



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY PARTNERS

www.mississippi-river.org

Minutes of Membership Meeting June 7, 2006

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Grandy at the Garden Pub & Grille in Pepin with about 35 members present.

Joanne Lerum, owner, welcomed the group and provided an overview of their restaurant. They just opened last year and have a very attractive setting; the seating is outside, so they are open April through October and also do carry-out.

Secretary's Report: The minutes were reviewed and with no changes were approved as written.

Committee Reports:

Marketing: Herdie Baisden and LaVone Weer reported on what the committee has thus far put together regarding the 2007 travel planner. The first item to consider is whether RFP's should again be sent out or if we should try to develop a long term relationship with RiverTown Publishing. The points regarding the planner itself include:

- +on the cover include people in the imagery, so the plan is to either initiate a new contest or upgrade the Shutterbug photo contest we already have in place, including putting it on the website.

- +include more photos of the MVP communities on their page in the planner including one whole page per community.

- +move the ads to the back portion of the planner and possibly include the option of coupons.

Other ideas the Marketing committee are considering include:

- international marketing

- develop cultural tours of the area

- encourage/develop town walking tours for each community including interactive CD's.

- Market the area more to bus tours

A request was made by a member that these recommendations be put together and sent out to the membership for their consideration and feedback.

Concurrently the Marketing Committee wants to work at upgrading the Marketing Plan.

[In regard to the photos and the update of the Marketing Plan, our guest, Ruth Goetz, stated the Dept. of Tourism has many professional photos available at no charge that we could review for use, and she would be happy to meet with the Marketing Committee to assist with the plan.]

Several other points mentioned are that the Committee needs more members and the ideal would be to have a member from each community to ensure ideas are exchanged.

Also, they wanted to stress that it is important that each member that has a website needs to put a link between their site and MVP's.

The distribution of the planners was discussed briefly, it is going well this year; a suggestion from a member is that we have members sign up to monitor a specific location during the year to insure that location has planners.

Garage Sale: The weekend was evaluated as busy and apparently went well. It was noted that MVP was referred to on some signs and ads which assists our branding. Colleen Flynn volunteered to be a member of the committee for next year.

Birding/Nature Festival: Mary DeRoos stated she will provide a final report when all invoices, etc. are in, however, even though it was a bad weather weekend, it went well. The numbers were low – probably related to the weather - and it was well-received. The best news is that we are in the black financially!

Request for assistance: Harry Roberts of Frontenac State Park requested assistance of volunteers for the following year to attend occasional meetings regarding the updating of the management plan for the park future. Harry believes it is important to have the tourism aspect represented and thus feels members of our group would be ideal. If you are interested, please call Harry [651/565-4318].

Treasurer's Report: Larry passed out the Treasurer's Report to everyone, following discussion the report was approved as presented.

Visitor Center: Donna Krebsbach wanted to let everyone know that the center is open for the season and will be open tonight so that anyone who has not seen it can drop by and also drop off their brochures. The Quality Inn from Winona has donated a flower box which has been placed in front and flowers that are being donated by Dave Smith will be planted in the next couple days.

Our guest for the evening:

Ruth Goetz, Wisconsin Dep't of Tourism presented ideas she believes are helpful in supporting tourism for both sides of the river and she encouraged that we have regular contact with the departments of both states to be aware of and take advantage of the programs/resources they have. She handed out copies of the most recent WI Department of Tourism booklet regarding the economic impact of tourism - \$11 billion for Wisconsin in 2005.

A resource we can use regularly is www.travelwisconsin.com and there we can list events of the area, learn about programs, etc.

She encouraged that we make contact with her counterpart in Minnesota and include her also in meetings and planning – such as the Marketing Plan.

One program Ruth suggested we consider is the JEM grant which we could apply for and use for something such as a spring advertising booklet of the area.

We can sign up to do a display at one or more of the Wisconsin Welcome Centers where we could also take brochures of members [we would need to review the guidelines and then sign up].

Lisa Marshall does special events on radio stations around the state at no charge.

Ruth stated that MVP is linked on the website under regional organizations and this is great advertising for us as it goes directly into our site; also, the Tourism Call Center uses the information on the website.

Other ideas she suggested:

- get events into the Tourism publications – however, we need to get that done 6 months in advance.

- develop package ideas that Tourism can market

- MVP could participate with Tourism at various tourism shows – would just need to pay \$100 plus expenses of whomever would attend. Shows are done in Chicago, Minneapolis, Michigan, Iowa.

- develop a press kit and regularly connect with PR people who could then easily be informed about the area.

- participate in Wisconsin's Technical/email co-op marketing program

Discussion:

Donna Krebsbach inquired about the mini grants and wondered if there are any available for fall. Ruth thinks there probably are.

Up and Down the River:

Winona has a new B&B where a fund raiser for the Historical Society with a chocolate buffet will occur. Coming up are Steamboat Days; Paul Barnes from the Great River Shakespeare Festival was introduced and spoke to their season beginning the end of June. The Marine Museum is ahead of schedule and could open by the end of the summer.

Stockholm has two new shops – Savvy and Sofie's Dog Boutique

Lake City has the 35th annual Water Ski Days the end of June; also, the Big River Theatre is moving into it's next production.

Pepin – Laura Ingalls Wilder Days in September and posters/brochures are available.

Reads Landing will have a homecoming celebration July 9.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes recorded by Carol Wiersma, Secretary