

## City of Rock Falls Tourism Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: 01-12-2022**


**Time Meeting Started: 10:00 a.m.**

**Time Meeting Ended: 10:31 a.m.**

Members		Also Attended	
Alderman Casey Babel - Chairman	P	Director Melinda Jones	
Alderman Bill Wangelin	A	Tracy Finch	
Alderman Jessica Devers	P	City Administrator Robbin Blackert	
Brian Tribley	P	Deputy City Clerk Michelle Conklin	
Emily Roth	A	Alderman Steve Dowd	
Amy Williamson	P		
Bethany Bland	P		
Tom Rynott	P		

Ordinance/Topic	Discussion	Plan of Action
Call to Order	Meeting was called to Order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Casey Babel	
Approve Minutes	<p>Committee reviewed minutes from the November 10, 2021, Tourism Committee meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alderman Devers moved to approve minutes, second by Tom Rynott, Viva Voce Vote, 6 ayes, motion carried.</li> </ul>	Minutes Approved
Tourism Committee Updates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Blackhawk Waterways – Report from BWCVB was presented (copy attached)</li> <li>b. Bethany Bland stated that the Chamber Annual Dinner has been cancelled for in person attendance, they will be doing a virtual Awards Presentation and are taking nominations for the awards and are working on a Dessert Auction as well. The Chamber is planning a Business Boot Camp and Tad Everett from Sterling Schools will be speaking.</li> <li>c. Tourism Director – Melinda Jones               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. There were 12 houses entered into the Rock Falls Tour of Lights Contest, there was a lot of good feedback and will be doing this contest again next year.</li> <li>ii. Flock to the Rock, a Rock Fall Birding Trail event will be held on February 12, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the lower dam. Alyssa Parker will be speaking about the eagles and other birds found along the Rock River, Rudy Vallejo will speak about how the bald eagle symbolizes the Native American Culture and will be doing an eagle dance.</li> <li>iii. There will be a Barn Quilt Painting Class on April 23, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Triple P BBQ.</li> <li>iv. The bands are scheduled for Food Truck Friday's. June 10, 2022 Three Day Rain, July 9, 2022 The Sting Rays and August 12, 2022 Outpatience Band.</li> <li>v. Submissions were just sent out for the Art in the Park Sculptures, there have been a few responses. We will be asking Rustic Oven to be at the event.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	No action on any items
Marketing/Advertising/Promotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Visit Rock Falls Website – we will start using Stahr Media for our website and stop using Square Space. We are currently</li> </ol>	No Action

	limited on how much we can add to the website. We have seen an 86% increase in traffic on the website from 2020 to 2021.	
Hotels	a. Amy Williamson stated that she has been working with Melinda on setting up a Valentine's Day Package at the hotel. She also informed the committee that the Holiday Inn & Suites was ranked #58 out of over 3,000 hotels.	No action on any items
New Business	<p>a. Bellson Jazz Festival – Melinda has been working with Francine Bellson on getting the festival together. We will have to scale down a little from our original ideas as the grant that we were applying for has been closed early with no explanation as to why. We will be doing advertising for the event in Chicago, Rockford, Quad Cities, Southern Wisconsin and possibly Indiana.</p> <p>b. Melinda has been checking on the cost of placing picnic tables at the RB&amp;W Park. We will need engineering done for where we can place the concrete pads and sidewalks where everything will be ADA compliant. Administrator Blackert stated that engineering should approximately be less than \$2,000.00. Committee agreed to have Administrator Blackert move forward with the engineering so we could start looking at costs.</p>	Committee agreed to have City Administrator Blackert move forward with the engineering
Committee Member Items	Tom Rynott stated that the Light Display went well again this year. He said that the City and the Tourism Committee deserve a lot of credit for the success. They had approximately 7,000 people go through the park and donations were \$3,300.00.	
Adjournment	<p>Casey Babel moved to adjourn, second by Jessica Devers, Viva Voce Vote, 6 ayes, motion carried.</p> <p>Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.</p>	

