CITY OF ANTIGO

HOTEL MOTEL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD

MAY 08, 2019

Hotel Motel Commission of the City of Antigo met in Regular Meeting on the above date at 8:30 AM in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Mayor Bill Brandt presiding.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Tom Bauknecht	Ward 4	Present	
Bill Brandt	Mayor	Present	
Deena Grabowsky	Member	Present	
David West	Member	Present	
Tom Quinlan	Member	Present	
Cathy LeBrun	Member	Present	
Angie Close	Member	Present	

Others in attendance: Barb Klasinski, Scott Lutz and Drew Lundt, Langlade County Chamber of Commerce Board; Ben Zelazoski, Chamber of Commerce Member; Sarah Repp, Park, Recreation and Cemetery Supervisor; Kaye Matucheski, Clerk-Treasurer/Finance Director; and Jaime Horswill, Lead Office Assistant.

Discussion and Action May Occur on Any of the Following Agenda Items:

1. Future Plans for a Welcome Center Including Location, Lead Entity and Possible Tourism Council

Deena Grabowsky, Langlade County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), provided a proposal noting that after considerable discussion and consideration, the Chamber board would like to propose to retain the Visitor/Welcome Center at its current location. Their proposal is to move forward with the Visitor/Welcome Center at its current location with tourism staff dedicated to promoting our community. The tourism staff responsibility would be operating the Visitor/Welcome Center. The center will also be the home of the Chamber, which would be manned by the Chamber. They would like to request funds from the Commission for either Option A or B:

A. New Visitor/Welcome Center will approximately cost $325,000 with the funds that have been allocated for a Visitor/Welcome Center since 2006 and continue to set aside $5,000 per quarter to cover additional monthly costs of the new building as per minutes dated September 27, 2017.

B. Renovate existing Visitor/Welcome Center with the same funds as mentioned about in the amount of $125,000 for renovations and $6,000 for a new Visitor/Welcome Center sign and additional funds annually for staffing and operational costs.

The Chamber would also like to invite Langlade County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to be housed in the Visitor/Welcome Center with the Chamber. If all three entities are sharing the space, they anticipate the annual expenses to be $2,268 per entity.

The Chamber is the hub of Antigo, serving a population of close to 20,000 within a thirty mile radius. They have a huge opportunity to promote the area’s attractions, amenities, and events. Continuing their interaction with visitors will lead to visitors staying longer, attending more events, and increasing their spending. This, in turn, increases room tax funds used to promote and grow the community. This is the perfect location. The property is situated along Highway 45 South, which greatly increases the visibility of the Visitor/Welcome Center and the services they provide. Averaging over 11,000 cars driving by per day, they will be better able to direct people to Downtown Antigo, Northcentral Technical College, North Towne Center, and other businesses and landmarks within the community.

The Chamber acknowledges there are varying opinions in the community on the location of the Visitor/Welcome Center. They believe strongly that not only have they brought forth a fair proposal, but that it provides for the best visible location. They are asking the Commission to consider the long-term benefits of housing the Chamber within the Visitor/Welcome Center located at the south entrance of Antigo. They believe it provides an incredible opportunity of the Commission to invest back into Antigo and the organizations who work alongside them to grow and improve the community.

Upon inquiry by Dave West, Ms. Grabowsky advised that she calculated the annual expenses and divided by three entities. She did not provide a breakout.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that she did not put actual numbers in for staffing the Visitor/Welcome Center as she staffs it now. They have been doing this (promoting the entire county) for a number of years and can continue with the staffing they have.

Upon inquiry by Angie Close, EDC, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that the $2,268 would be a rent as the Chamber would own the building and be responsible for all maintenance and upkeep.

Upon inquiry by Ms. Close, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that the renovation would include updating the interior as the building is old. If the EDC were to come into the building after renovations, it would be very tight but they could make room. The renovation does not include a kitchen or any additions.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that the Chamber does represent its members, however, for the last 13 years that she has been there she promotes the entire County. The Visitor Guide that they have been producing is opened up to anyone that would like to advertise in it, it is not just for Chamber members. After the last meeting, they did make some changes and have added the Holiday Inn and America's Best Inn to their website so they are listed under places to stay.

