

CITY OF ANTIGO
HOTEL MOTEL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD
JANUARY 31, 2018

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	Absent	
Bill Brandt	Mayor	Present	
Deena Grabowsky	Member	Present	
David West	Member	Absent	
Tom Quinlan	Member	Present	
Leah Antoniewicz	Member	Present	
Cathy LeBrun	Member	Present	

Others in attendance: Joe Hermolin and Lisa Haefs, Langlade County Historical Society; Angie Close, Langlade County Economic Development Corporation; James Justman, Drew Lundt, and Scott Lutz, Chamber of Commerce; Sarah Repp, Park, Recreation and Cemetery Director; and Jaime Horswill, Clerical/Utility Assistant.

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

1. Feasibility of Welcome Center and Possible Sites

Minutes from the Hotel Motel Room Tax Commission Meeting dated October 2, 2005 were attached to the agenda. The minutes noted the Commission was setting aside \$5,000 quarterly and be earmarked for a Welcome/Visitor Center with the first payment to be collected the first quarter of 2006. It was noted the Commission's intent is for the Chamber of Commerce to house this facility with a site to be determined after sufficient funds have been acquired.

Lisa Haefs, Langlade County Historical Society (LCHS), provided a short note advising recent plans by LCHS to create a handicapped-accessible facility in the heart of downtown open up exciting new possibilities for partnerships. An informal survey of downtown businesses, along with feedback from the City of Antigo Destination Assessment Taskforce Team, point to the need for a downtown Visitor's Center devoted to the City of Antigo. The heartbeat of a small town is found in its people and the vitality of its downtown. A visitor center downtown would add opportunities for volunteers, more open hours for one-on-one conversations and a chance to create a true resource center. LCHS would like to work with the City to make that facility a possibility.

Ms. Haefs' note advised that under their proposal, the LCHS will partner with organizers including, but not limited to: Antigo First, the Langlade County Economic Development Corporation, City of Antigo Parks and Recreation Department and others including the Langlade County Forestry Department, school district and recreation and cultural groups such as Langlade Area Mountain Bike Association, Antigo Bike and Ski Club, Elcho Cross Country Ski Club, Ice Age Trail Alliance, Antigo Visual Arts, Music in the Park, Langlade Area Arts and more to create a one stop center of information for "all things Antigo", stretching into the surrounding area. Talks with the Antigo/Langlade County Chamber of Commerce on a joint location have not been fruitful, but LCHS will continue to encourage collaboration.

Ms. Haefs' note continues to advise that they would be open and staffed on a daily basis, Monday through Saturday, with an around the clock information kiosk included as part of the renovation plans. The possibilities are far reaching. Visitors could stop by the museum for

tours of the exhibits, the 440 locomotive and Deleglise Cabin and use the convenient Seventh and Superior location to branch out and explore using maps, brochures and perhaps even bicycles that could be available at the facility. They would be steps from the historic downtown and its mix of hospitality, financial services and retail, the Heinzen Pavilion and Peaceful Valley Park and the extensive city trail and boardwalk system. To move forward, LCHS would require a substantial financial requirement from the Hotel/Motel Room Tax Commission, including funding to allow the renovations to advance and a yearly stipend to assure adequate staffing at the museum location.

Mayor Brandt advised that at some point the Commission is going to be tasked with determining where the Welcome Center should be located. The previous Director of Administrative Services wanted to make the Welcome Center part of the Downtown Springbrook Revitalization Plan. There are some options now that were not available in 2005. There is approximately \$220,000 that is controlled by this Commission that has been earmarked for a Welcome Center. Those funds are not earmarked to anyone and Mayor Brandt does not want anyone assuming that those funds belong to any group. Those funds are controlled by this Commission and this Commission will decide where the funds will be best spent to open a Welcome Center for the area.

Mayor Brandt advised that a meeting was held with the LCHS, Chamber of Commerce, Langlade County Economic Development Corporation, City of Antigo Park and Recreation Department, and members of the Commission. There did not seem to be a lot of warmth from the Chamber of Commerce towards the LCHS. Mayor Brandt would like to see all the entities working together on a project of this scale so there is a center that everyone can use and not having a competing interest somewhere.

Mayor Brandt further explained that the LCHS is interested in putting a Welcome Center at their location downtown. The Chamber of Commerce is still interested in putting a building at their location. He has not seen or heard from the Chamber with plans for the building or hours of operation, attractions, etc. He is in favor of the downtown idea. There are businesses in this location that are supportive of it. There is access to the parks, trails, and downtown area. This could actually be a family stop with the museum, the train, and attractions within the downtown area.

Drew Lundt, Chamber of Commerce, advised he went to the meeting. They currently are cooperating with other businesses. A comment was made that essentially they could get rid of the other businesses to make room for the Chamber. Mr. Lundt took that as if they could do that to them, they could do that to the Chamber down the road. The Chamber is concerned about the structural integrity of the building. There are problems with the foundation in the basement. There are no price tags on these big items that need to be addressed, such as a wheelchair ramp. They are also concerned where they are going to fit. There are many unknowns. There is really no way of saying that they can do it without knowing prices.

