

ROOM TAX COMMISSION

Date and Time: Monday, July 24, 2023, at 4:00 p.m., Council Chambers

Members Present: Michael Martens, Lisa Rasmussen, Chad Henke, Lindsey Lewitzke, Tim VanDeYacht

Others Present: Mayor Rosenberg, Maryanne Groat, Alissandra Aderholdt, Alyson Leahy, Tiffany Rodriguez-Lee, Kody Hart

In compliance with Wis. Stat. § 19.84, notice of this meeting was duly posted and sent to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Noting the presence of a quorum, at approximately 4:00 p.m., Chairperson Martens called the meeting to order.

Discussion and possible action on approving minutes of previous meeting (6/26/2023)

Motion by Rasmussen, second by Lewitzke, to approve the minutes. Motion carries 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action regarding Tourism Grant Requests

Without objection, it was decided to approach each request individually in order within the packet.

The Blues Fest request by Wausau Events was the first item discussed. Lewitzke stated that this is the smallest total event budget of the request before the commission today. VanDeYacht questioned the increased amount of funding going towards advertising. Alissandra Aderholdt, Executive Director at Wausau Events, stated that other Blues Fest's within the state have closed and that the additional advertising dollars would go towards capturing the markets where the other Blues Fest have shut down.

Motion by Rasmussen, second by Henke, to approve the full amount of \$4,000 funding. Motion carries 5-0.

The Winter Brew Fest request by Wausau Events was the next item discussed. Martens questioned if this was the first time a Tourism Grant request was made for this specific event. Aderholdt confirmed that this was the first ever request for this event. Rasmussen questioned if this event was separate from Winter Fest. Aderholdt stated that it was a separate event from Winter Fest. Rasmussen continued to state that there was a need to support events that bring people out in the winter months. VanDeYacht questioned the location of the event. Aderholdt stated that the event is held at the Jefferson Street Inn the evening before Winter Fest and that Winter Brew Fest was meant to be a ticketed adult-only event. Lewitzke asked if there was a plan for a "stay and play" option with the Jefferson Street Inn. Aderholdt stated that the hotel was giving a discount on rooms for attendees and that the space for the event could hold 400 people.

Motion by Henke, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve the full amount of \$3,000 funding. Motion carried 5-0.

The ExhibiTour request by Wausau River District was the next item discussed. Martens questioned if this was the first time a Tourism Grant request was made for this specific event, Alyson Leahy, Assistant Director at Wausau River District, confirmed that this was the first ever request for this event. Rasmussen stated the brief history of the ExhibiTour event and that this is a local favorite event which was enhanced by a change in state law allowing wine walks. Martens stated support for events meant to bring people to the downtown area. VanDeYacht questioned the attendance estimate in accordance with the proposed marketing budget. Leahy stated that they are looking at a more robust marketing plan to seek a wider audience in addition to attracting participating artists from outside the area. VanDeYacht questioned the details of the event budget. Leahy answered accordingly. Lewitzke questioned the robust marketing plan and for more details on the plan. Leahy stated that the presented marketing plan was intended to build future content. Lewitzke stated that in the following years it was not expected to need a videographer and photographer in future marketing budgets for this event. VanDeYacht questioned other funding sources. Leahy stated that there was a grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin and Maryanne Groat, Finance Director, stated that the Wausau River District receives an annual allotment of room tax funds. VanDeYacht objected to the funding allocated towards City Pages ads.

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Rasmussen, to approve \$9,300 of the funding. Motion carried 5-0.

The Center for the Visual Arts (CVA) request was the next item discussed. Lewitzke questioned funding a marketing budget for an organization with a preference of funding specific events with room tax funds. Tiffany Rodriguez-Lee, Executive Director at the CVA, stated that the organization holds several exhibits that bring in artists and visitors from outside the area. Rasmussen stated that these are exhibit specific in which a marketing plan

of this reach has not been executed before. Rodriguez-Lee stated that each exhibit has a reception event which draws a large crowd and that the receptions are free and open to the public necessitating grant funding. VanDeYacht questioned a mandate to have receptions that are free and open to the public. Rodriguez-Lee stated that the free and open to the public model is a part of the foundation of the organization. VanDeYacht stated an unwillingness to support design services and search engine optimization and objected to those parts of the proposed marketing budget. Groat stated that this request includes funding for City Pages ads which was objected to in the previous request. Lewitzke questioned if there were any other parts of the proposed marketing budget that would be objected to. VanDeYacht stated support for Wisconsin Public Radio ads, social media ads, and distribution of a tourism magazine. Rasmussen suggested to pair down the funding allocation to \$7,500.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$7,500 of the funding. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action regarding next grant application period and standard meeting times.

Groat suggested setting criteria for proposals. Rasmussen suggested that criteria parameters focus on outreach outside the area as opposed to local marketing. Groat further suggested requiring applicants to return receipts of funding to be reimbursed or proof of funding if funds were allocated in advance. Rasmussen stated that the suggestion would have to be taken on a case-by-case basis. Lewitzke suggested to add a checkbox on the application to allow requestees to seek reimbursement or proof of funding when applying for Tourism Grant funding.

Lewitzke requested year-to-date information on requests that were funded.

Martens stated the previous goal of the commission to continue to have meetings at regular intervals. There will be a September 25, 2023, meeting to review requests received prior to a September 18, 2023, deadline.

Henke stated a preference for a rolling basis cycle of applications to mitigate the length of meetings and need to review.

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Henke, to hold quarterly meetings for 2024 in January, April, July, and October. Motion carried 5-0.

Adjourn

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Henke, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

For full meeting video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orWqkxDu9r8>