Ms. Grabowsky indicated that when people stop in or call they do not give out Chamber member information only. The money they have received in previous years from the room tax promotes the entire county, the recreation and trails. They can enhance a lot of this and promote things more with the room tax funds received.

Ms. Grabowsky advised that their website clearly lists all the trails, recreation, fishing, etc. It is not geared just towards their members. Most of their website is recreation. They also promote the entire county for their events.

Kathy LeBrun commented that the Chamber members are the ones who do behind the scenes and sponsor.

Ms. Grabowsky looked at previous visitor center numbers. They had 14,100 contacts in 2014 between personal phone calls, contacts, and people stopping. 15,400 in 2015, 15,750 in 2016, 16,230 in 2017 and 16,665 in 2018. Their numbers are growing. They have an 800 number and a 24/7 trail hot-line.

Upon inquiry by Ms. Grabowsky, Mayor Brandt advised that he is looking for change. More in the way of promotional material, more local information in Kiosks, and the Visitor's Guide.

Ms. Close provided a proposal as well. She advised that placing the Visitor/Welcome Center within the Museum would be a better use of room tax dollars to fund an already established attraction (people visit an attraction, not a building), $20,000 plus per year more added to the marketing budget instead of building fund, in 2018 the Museum had 3,000 visitors that registered, in 2018 12,100 vehicles passed the museum daily according to the Wisconsin

Department of Transportation and visiting the Museum creates an experience and positive experiences changes people perceptions.

Staffing of the Welcome Center: Currently the Museum is open during the Summer months-Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and during the Winter months-Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The EDC proposal would include Museum staffing the Visitor/Welcome Center hours during their normal operational hours. EDC would staff hours outside of these hours Monday, 10:00 am-6:00 pm (8 hours) Wednesday 4:00 pm-6:00 pm (2 hours), Thursday 4:00 pm-7:00 pm (3 hours), Friday 4:00 pm-7:00 pm (3 hours) and Sunday 10:00 am-4:00 pm (6 hours).

There are enhanced offerings such as an ADA compliant historic building that encompasses and involves the community culture, 24 hour vestibule services, longer hours, targeted congruent marketing efforts without duplication, one website, one app, Discovery Guide will be in both digital and print, more marketing dollars to use and the ability to apply for Tourism Information Center grant dollars. The EDC future implementation plans include creation of a County-Wide Hotel/Motel Room Tax, creation of a Tourism Council, creation of Trail Alliance, Gateway to Recreation (bike and kayak rentals) and "Buy from the Locals" gift shop.

The Visitor/Welcome Center budget would include a one-time cost of $100,000 for the building (24-hour vestibule with locking doors and cameras for visitors to access Langlade County information at any time. Includes inside existing building, build out of first floor 14x22 room and reception desk). A yearly lease (10 years) for $12,000 per year to be paid from the Visitor/Welcome Center building fund. The yearly lease fee would include rent, utilities, insurance, internet access/Wi-Fi, and routine maintenance. The lease would commence January 1, 2020. A one-time cost of $12,000 for indoor/outdoor Visitor/Welcome Center signs. A one-time cost of $3,000 for computer/printer for worker (part of the part-time tourism employees job duties would require them to post on social media and keep websites up to date, which requires a separate computer and printer). A one-time cost of $1,500 for TVs (Langlade County videos and pictures will be able to view above the brochure racks in the entrance way to the Visitor/Welcome Center). And a yearly cost of $25,000 for a part-time Visitor/Welcome Center employee (employee to work so the Visitor/Welcome Center and Museum could be open more days and longer hours. The proposal further noted potential Wisconsin Tourism grants of $110,500 towards the total one-time cost of $116,500 and $22,000 towards the yearly cost of $37,000.

The EDC's ultimate goal is to partner with the Chamber to be housed with EDC at Northcentral Technical College which will help reduce brick and mortar costs for the Chamber, eliminate duplicated efforts, eliminate the need to hire additional staff members for the Visitor/Welcome Center with minimal training needs and enhance opportunities for both business and tourism with more strategic efforts of services between EDC and the Chamber.

Upon inquiry by Drew Lundt, Ms. Close noted that if the Chamber were to merge with EDC they would not have an office at the Museum, both entities would be housed within NTC.

