

ROOM TAX COMMISSION

Date and Time: Tuesday, April 18, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., Council Chambers

Members Present: Michael Martens (C), Tim VanDeYacht (VC), Lisa Rasmussen, Chad Henke (left at 4:50 p.m.), Lindsey Lewitzke

Noting the presence of a quorum Deputy City Clerk Hart called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Elect Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for the Room Tax Commission

Nominations for Chairperson were opened.

Rasmussen nominated Micheal Martens. Martens accepted the nomination.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Martens to be the Chairperson for the Room Tax Commission. Motion carried 5-0.

Nominations for Vice Chairperson were opened.

Henke nominated Tim VanDeYacht. VanDeYacht accepted the nomination.

Motion by Henke, seconded by Lewitzke, to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for VanDeYacht to be the Vice Chairperson for the Room Tax Commission. Motion carried 5-0.

Minutes of the previous meeting (11/28/2023).

Motion by Lewitzke, seconded by Henke, to approve the minutes. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action regarding Tourism Grant request applications.

The Balloon Festival application was discussed. Rasmussen questioned if the event would continue or cease due to public tensions among organizers and local stakeholders, and the possibility of a rival event. It was stated the event is long-running and there is a community want to continue with the event with 20 to 25 balloons and other unique things to attract attendees. Rasmussen stated concerns with rebuilding the event. Lewitzke questioned the 2023 finances in relations to a grant that required a local funding match. Rasmussen stated the funds allocated with room tax are not to go towards overhead or local matching. It was stated the additional grant was used for advertising outside of the local area. VanDeYacht questioned if there was an accounting oversight for spent funds and if there were clawback mechanisms for funds that were not allocated or if the event moves locations. It was stated accounting is overseen and a clawback mechanism could be made as a condition of the allocation. Rasmussen requested a review mechanism for a measure of accountability for allocated room tax grants.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve the full amount of \$10,000 funding with the understanding that the event is rebuilding. Motion carried 5-0.

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

The Center for the Visual Arts – New Exhibit application was discussed. Lewitzke stated there was \$1,500 specified in the application for ads to run in City Pages. VanDeYacht questioned the room nights estimated and stated this could be coupled with the Hmong Festival to achieve that goal. It was stated there is an extended period of this event as the exhibit will be open for a number of months.

Motion by Lewitzke, seconded by Rasmussen, to approve \$6,500 funding. Motion carried 5-0.

The Hmong Festival application was discussed. Rasmussen stated this event gets incrementally better year after year by doing more to bring people in. VanDeYacht stated an interest in the event becoming more self-sustaining with the large attendance. Lewitzke questioned if this amount of funds should be allocated to a standing event that has a dedicated audience and questioned why there was not a clear outline of where the funds would specifically be allocated.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by Henke, to approve \$20,000 funding with the understanding that the event should begin looking at sustainability. Motion carried 5-0.

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum – Artrageous and Wisconsin Art Association Marathon Park applications was discussed. Rasmussen stated this event is typically one with a wide draw of visitors and worthy of funding. VanDeYacht questioned if this application was marketing to the same people as the application for Wisconsin Art Association Marathon Park. Rasmussen stated these are all key to each other's success and that the Wisconsin Art Association application markets to artists specifically. Henke questioned if these two applications should be combined into one because it would be for the same event. Lewitzke stated the Wisconsin Art Association Marathon Park includes a brochure and Visit Wausau advertising meaning they only have \$8,000 which is applicable to the scope of room tax funding. Rasmussen stated \$8,000 would be appropriate for the Wisconsin Art Association Marathon Park as they were not present to speak on the brochure and Visit Wausau funding portions and because they draw people in from a concurrent event run by a private entity.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by Henke, to approved \$10,000 funding for Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum - Artrageous. Motion carried 5-0.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$8,000 funding for Wisconsin Art Association Marathon Park. Motion carried 5-0.

The Iron Bull application was discussed. Rasmussen stated this event was picking up popularity and has expanded the appeal of the series of events. Martens questioned if the ask seemed appropriate for the size of the event. Henke questioned how long the event organizers were seeking room tax funds. It was stated this was the third year they received the funding. Lewitzke questioned the accounting oversight from the previous year and stated the organizers should not be awarded more than previously. Rasmussen questioned if they had individual events in 2024 from the previous years and further questioned if they are funded more will the return be more. Rasmussen stated the draw is there and more funding could in fact draw more people into the community. Lewitzke stated the organizers could come back and justify for the remainder of the funding as they were not present at this meeting.

Motion by Lewitzke, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$15,000 funding. Motion carried 5-0.

The Wausau Pride application was discussed. VanDeYacht questioned the funding of undefined creative. Rasmussen stated a preference for the roll out of creative materials as opposed to the creation of creative which was funded for in the last year. It was stated that they could shift the allocation funding to strictly be for marketing. Martens requested that the funding, if allocated, be spent on marketing outreach.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$6,500 funding to be spent on marketing outreach. Motion carried 5-0.

Henke is excused from the rest of the meeting.

The Monk Gardens Blossom of Lights application was discussed. Rasmussen stated this event occurred in the previous year and was very successful and stated the organization needed to cast a wide net for outreach to bring people into the area. Martens stated an appreciation for a joint effort with Granite Peak for a day and night activity with the autumn chair-lift rides. VanDeYacht questioned the additional increase in stay nights. It was stated that the increase was attributed to the partnership with Granite Peak and that the vent will be longer running than past events. Martens stated that this event fills a fall gap in tourism.

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Rasmussen, to approve \$10,000 funding. Motion carried 4-0.

The Bluesfest application was discussed. Rasmussen stated the success of this event to allow it to become more self-sustaining as it grows in attendance.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$10,000 funding. Motion carried 4-0.

The Fireworks Festival application was discussed. Lewitzke stated that only \$1,500 from this application was meant for advertising. Rasmussen stated that the commission could fund the \$1,500 for the funding of advertising and seek the other funding from an appropriation from the city.

Motion by Rasmussen, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve \$1,500 funding for advertising. Motion carried 4-0.

Adjourn

Motion by Lewitzke, seconded by VanDeYacht, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

For full meeting video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqQ46lgkyk>