



INDEPENDENCE TOURISM COMMISSION Minutes

May 28, 2024 8:30 AM

Veterans Hall, Truman Memorial Building, 416 W. Maple

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rushay called the meeting to order.

Commissioners present: Lynne Baker, Mike Calvert, Scott Forsyth, Amy Kistler, Jodi Krantz, Jeff McLaughlin, John Thornton

Commissioner absent: Bobby McCutcheon

Staff present: Frank Buhro, Melissa Brown, Kimberle Franks, Morris Heide, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Madeline Rincon, Wendy Shay, Tabitha Williams

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. February 27, 2024 Meeting

Motioned by Commissioner Baker, seconded by Commissioner Thornton. Minutes approved as presented.

STAFF REPORT

1. Budget

Parks, Recreation & Tourism (PRT) Fiscal Administrator Kimberle Franks presented the third quarter department budget report. Expenditures are at 75% of budget through March 31, 2024. Discussion followed about orgs 6064 and 6061.

2. Social Media

Morris Heide, PRT Director introduced Maddie Rincon, Public Relations Manager and directed the Commission to the written report in their packets. Ms. Rincon stated the City's new Public Information Officer was unable to attend due to meetings concerning the weekend storm cleanup.

Discussion followed concerning the main social media accounts for Tourism, website statistics, use of local influencers, EMMA data, and definitions of reach and impressions.

3. Tourism, NFTM & Historic Sites

Assistant Director Frank Buhro gave an overview of the written report: new visitor guides were delivered and are being distributed, efforts continue to try to recruit volunteers for the historic sites and museum, STR report statistics, transient guest tax annual receipts, historic sites attendance, National Frontier Trails Museum attendance including pre- and post-pandemic figures, school field trips and group tours.

Discussion followed concerning historic sites schedules, 2018 NFTM attendance, volunteers, 2026 FIFA plans for international and other visitors, MO Model RR Museum opening and schedule, KC Mavericks first conference championship, and KC Comets leading their league in attendance.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Wayfinding Signage Update

Director Heide reported that staff from the City Manager's Office and PRT met with PGAV, the consultant working on the wayfinding project, to review different scenarios of signage. PGAV will be making some edits and begin sharing with key stakeholders. The study should be complete late this summer.

Discussion followed about kinds and sizes of signage, locations, construction, installation, and timeline.

2. Truman Depot Project Update

Director Heide reported that the contractor has resumed work. 700 feet of trail and curb from the Depot to the MO Model RR museum has been completed and the exterior abatement work is nearly finished. Discussion about the delays and cost followed.

3. NPS Harry S Truman Visitor Center Project Update

Director Heide recently attended a value methodology workshop where three proposed renderings of the facility were refined down to one. Design is scheduled for this year with construction in 2026. The new visitor center will focus on the private life of President and Mrs. Truman.

4. Tourism Study Update

Director Heide introduced Karen Hibbard, former Executive Director of the Manhattan, KS Convention and Visitors Bureau. She has been contracted since December to evaluate tourism in Independence. Ms. Hibbard stated she has been meeting with key stakeholders

and visiting lodging and tourism sites. She shared information about a survey hoteliers will be asking guests to complete. In June or July she will present her findings to the City Council for their recommendation.

5. Statues at MO Model Railroad Museum

Discussion took place about cost and locations for moving both statues at the MO Model Railroad Museum. Final cost cannot be determined until the exact locations are known. Commissioner Calvert has secured \$7000 in private funding.

Commissioner Calvert made a motion to recommend to the City Council that the Lady of the Trails statue currently located at the MO Model Railroad Museum be relocated to Liberty Street near the Independence Uptown Market and the Jim Bridger statue currently located at the MO Model Railroad Museum be relocated to a site to be determined on the Independence Square. Relocation would include new interpretive signage for both statues. \$7000 in private funding has been secured and the additional cost would be provided by the City.

Commissioner Baker seconded the motion. The motion carried 6-0. Commissioners McCutcheon and McLaughlin were not present for the vote.

NEW BUSINESS

1. FY 2024-25 Budget

Director Heide presented the department's FY 2024-25 proposed budget to the City Manager in March. The City Manager presented the budget to the City Council in April, and department directors will present their budgets to the Council this month. Director Heide presents the PRT proposed budget at tonight's Council Study Session.

Discussion followed concerning increasing expenses, flat revenue, personnel changes, how historic sites maintenance costs reduce the amount of funds available for marketing, and shifting Truman Memorial Building operations to the Tourism fund.

2. General Obligation Bond Proposal

Director Heide introduced Lois McDonald who is part of a grassroots campaign to promote the proposed General Obligation bond issue on the April 2025 ballot. Ms. McDonald provided background information and the City's deferred maintenance needs which includes historic site maintenance and park revitalization. Their website is GOIndependence.org. She will provide an update at the August Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Baker motioned; Chairman Rushay seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:47 AM. Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.

1. The next meeting will be at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, August 27, 2024.
Meeting Schedule - 8:30 a.m. on the 4th Tuesday of February, May, August, and November.