Ms. Grabowsky commented that the Chamber is more than just a space. Members stop in daily, they do the Chamber Gift Certificates, and issue work permits so they do need more than a room. They currently have a garage full of event supplies and equipment.

Upon inquiry by Alderperson Bauknecht, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that currently the Chamber has 220 members. That number has been increasing rapidly.

Ms. LeBrun discussed combining some ideas from the Chamber and EDC. This is a small community. We have to fight with the people outside, we should not be fighting inside.

Mayor Brandt indicated that this is the idea behind this. He is not satisfied with what we now have. It is an opportunity to do something different and something better. There has been a lot of bickering. This will need everyone working together, we should have been working together all along. We have an opportunity to enhance our county as a whole and that is what he would like to see and do. He does not want to continue doing the same as we are not optimizing our ability to promote this area.

Ms. Close advised the tourism numbers just came out and we are flat and have been flat.

Ms. Grabowsky indicated in 2015 tourism here was up 6.10%, 2016 we went down 1.98%, 2017 we went up 2.68%, and in 2018 we went up .24%.

Sarah Repp, Park, Recreation and Cemetery Director, advised that there is not enough space for both entities in the Chamber if the re-hab option is chosen. This site is also an old gas station site and if a new building is constructed are the tanks still under the ground?

The Chamber advised the tanks have been removed.

Mayor Brandt requested a motion on one of the proposals.

Ms. LeBrun questioned who should not vote to which Mayor Brandt noted both Ms. Grabowsky and Ms. Close should abstain.

Barb Klasinski, Chamber of Commerce, commented that Ms. Grabowsky can vote as she is part of the Chamber and the vote is for the Visitor/Welcome Center which are two separate entities.

Mayor Brandt commented than Ms. Close can to as she is part of the EDC and the vote is for the Visitor/Welcome Center which are two separate entities.

Tom Quinlan noted that he feels there is a conflict of interest for Ms. Grabowsky and Ms. Close to vote. Mayor Brandt agreed and advised the two of them to abstain.

Drew Lundt advised that because of everything going and all the discussion the past year, he has met with the state legal team.

Mayor Brandt advised that he does not believe the Commission is breaking any rules.

Scott Lutz commented Section C1, the Commission shall consist of only four to six members. One of the commission members shall represent the Hotel Motel industry, members shall be appointed. (Therefore, there is one extra member on the commission).

Mr. Lutz added that members of the Commission shall be voted upon. There is no Vice Chairperson or Secretary.

Ms. Grabowsky indicated that she has spoken with an attorney. The State Statute outweighs the City Ordinance.

Kaye Matucheski, Clerk-Treasurer/Finance Director, indicated that she has reviewed the State Statutes with the City Attorney. He is comfortable that the Commission is doing things properly. If he has to defend the Commission he will, but the City Attorney has determined that the Commission has the power to act.

Bauknecht moved, West seconded, to approve the proposal from Langlade County Economic Development Corporation for the Visitor/Welcome Center. Ayes: Bauknecht, West, Brandt. Noes: Quinlan, LeBrun. Abstain: Close, Grabowsky.

(Note: After the meeting and checking with the City Attorney, the Commission has the power to act on a Visitor/Welcome Center but is not following State Statue on the number of members, election of officers, and terms. An Ordinance to correct this was approved at the Finance, Personnel and Legislative Committee and will be an agenda item on the June 12, 2019 Council meeting. The vote on a Visitor/Welcome Center will be considered at a future Hotel Motel Commission meeting.)

RESULT:	**CARRIED [3 TO 2]**
MOVER:	Tom Bauknecht, Ward 4
SECONDER:	David West, Member
AYES:	Tom Bauknecht, Bill Brandt, David West
NAYS:	Tom Quinlan, Cathy LeBrun
ABSTAIN:	Deena Grabowsky, Angie Close

Any Other Matters Authorized by Law to be Considered

None

Adjournment

1. **Motion to:** Adjourn at 9:20 am

RESULT:	**CARRIED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Bill Brandt, Mayor
SECONDER:	David West, Member
AYES:	Bauknecht, Brandt, Grabowsky, West, Quinlan, LeBrun, Close

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Bill Brandt, Chairperson Date