  
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 Chairman, Casey Babel

**Report for Rock Falls Tourism**  
**by BWCVB Executive Director, Diane Bausman**  
**January 12, 2022**

**Meetings Attended:**

- Dec 6-8 - Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism in Chicago
- Jan 5 - Savanna Hotel-Motel mtg via Zoom

**Web Site Update:**

**Visitnorthwestillinois.com** - Since December 1st we've had 6,632 unique visits to our website and they viewed 1.69 pages per session. 13.84% came as direct traffic (typed in our URL); 70.25% came as organic traffic (searched using keywords that lead them to our site) and 9.87% were referrals. The top landing pages were (1) Discover the Great Outdoors (2) What to do/Live Entertainment-White Pines Theater (3) What to do/Christmas Tree Farms (4) What to do/Shopping-Frank Fritz Antiques

**BWCVB Staff Change:**

Patha Brandon, our office admin since 2017, resigned to pursue other interests and effective January 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jayne Rose has joined BWCVB as our full time VP of Marketing. Jayne comes with a background in tourism work and graphic design. We will miss Patha but we feel Jayne is a good fit for us!

**Advertising, Promotion & Public Relations:**

- **2022 Visitor Guide:** Our 2022 VG went to the printer Dec 20<sup>th</sup> and we expect delivery by the end of January. It is currently available on our website so please check it out. I truly appreciate Rock Falls Tourism's support of our Guide with the purchase of a 2 page spread that are on the last 2 pages of the Guide. The front cover reflects our updated campaign messaging, *Real Getaways - Northwest Illinois*. The aim is to continue our emphasis on branding our region as the place to escape the larger metropolitan areas to take advantage of our many outdoor & historic activities.
- **Requests for information:** In the last 2 months we had 34 requests for VG's from our website.
- **Fall Online Advertising Campaign:** Our fall online ad campaign concluded in mid-November and the following are insights from our analytics:
  - Our ads drove 2,5000 clicks to the website during the final campaign
  - There were 116 conversions with requests for visitor guides or contact us
  - Looking at the analytics report, numbers are all significantly up for this time period as compared to the same period in 2020 but that's because we didn't run ads in November of 2020 which highlights how much of a difference running ads versus not running ads matters to your overall website traffic.
  - When looking at the stats it's notable that ad landing page is the number one page - even more than the homepage.
- **Blog:** The following is a re-cap of the blogs that were posted since Nov 1<sup>st</sup> and the results of the 3 day/\$10 Facebook boost we did on each one:
  - **Sparkle Fox Confections in Oregon** Nov 8-11; had a reach of 2373 with 75 link clicks & 12 shares.
  - **The Dragonfly Airbnb in Savanna** Nov 19-22; had a reach of 2,753 with 74 link clicks and 8 shares. This blog also included a link to the Explore Savanna website.
  - **Mill Spring Cottage Airbnb in Franklin Grove** Dec 18-21; had a reach of 3,319 with 87 link clicks and 10 shares.
  - **Twin City Farmer's Market in Sterling** Dec 27-30; had a reach of 4,324 with 112 link clicks and 9 shares.
- **BWCVB Social Media:** Since November 1st Jayne posted 42 times on our social media channels. In checking our analytics for this time period, it shows that over 98% of the referrals to our website came from our FB posts.

- Here are results from our top FB posts done since Nov 1st:

<u>Post</u>	<u>Total Reach</u>	<u>Post clicks</u>	<u>Shares</u>
<u>Bison in winter at Nachusa Grasslands</u>	4,251	91	12
<u>Heritage Canyon x-mas Walk</u>	3,453	73	23
<u>Blackhawk Model Railroad Club</u>	2,270	49	11
<u>White Pines Ranch Winter Rides</u>	1,782	66	12

- **Radio shows:** WIXN 11/22; WRHL 11/24; WLLT weekly; WCCI bi-weekly. *Aroundptown.com* events are submitted weekly for their online newsletter.

***Blackhawk Waterways CVB Mission Statement***

*To increase the economic impact to the four counties represented through promotions, advertising and providing information to potential visitors.*