 3, 2024 10:00 AM Central Time

PLACE: Zoom

TOPIC: OCTC BOARD MEETING

ATTENDEES: Krystal Westfal, Jacqui Sharpe, Kris Hanus, Steven Schreier, Michael Tautges, Jim Rosenberg, Collette Sorgel, Tony Pharo, Jeff Verdoorn, Susanne Thiede-Barnet-Guest

MINUTES:

1. Call to Order
 - a. 1:08pm with K. Westfal chairing
2. Discuss/Approve agenda for today's meeting
 - a. J. Sharpe motioned to approve the agenda. C. Sorgel seconded the motion. Agenda approved.
3. Order of agenda items at Chair's discretion
4. Discuss/Approve meeting notes - 4/15/24
 - a. J. Sharp motioned to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2024 OCTC meeting. K. Westfal seconded the motion. Minutes approved.
5. Discuss/Approve Treasurer's Report -
 - a. K. Westfal reviewed packet prepared by Lauren Sackett
 - b. C. Sorgel motioned to approve the treasurer's report. J. Sharpe seconded the motion. Treasurer's report approved.
6. Discuss/ Approve Invoices
 - a. Invoices to communities will go out on June 15. During the July meeting the group will discuss who pays invoices. Invoice received from Pilch + Barnet for Q2.
 - b. K. Westfall motioned to approve the P+B invoice. C. Sorgel seconded. Motion approved.
7. Appointment of Vice President
 - a. K. Westfal appointed J. Sharpe Vice Chair effective immediately due to the resignation of Sherry Hulett, Tomahawk Chamber Director.
8. Welcome New Board Members
 - a. Welcome to the new County board members. K. Westfal reviewed the leaflet explaining that we take pride in how hard we work to promote tourism in the North. We want a steady stream of visitors that come and give us their money. How can we better incorporate this council into the work the county board is doing? We've struggled with this for years. During the July meeting, we'll talk about everyone's roles.
9. Pilch & Barnet Marketing Report
 - a. DEAI Project update
 - i. S. Thiede-Barnet reported that we are wrapping up trail and business updates. Currently sweepstakes going on through 6/25 and already 1,812 entries, 911 newsletter sign ups and a healthy amount of facebook growth (82). We plan to wrap up eval and submit to the State (once room tax info is available) in August so we can reapply for another year of funding by 9/1 deadline.
 - b. Oneida County/Vilas County Snowmobiling JEM Grant

- i. S.Thiede-Barnet reported that the campaign is closed and waiting on Q1 room tax numbers from Vilas County to add to the state's evaluation. C. Sorgel anticipates having all of Vilas County's number by the end of this week.
 - c. Trails Guide
 - i. S. Thiede-Barnet reports we're still in the collection phase. Volunteers are collecting trail GIS information. We are not yet halfway through. Once completed everything will go to OC Land Information to input into their mapping system before providing the final files for use in the Guide.

10. Strategic Planning Meeting

- a. OCTC organizational structure recommendation for approval
 - i. The strategic planning session is scheduled for July 8 at 1pm in Rhinelander - C. Sorgel thinks she can attend. K. Hanus is unavailable until after Country Fest. K. Westfal stressed the importance of the meeting and finding a new time that will work for all. The week of July 15 looks possible. Pilch + Barnet will send a Doodle poll to check availability. We want to review our org structure and get in front of the county board, especially with budget time so we have people advocating for us.
- b. County Board meeting presentation on 6/18
 - i. The county board meeting presentation is on June 18. Sometimes we only talk to the admin and not the whole county board. We want to talk with everyone about the power of tourism, the annual report, new economic impact numbers and how impactful the year before was for taxes. C. Sorgel spoke of how tourism is bringing in money and therefore we can't take the budget away from it. Nothing needed from P&B for the June 18 meeting.

11. Grow North

- a. No one present but noted that Tommy Wartman was just (previously worked with SBA grant program at college) named full-time as director and will still be based in the College. Expect more visualization in what Grow North does.

12. OCEDC Report

- a. J. Verdoorn noted two topics (1) broadband and (2) introduced Tony Pharo as Executive Director as of today. T. Pharo is a full-time Northwoods resident for about 2 years. Largest single economic driver in OC is tourism. We are in the process of improving broadband in rural areas. The infrastructure is going in that will help data transmission. We're installing an open network so anyone can lease space. County facilities will have their own access to the Internet. Construction season has been going about 2months. 300 miles in total by the end of this project. 6000 residents will have immediate access. \$1.1 billion dollar broadband project. Lots of work to continue. It will take 2-3 years but it will happen. There will be more capacity in this area. Call the provider you want and keep bugging them to apply for the hook ups. Infrastructure is in place and we're filling in the gaps. K. Westfal asked if we want to encourage entrepreneurs to come here now that we have broadband. T. Pharo said yes, in time. K. Westfal said we're here to help you get in front of people - Consider Chamber after 5 and mixer events as good opportunities to talk with people. Let's work collaboratively together and let us know if you need something. J. Verdoorn's last day is July 1.

