

Members Present: Linda Thorpe, Emil Bakka, Ron De Bruyne, Leon Kukanich, Ralph Sitzberger

Department Personnel Present: Cindy Burzinski, Vilas County Tourism  
Janet Christianson, Vilas County Tourism

Others Present: Theresa Smith, Vilas County Chamber  
Lyn Pilch, Pilch & Barnet  
Fritz Laeser, Edgewater Inn & Cottages  
Dick Mendham, Sunrise Lodge

Media: Monica Baltich, Lakeland Times

Thorpe called the regular meeting to order at 9:00am in Conference Room #2 of the Vilas County Courthouse. The meeting was properly posted and notices sent to all media provided on September 27, 2011.

**Motion by Bakka, seconded by Kukanich to accept the agenda to be taken in any order at the discretion of the chair; motion carried.**

**Motion by Sitzberger, seconded by Kukanich, to approve the minutes of September 6, 2011 as distributed; motion carried.**

**Introductions** – All present introduced themselves. Janna Kahl, Vilas County Human Resource Manager was introduced to the Committee.

**Musky Marathon** – Registrations remain slow and slightly lower than last year but on par with previous years.

**Vilas County Chamber** – Smith indicated registration has started for the Fall/Winter Resort Tour on October 13<sup>th</sup> in the Sayner/Star Lake and St. Germain areas. Luncheon planned for North Star Lodge with Charles Metelka as speaker.

The Chamber, along with Vilas County Tourism & Publicity, is discussing production of a 5<sup>th</sup> edition of TREK the Northwoods Trails, a tri-county cooperative publication, which has been well received since its 2005 development during a Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant promotion. Almost 10,000 copies of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition have been distributed since January, 2010. There is also discussion with Pilch & Barnet regarding the possibility of developing an app (application icon) for the trails.

The Chamber discussed the feasibility of creating a fall auto/color tour. While it may follow the previous Harvest & Heritage publication format, content would be less historical and more tour/fall color/events oriented.

The Chamber also discussed the status of the Five County Branding Grant.

The next Chamber meeting is scheduled for November 10<sup>th</sup> in Eagle River.

**Pilch & Barnet** – Pilch noted that while a website search engine optimization (SEO) plan had been proposed as part of the 2012 Media Schedule/Budget, her company planned to start some of the preliminary work yet in 2011. This would allow more time in 2012 to update page content, better present the website to search engines, and streamline the Google Ad words used to search to reduce costs which are necessary to increase user visits.

**Five County Branding Grant** – While no official announcement letter had been received, Pilch just received word from Oneida County (grant applicant for the 5 counties) that the application for 2<sup>nd</sup> year funding of the Five County Branding Grant had not been approved. The grant committee apparently expressed several concerns about the application:

- Not convinced that individual chambers would incorporate the brand; even though all five counties had expressed support for the brand.
- May be more of a local promotion than regional; even though survey results from outside the area indicated people viewed the area as the Northwoods.
- The area may not be ready for an app (application icon).

The grant committee suggested the Branding Committee consider some revisions to the grant and resubmit (April cycle). Pilch noted she and the Branding Committee were disappointed with the grant committee's decision and would be meeting soon to discuss options. As the goal had been to incorporate the information from the 1<sup>st</sup> year surveys into a Spring promotion, waiting to resubmit the grant in April would delay that promotion.

During discussion, it was noted that due to recent changes and appointments, the grant review committee and the Governor's Council on Tourism no longer had representation from the northern counties (the furthest north representatives are in Bayfield and Eau Claire). Several Committee members expressed regret at not having this information earlier as they would have mentioned it during recent contacts with legislators and the Tourism Secretary. The Committee felt that as a tourism driven area, the northern Counties really needed representation on the Governor's Council. **Motion by De Bruyne, seconded by Sitzberger to have a letter drafted, for Committee Chair Thorpe's signature, regarding the lack of northern representation on the Governor's Council and the grant review committee with copies to the Tourism Secretary and other northern counties' tourism committees/councils; motion carried.** Noting the Northwoods Summit was scheduled for early December, the letter should be ready for Chair Thorpe's review shortly.

**2012 Vilas County Travel Guide** – Pilch indicated last minute ad sales continue. The first draft of content (narrative, events, etc.) is due to the Department early next week. The Committee then reviewed the proposed covers. **Motion by Sitzberger, seconded by De Bruyne to select cover #11 (boys and dog by river);** during discussion it was questioned whether some colors on the cover (bobbars, line, etc.) could be made brighter to show more contrast. Reminding the Committee that the final cover would be at a higher resolution, Pilch felt that some color modifications may be possible. **Motion carried.**

With space limitations, not all requested events will be included in the Guide; however, all will be listed on the website which can be updated more quickly. It was also noted that two additional trail maps were being added and trail expansions/improvements are anticipated over the next few years. Also as more people travel with their pets will look into the adding pet friendly icons.

**2012 Tourism & Publicity Budget** – The 2012 budget, with the proposed increase discussed at last month's meeting, was distributed for final review along with the current 2011 budget report. Burzinski noted the Department's budget hearing appointment with Finance was scheduled for October 17<sup>th</sup> at 9am and Committee support at the hearing would be appreciated. Thorpe noted several board members had commented about the need to maintain/increase the County's tourism base. Sitzberger also noted the need to maintain a presence through advertising by referencing another (Hawaii) prime tourism area's advertising cutback which resulted in decreased revenues. Bakka questioned when the Schenk study would be available; no date was available.

**Tourism Shows and Expos** – Burzinski noted that North Central ITBEC proposed attending the following shows in 2012: Green Bay RV Expo, Madison Fishing Expo, Canoecopia; the Milwaukee Fishing Show; and the Wisconsin State Fair (only if the booth can be in or near the Wisconsin Products Pavilion and there is a waiting list). A copy of the ITBEC brochure, which lists the recreational opportunities of each area and which is distributed at the shows was passed around.

**Out of County Travel** – Noting the variety of relevant topics, Burzinski passed around the descriptive brochure and requested permission to attend the Wisconsin Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus (WACVB) Fall Tourism Convention November 3 & 4 in Lake Geneva. Noting there were funds in both Training and Conventions, Dues & Meetings line items, **motion by De Bruyne, seconded by Sitzberger to approve Burzinski attending the WACVB Fall Tourism Convention November 3 & 4; motion carried.**

**Department Reports** – The Department report for September was distributed. Burzinski noted that both the inquiries and website visits were up.

**Budget/Approval of Bills** – Burzinski distributed the monthly bills and budget report and indicated all items remain on target. The Department had received notification from IT that both Burzinski and Christianson were in line for new computers. Updated software has also been ordered. **Motion by Sitzberger, seconded by Bakka, to approve the bills as presented: Cindy Burzinski - \$114.33; Vilas County Chamber - \$40.00; Lambeau Telecom - \$34.19; Florida Micro, LLC – \$219.58; Southern Computer Warehouse - \$2,132.57; Pilch & Barnet - \$9,100.00; US Postmaster - \$1,000.00; Clermont Printing, Inc. - \$54.72; motion carried.**

**Motion by Bakka, seconded by Kukanich to approve the budget as presented; motion carried.**

**Correspondence/Communication** – The two accommodations present at the meeting were invited to attend the budget hearings on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Next meeting** – The next regular Tourism & Publicity Committee meeting is scheduled for November 1, at 9am in Conference Room #2.

**There being no further items on the agenda, Chairperson Thorpe adjourned the meeting at 10:25am.**

Respectfully submitted, Janet R. Christianson

*Minutes reflect the notations of the recorder and are subject to change by the Committee.*