



INDEPENDENCE TOURISM COMMISSION Minutes

November 26, 2024 8:30 AM

Veterans Hall, Truman Memorial Building, 416 W. Maple

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rushay called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Commissioners Present: Sam Rushay, Lynne Baker, Mike Calvert, Scott Forsyth, Bobby McCutcheon, Jeff McLaughlin, John Thornton

Staff present: Frank Buhro, Kimberle Franks, Morris Heide, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Candi Laster, Madeline Rincon, Councilmember Jennie Vaught, Tabitha Williams

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. August 27, 2024 Minutes

Commissioner Thornton motioned to approve, Commissioner Baker seconded. Minutes approved as presented.

STAFF REPORT

1. Budget

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Fiscal Administrator Kimberle Franks presented the first quarter department budget report showing expenditures under budget for the year pending Tourism Division reorganization.

2. Tourism, NFTM and Historic Sites

Assistant Director Frank Buhro reported that museum staff has begun to map visitor's home locations, maintenance is being completed on some exhibits and attendance is up. Staff is tracking number of visitors and amount of donations to determine an amount per person. Staff looked into billboard advertising and decided to let the proposed CVB staff pursue that option.

Discussion followed concerning the Bingham Waggoner stable roof repair, NFTM signage, reasons for increased museum attendance, coordination with Pioneer Trails Adventures, group tours and school field trips, and resuming admission fees at NFTM. The Commission questioned why a new museum was not part of the General Obligation bond proposal. Discussion then turned to preparations for the World Cup in 2026.

3. Marketing and Social Media

Public Relations Manager Madeline Rincon reported that overall numbers were up last quarter on all Facebook pages except Adventure Oasis, the Visit Independence Instagram page needs more growth, and staff will be creating more videos for the City's one YouTube channel. She also discussed website analytics, paid print ads in MO Life and the MO Travel Guide, and digital media buys with Visit KC. Staff relaunched the City's newsletter and are trying to get an email list for only PRT news. Staff is actively working on next year's visitor guide.

Discussion followed concerning analytics from advertisements, Visit KC's cost and service, how to accurately track attendance at large events, the value of free programming, and solutions to the continuing vandalism, graffiti, and homelessness issues.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Truman Depot Project

Director Heide reported that the contract has been extended yet again with a new completion date of April 2025. Discussion centered on the use of the depot once reconstruction is finished and plans to relocate the caboose to the MO Model Railroad campus where it will be restored.

2. NPS Harry S Truman Visitor Center Project

In October the architectural firm met with Community Development staff. The schematic design and rendering include a single-story building with a small parking lot. Design work continues and construction is scheduled to begin in 2026 unless there are changes with the federal budget.

3. General Obligation Bond Proposal

The City Council created an advisory committee who recommended funds for a new justice center, animal shelter acquisition from Jackson County, and street, bridge and sidewalk repair. A new community center was not recommended.

The City Manager is proposing a \$197 million bond package divided into three ballot questions: \$130 million for a new justice center, animal shelter acquisition, and the demolition of the current police building; \$55 million for streets, sidewalks, bridges & culverts; and \$12 million for recreation and historic sites. \$5 million of the \$12 million would fund improvements at the Independence Athletic Complex to generate sports tourism and the remaining \$7 million would go toward maintenance at the Bingham Waggoner Estate, Vaile Mansion, and Truman Memorial Building. If approved by the City Council in December, it would be included in the April 2025 election.

PRT staff will update the Parks Master Plan. Discussion followed concerning the need for a new facility on the current City Hall and Police locations once those buildings are vacated, and whether that should be a recreation center, community center or museum and cultural center which would include space for a theatre.

4. Tourism Reorganization

Director Heide reported that the City Manager recommended a plan to the City Council that would create a new Convention and Visitors Bureau operating as a 201c6 nonprofit organization. The CVB would be responsible for tourism promotions and marketing and be funded by 50% of the transient guest tax. The remaining 50% would stay with PRT to fund maintenance at the City's historic sites and National Frontier Trails Museum operations.

A resolution will be on the December 2nd City Council agenda. If approved, the CVB would begin operations July 1, 2025.

Discussion followed concerning the future of the Tourism Commission, a new CVB board of directors, and changes in tourism operations.

NEW BUSINESS

Quarterly Historic Trails Meetings - Director Heide reported that staff have begun meeting regularly with representatives of the Oregon-California, Santa Fe, Lewis & Clark, and Mormon trails associations to increase collaboration, promote a new trails museum, and promote a new western trails research library.

Statues Relocation – Commissioner Calvert asked if there were any updates. Director Heide responded that staff was waiting for a decision about the tourism reorganization. An update will be provided at the January meeting.

ADJOURNMENT - NEXT MEETING - 8:30 AM, TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2025

Meeting Schedule - 8:30 am on the 4th Tuesday of every other month

Commissioner Baker motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Forsyth seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:16 AM.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES