



INDEPENDENCE TOURISM COMMISSION Minutes

January 28, 2025 8:30 AM

Veterans Hall, Truman Memorial Building, 416 W. Maple

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioners Present: Sam Rushay, Lynne Baker, Mike Calvert, Scott Forsyth, John Thornton
Staff present: Frank Buhro, Kimberle Franks, Morris Heide, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Candi Laster, Madeline Rincon, Tabitha Williams
Councilmember Vaught informed Director Heide that she was unable to attend.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. November 26, 2024 Minutes

Commissioner Baker motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Forsyth seconded the motion. Minutes approved as presented.

STAFF REPORT

1. Budget

Parks, Recreation & Tourism Fiscal Administrator Kimberle Franks presented the second quarter department budget report. Accounts are under budget for the year. Several items have been on hold pending the creation of the new Convention and Visitors Bureau and funding structure.

2. Tourism, NFTM and Historic Sites

Assistant Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Frank Buhro referenced the written report sent to commissioners. He highlighted annual receipts, winter tourism season, the STR report, NFTM attendance, and MO Model Railroad Museum progress.

Discussion followed about attendance at the Vaile Mansion and translating signage and documents into printed English and Spanish.

3. Marketing and Social Media

Parks, Recreation and Tourism Community Relations Coordinator Candi Laster reported that all social media pages have seen increases this quarter due in part to the premier of Hallmark movie and winter weather events. Social media creation will focus on more videos, reels and picture carousels in the future.

The PRT website page views are up with viewers spending the most time on kid-friendly items.

Paid media included print and digital ads with Visit KC, MO Travel Guide, and MO Life magazine. The 2025 Visitor Guide goes to print in February and will be distributed in March. PRT attraction ads are also running during events at Cable Dahmer Arena.

Discussion followed about ads for competing cities and the visitor guide content.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Truman Depot Renovation and Caboose Restoration Update

Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Morris Heide reported that the contractor continues working at the Truman Depot and the completion date remains April 2025.

In mid-December, Park Maintenance staff poured concrete piers at the site in front of the MO Model Railroad Museum. The Union Pacific Railroad has agreed to donate a section of track. Once the concrete has cured, the city-owned caboose will be relocated and then restoration work will begin.

Discussion followed about signage at the caboose, plans for the depot once renovation is complete, and budget for moving and restoring the caboose.

It was noted that Gloria Smith has been communicating with UPRR about removing debris removed from the depot location.

2. NPS Harry S Truman Visitor Center Project

PRT Director Heide reported that schematic design is scheduled for the fall with construction scheduled in 2026.

Discussion followed about the Independence 76ers using old Fire House #1 as a fire truck and equipment museum.

3. General Obligation Bond Proposal/Historic Sites Projects & Budget

PRT Fiscal Administrator Franks presented a detailed budget for the proposed projects included in question #3 of the GO bond proposal. Discussion followed about operating and capital projects budgets and the promotion of the GO bond. The budget report discussed will be emailed to commissioners.

4. Tourism Reorganization & CVB Board

PRT Director Heide reported that the City has hired Karen Hibbard to lead the creation of the CVB. July 1 is the target date to have the CVB operational. It has been legally established as a 501(c)(3) organization.

Discussion followed about CVB board membership and the dissolution of the Tourism Commission. Chairman Rushay stated he would like a Heritage Commission member to serve on the new board.

5. Statues Status

PRT Director Heide stated that the City Managers Office prefers to wait until the Feasibility Study for the new trails museum is complete to avoid moving the Lady of the Trails and the Jim Bridger statues multiple times. Commissioner Calvert expressed his disagreement with the decision.

Discussion followed about reasons for moving them, moving both statues or just one, possibly waiting until after the GO Bond results in April, funds available, and permanent locations.

Commissioner Baker made a motion to move the Lady of the Trails statue as soon as practical to a location at the Uptown Market using private funds and keep the Jim Bridger statue in its current location for an undetermined amount of time. Chairman Rushay seconded the motion.

Commissioners Baker, Forsyth, Thornton and Chairman Rushay voted in favor. Commission Calvert opposed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Calvert suggested Chairman Rushay write a letter to the mayor & city council with the revised request.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Thornton stated the Wayne City Landing Memorial needs attention. Although it is owned by Sugar Creek, it is part of the history of Independence. Commissioner Forsyth commented that the trees have been trimmed but the signs need maintenance.

1. Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Historic Sites)

PRT Director Heide reported that Pros Consulting has been hired to complete a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The last master plan was completed in 2010. This new plan will include extensive reviews of historic sites with a business model to address long-term

capital needs.

2. Volunteer Program Expansion

Chairman Rushay asked if the attractions and historic sites had enough volunteers. Sandee Dougherty with the Vaile Mansion and Mark Mangels with Bingham Waggoner Estate responded that they need more as their current volunteers are aging out. Commissioner Thornton reported the Chicago & Alton Depot has enough to cover Thursday, Friday and Saturday half day shifts.

Discussion followed about recruitment. Will strategize more in future meetings.

3. Free Passes to Historic Sites Offered by Mid-Continent Public Library

Chairman Rushay stated that the Mid-Continent Library patrons can check out passes for a family of 4 to visit the Truman Library and asked if that could be expanded to include the historic sites.

Assistant Director Buhro responded that the historic sites participated in that program in the past but it did not generate additional revenue in gift shop purchases or donations. It would work for NFTM as there is no admission fee currently. Discussion followed about buy-1-get-1-free passes rather than free passes and not offering any passes during the holiday season.

ADJOURNMENT - NEXT MEETING - 8:30 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

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

The Tourism Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Commissioner Forsyth for serving on the Tourism Commission. Commissioner Forsyth is relocating out of state.

Commissioner Forsyth motioned to adjourn; Commissioner Calvert seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:16 AM.