Mr. Lundt also wanted to clarify advising that the Chamber is more than receptive to making changes such as hours. They do have a plan for a new building. They are very negotiable and transparent with this. They have done research with comparative communities such as Shawano, New London, and Clintonville. They are not against the idea, but are very conservative as they do not know what this is going to cost. He showed pictures of these locations.

Scott Lutz, Chamber of Commerce, noted concerns with energy efficiency of the building. Joe Hermolin, LCHS, corrected Mr. Lutz and noted that it costs \$900 per month in the winter. The new building proposed by the Chamber would cost significantly less.

Mr. Lundt spoke about the exposed duct work not having good curb appeal.

Cathy LeBrun noted that she likes the current location, it is on the right side of the road. She is unaware of what that would do to the business membership as they have been promised a new building for years. Mayor Brandt commented that they are not funding a Chamber building, but a Welcome Center.

James Justman, Chamber of Commerce, advised that the museum building will not be able to host a kitchen, which is priority for the Chamber. They currently rely on someone's house to make mass food preparations.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt, Deena Grabowsky, Chamber of Commerce, indicated that it is not necessarily cooking, but preparation and cleaning nescos.

Mr. Justman noted they are looking for oven, sinks, plumbing, microwave, the whole nine yards.

Mr. Lundt noted that they are also looking at expanding. If they had a full kitchen, what else could they do? If they had a meeting room, who could utilize it?

Mr. Justman noted that currently they are staffed at 1.5 employees and they are open Monday through Friday. They also work events that are held on Saturday or Sunday. The LCHS is only open Thursday, Friday and Saturday during the winter months. Now they are worried about running the museum on the other days. The Chamber is pretty self-sufficient right now.

Mayor Brandt indicated that the Hotel Motel Commission currently help with that as well at approximately \$38,000 per year.

Upon inquiry by Ms. LeBrun, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that there may be problems with storage as well. The LCHS has its storage area full. The Chamber also has a garage on its property to store tables, coolers, nesco, etc. This is full. It is easily accessible, they can just back the truck up to it and remove what they need.

Upon comment by Leah Antoniewicz, Ms. Grabowsky indicated that storage within the Museum would not be as accessible as outside in the garage as you would have to walk up and down the stairs.

Mr. Lundt also commented on the shared parking lot and the distance to walk from the parking lot to the door.

Ms. Haefs advised that the LCHS does have plans. Maybe the Chamber of Commerce is not the best idea for a Welcome Center. The LCHS is not going to change the parking location or put in a kitchen. They are willing to make the building capable of being a visitor center for the City of Antigo. They are willing to have the Chamber of Commerce move to their location and share funding. They do not want to be adversarial, but maybe separate centers are the way to go.

Ms. Haefs further noted that the LCHS is working with a historic structure architectural design company out of Wausau and they have designed a two or three phase plan for the building to bring it up to handicap accessible, lighting up to historic standards and fix any issues with the foundation, furnace, restrooms, etc. They are going to proceed with the plan regardless of what happens here. They are waiting to see what happens with this decision so that they can bring these ideas to the architect. Is the Chamber going to move in, where? Do they need a 24 hour kiosk? The architect can then address these issues while making the plans. They do not want to pay the architect to fit these things in if they are not going to happen. Energy efficiency will be addressed with the architect.

Ms. Haefs noted that they have been in contact with the owner of the empty parking lot across the street for possible additional parking. She has never seen their parking lot full, Dr. Krueger's parking lot full, or the Chamber's parking lot. Parking problems are over-rated. They feel that they would make a perfect Welcome Center for the City of Antigo.

Mr. Hermolin advised that May - October they are open 5 days per week staffed with one part time employee and volunteers. From October - May they are open three days a week. The building is heated every day and would not cost more to be open six days a week.

Angie Close, Langlade County Economic Development Corporation, advised that most Welcome Centers operate largely with volunteers and this is one way to get people involved.

Ms. Haefs also commented that they are not "getting rid" of anyone that is within the building currently, they would move the art gallery to the second floor as the Chamber would probably want to be on the first floor.

Mr. Lundt noted that if this does not work, the Chamber was planning on breaking ground after the frost was out. A question they have asked themselves is do they want to fit somewhere or do they want to grow?

Upon inquiry by Sarah Repp, Park, Recreation and Cemetery Director, Mr. Lundt advised that he does not feel the Chamber of Commerce could grow at the museum without a kitchen or storage.

Mayor Brandt again reiterated that the Commission is tasked to find the best place for a Welcome Center not support a Historical Society or build a Chamber of Commerce building. We are here to do what the Commission feels is the best for a Welcome Center. The Commission is trying to accommodate all groups with the Welcome Center.

Ms. Close commented that the groups need to come together with a shared community vision. We have to come together and collaborate. In today's age for new businesses, new attractions, for people, if the community stays separate entities and duplicate efforts, it is a waste.