13. ITBEC Marketing Committee Report

- a. J. Sharpe reported that ITBEC is now called the North Central WI tourism partnership. This organization is something that OC pays into through the Counties Association. Each county member sends two county board members or people - one county board and one citizen. The marketing committee (tourism committee) C. Sorgel is our appointee - tourism professionals - one from each county and then the chair and vice chair from that committee will sit on the board. Chair of the tourism committee can appoint whoever to join but they won't have a vote. C. Sorgel votes for OC but J. Sharpe will attend but not vote. Changes happened recently. The group together promotes a region. We pay dues. OC pays the most but they are working on a new pay schedule to equalize the membership. No one is quite sure how they got to the current amount.

14. Department of Tourism Report

- a. Drew could not attend today. Jeff is no longer our representative. We probably won't see Drew on a regular basis because of the size of his territory. K. Westfall indicated she will request an outline of info for the future.

15. Community Reports

- a. Three Lakes - J. Sharpe reported that Three Lakes has no hotel but we have short-term rental. In OC, you are to stay for one full week. In summer it's fine but Labor Day to Memorial day, we're hurting for travel. We've asked this group for advocacy. We'd like each municipality to say what works for them. We'd like the ordinance to change to one rental per week. We're paused on this right now. We'd like each municipality to be in charge of each rather than the whole county. We signed a letter and sent it to the county board with this request. Other updates include an economic development training tomorrow that we're hosting through WHEDA ECD 101 for elected officials. There are a few spots open if anyone is interested. We're hosting a community garage sale on Saturday. We canceled our flea market for this year. For 4th of July, we act as a bridge for different organizations that have things going on. C. Sorgel, we can't emphasize enough that we need lodging in Three Lakes. Having to rent a place for a week is crazy when there is no hotel option.
- a. Pelican River Forest - K. Westfal noted that this is going off the agenda since it happened and we incorporated it onto our website. It is NOT a "state" forest. Please note. We are promoting it as part of tourism in the county.
- b. Minocqua Area - K. Westfahl - K. Westfall already distributed Sherri's new sports and group director business card with Minocqua and happy to say today is her first day. We may be getting an events assistant in the coming weeks. Our events are interesting this year. July 4 construction happening on Hwy 51. We're running the parade backwards this year so that'll be challenging. We are not doing our Dive In event. It got what we needed and people can borrow these equipment resources if they want to rent and hold their own event. We gave it up once we raised enough money to purchase the projector. We want to provide for area movie nights. We are doing a destination stewardship planning project - 4 municipalities in our tourism zones. Unique attributes and residents so we're going to get everyone under one banner in the future - how to better use the room tax resource. Something that will help build infrastructure in our community. Art Walk - first

event just wrapped up on the Island. We paired businesses with artists and we have 20 businesses and we created a downtown walking map and then promoted it. We brought in 6 foot letters that said ART (on the island) and we highlighted Art around (murals). Art on the Island might stay for the summer with cross promotion. We did it ahead of building an Arts page on the website and second the history of railroad and forestry, which led to tourism in our communities - mutual language of taking an overnight train to go to your up north resort.

16. Public Comment/Communication

We received an email about the new DEAI filters on the website. Pilch + Barnet drafted a response to an email that was read aloud.

Good morning, Kay,

Thank you for your feedback about the new additions to the oneidacountywi.com business filter system.

These updates were funded by a Wisconsin Department of Tourism (DOT) joint effort marketing grant, and followed the guidance of the DOT's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion Committee's strategic plan, the goal of which is to "foster positive traveler experiences for all." The plan focuses on highlighting diversity, promoting equity and bringing traditionally excluded groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Our filter system follows a model already in place and being used statewide on the DOT's website travelwisconsin.com. It provides users with the option to search by specific characteristics, but is in no way required, and all businesses who have opted to be part of the website appear by default when the user arrives on the site. People who are not interested in searching by those characteristics may simply choose not to use them, but in the meantime, the opportunity to do so shows that any and all people and businesses are welcome in Oneida County.

J. Verdoorn commented that the article referenced in the email from the Tomahawk Leader Telegram miscommunicated what was included in the media release about the website, which led to the email comment. K. Westfal and the group agreed. K. Westfal will send a follow up response using the draft.

17. Items to include on the next agenda -

C. Sorgel would like to start talking about the budget. K. Westfal noted that we'll start talking about that in the July meeting.

18. Confirm Date and Location

8/5 (K. Westfall is not available so that date may change) We'll send out another poll. Rhinelander, 10/7 - Tomahawk, 12/2

19. Adjournment at 2:29pm