Mayor Brandt indicated that as a Mayor, he is partial to the downtown area. The Chamber is not even located within the City limits. He does not believe a Welcome Center is a place where you quick stop run in and grab some brochures. He goes to Welcome Centers and sometimes they are there for an hour depending on what they have there to see. It is part of the trip, something to do, something to see. People actually stop to see what there is. You can get a snowmobile trail map at any bar.

Ms. Grabowsky indicated that people that come to the Chamber do visit, talk about the area. Some stay for an hour. They do not just hand out information. The Chamber Welcome Center is the same as others.

Mayor Brandt commented that he is looking at a place that a family will stop, have something to do, decide to have lunch. They can walk around the corner to see the sign park, a playground, and walking path/boardwalk. He has gone to different Welcome Centers when he travels and has not gone to a Chamber of Commerce. The Welcome Centers he visits has things to do and see. The one that comes to mind is in Jackson, Wyoming. He goes every time he is in the area as there are things to see and it changes occasionally. He takes the grandkids and is there for at least an hour. You find out what is going on in the community. That Welcome Center is partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and Forestry Department, which provides a lot of help with volunteer. He has been to Welcome Centers where he has had to crawl two ramps and a flight of stairs because you can then walk on a trail. There is a lot of neat information and history about the area on the inside. His vision is more interactive. The kids are going to want to get out and look at things. If these other Welcome Centers did not have things available to see and do, people would not want to stop.

Mayor Brandt further commented that he does not buy the right side or wrong side of the road. He has never been to a place and not gone to a Welcome Center because it was on the wrong side of the road. This is not a valid point.

Mayor Brandt indicated that he understands not wanting to pay an architect for drawings that

may or may not happen. He advised that it should not cost that much money for an idea as the architect knows the building. He suggests the Commission help pay for this cost. He noted Wisconsin Act 55 should allow this expenditure.

Upon inquiry by Mr. Lundt, Ms. Antoniewicz suggested the Welcome Center in Hurley, Wisconsin. There is also a Welcome Center on Highway 2 by the bridge that has a beautiful center with walking trails.

Mr. Justman indicated that he keeps coming back to the cost of operating the building. Right now the operational of the Museum is grant and donation funded. Grants are not guaranteed. Once the commitment is made and the grants do not come through, he is afraid of the liability for the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Haefs commented that if the Museum partners with other entities, it develops a cash flow so they are not totally dependent on grants. If the Museum does a Welcome Center, they are not doing it for free.

Upon inquiry by Tom Quinlan, Ms. Haefs advised that any monies received will not affect the grants that they get. In fact, it may help receive other available grants as they will partner with other entities.

Ms. Repp commented about a grant that could be available on a yearly basis, if the Museum was partnered with another entity.

Mr. Lutz noted that his idea of a Welcome Center is right as you come into town. He wants to find a spot that is easy to get to if he is pulling a trailer. He likes the idea of having it on the south side of town as the first thing you see when you come to town. When he travels with his kids, they have no interest in getting out of the vehicle. He is looking for something easy. He would like to see a cool map in-layed in the floor. In and out is hugely important when he is traveling. If he senses any difficulty, he will pass right by it.

Mr. Lutz indicated that the kitchen is important to him as he is sick and tired of Ms. Grabowsky having to do work in her house. That should not be. This would give space for volunteers as well.

Mr. Lutz also explained how the Chamber made a bucket list years ago and have been building on those ideas until the plan came about. It is dear to his heart as it is what the Chamber needs and will be able to expand on.

Mr. Hermolin noted that people do stop and wander into the museum during the summer months. The museum is a building that is noticed. It would make an ideal Welcome Center.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt, Mr. Lutz indicated that it would not make any difference to him if LCHS produced a drawing that accommodated the Chamber. He does not believe it would be best for Antigo if the Chamber was located within the museum.

Ms. Antoniewicz commented that the separation needs to stop. The community has numerous things to offer everyone. She questions if a kitchen and storage are going to stop entities from working together for the community.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt, Mr. Justman noted that he is not positive the new Chamber of Commerce will be built if they do not receive the Welcome Center money.

Upon inquiry by Mayor Brandt to the Commission members, Cathy LeBrun and Leah Antoniewicz would not care about seeing an architectural design. Ms. Antoniewicz noted that the other entities should want to see it.

Mr. Lutz advised that he would not care to see a design either. Some of the bigger points such as location and finances are of concern.

Motion to approve up to \$5,000 for architectural plans for each the Langlade County Historical Society and the Chamber of Commerce with funding derived from the Hotel Motel Commission's general funds. These plans do not need to be state approved plans.

RESULT:	CARRIED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Bill Brandt, Mayor
SECONDER:	Leah Antoniewicz, Member
AYES:	Brandt, Grabowsky, Quinlan, Antoniewicz, LeBrun
ABSENT:	Tom Bauknecht, David West

Any Other Matters Authorized by Law to be Considered

NONE

Adjournment

1. **Motion to:** Adjourn at 10:22 am

RESULT:	CARRIED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Tom Quinlan, Member
SECONDER:	Cathy LeBrun, Member
AYES:	Bauknecht, Brandt, Grabowsky, Quinlan, Antoniewicz, LeBrun
ABSENT:	David West

Bill Brandt, Chairperson

Date