



CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016
Council Chamber - 7:30 AM

August 27, 2024

Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - 1 02-27-2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes
 - 2 06-04-2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes
6. Presentations
7. Business Items
 - 1 2nd Quarter Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection
 - 2 2025 Convention and Visitor's Bureau Preliminary Budget Approval
 - 3 CVB Strategic Plan Update
 - 4 Dowdle Art Unveiling Update
 - 5 Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival Update
8. Workshop
9. Comments
10. Adjournment

Regular Meeting



**COTTAGE GROVE
CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
MINUTES
CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
February 26, 2024**

A meeting of the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau was held on the 27th day of February, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chairman Justin Olsen. He asked everyone to stand and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL

Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist, called the roll:

Members Present: Justin Olsen, Chairman - Here
Sarah Grecula, Director - Here
Steve Hanson, Director - Here
Gretchen Larson, Director - Here
Laurie Levine, Director - Here
Druscilla Nute, Director - Here
Erik Olson, Director - Here

Members Absent: Tony Khambata, Vice Chairman

Staff Present: Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager/Assistant to the City Administrator
Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist
Liz Dillon, Communications Specialist

Others Present: None.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Director Levine made a motion to approve adoption of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Grecula. Motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of November 28, 2023 CGCVB Meeting Minutes

Approval of the November 28, 2023 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes.

Minutes were approved by unanimous consent (6-to-0 vote).

BUSINESS ITEMS

5.1 2023 Quarter 4 Lodging Tax

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager/Assistant to the City Administrator, stated we had a great year in 2023. Quarter 4 Lodging Tax Revenue came in slightly over budget again at \$16,707, our projected Lodging Tax was \$16,587; so, we were .07 percent over our budgeted amount for revenue for Quarter 4.

Overall, in 2023, we were 5.7% over our budgeted amount and came in at just under \$100,000, at \$99,744, to a budgeted amount of about \$94,390.

Jaime stated she'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen stated it's always good to start with some good news. He asked what did we attribute that to, just a little bit busier season for us with different things going on, etc.

Jaime replied if you recall, when we went back to our budgeting, we increased our Lodging Tax estimates for 2024 to 63% vs. 60%; so, I think we were a little bit under budget on the Lodging Tax side, but we came in higher on grants and the Food Truck Festival truck revenues.

5.2 Visitors Bureau Strategic Plan

Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director, stated we had been working on an RFP for Strategic Plan for the CVB, and we issued the RFP earlier in the month and we had it out for about three weeks. We had hoped, given the discussions prior to actually issuing it, that we'd probably get four-or-five proposals. Unfortunately, we only received one, and while they're well qualified, they don't necessarily have any experience in the tourism industry.

So, we've decided to go ahead and tweak the RFP and put it back out for the next month. In your packet, we had originally said March 22 was the deadline, but we've decided to change it to March 28, just so you know the disconnect there. We might as well just give them a full month because we're not in any particular rush for the RFP to come back in, since you don't meet again until May.

This time, though, we're going to ask our partners in the Minnesota Chamber and Explore Minnesota to push it out a little harder for us, to select consultants that they may work with. We're also going to place an ad in the League of Minnesota Cities, in the Pioneer Press, and in the Minnesota Business Journal because we know consultants generally look for RFPs in legal postings. So, we're hoping with that, we'll get some more submittals that you'll be able to select from or we'll make a recommendation for.

Director Larson stated she'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Olsen stated I think it's a smart decision, obviously, to extend the deadline a little bit considering that we want to make sure we do this right. Have we had any conversations with others that we work with as a City, with regard to Strategic Planning; for example, Ethical Leaders in Action, have we asked if they maybe have some contacts or know of anybody who does this sort of work in this particular niche?

Director Larson replied we've actually talked to all of our partners, so hopefully this next round will be a little more strategic with what we do and ask them to help us with it.

Chairman Olsen stated the second question I had has to do with how we're advertising; I know we do RFPs regularly, so, I'm certainly talking to the subject matter experts here as it relates to the way in which we kind of go to market with this. But because we're a Convention and Visitors Bureau, are there other avenues that we may want to explore that lean more towards sort of what we're looking for versus your standardized municipal government RFP? I saw we're advertising through the

League, we're advertising in the various newspapers. I just don't know if there are other publications or anything of that nature that we might want to take advantage of; frankly, it boils down to I don't know what I don't know. So, just curious if you're hearing from others who kind of do this sort of work that there may be potentially other avenues to try to source somebody who's going to fit our needs, and anybody who wants to answer that can answer that.

Director Larson replied we have discussed that; Alexa and I just discussed that yesterday, as a matter of fact, like let's look at everybody's who is in this business and try to figure it out. Because there are so many people who do strategic planning and they do a great job. Even the submittal we received, they're clearly qualified, but they don't have any tourism expertise. So, I think that's really the challenge is that we've got to figure out who makes the most sense to share it with, as our partners. Explore Minnesota and then the Minnesota Chamber and our Chamber of Commerce are certainly three that are very influential. But, yes, we are going to talk about who else would we send it to even though we'll issue it this week.

Chairman Olsen stated I'm just wondering, sometimes there are specialty websites and things of that nature and if those things do exist, it would be a shame if we didn't take advantage of it, so good.

Director Levine stated I'll ask one question just to clarify, so, are you looking for companies with expertise in the tourism, obviously, are you also looking for companies that are based here in Minnesota?

Director Larson replied well, yes, actually that was our original scope. We didn't really send it out of state; so, we're competing with a lot of folks, even Woodbury, who's going to set up a DMO, which is a Direct Marketing Organization. So, we want someone who has expertise in our area, if we can, but then also has that expertise in the tourism industry because we're going to just butt up right against our neighbors. We'd like to have a cooperative relationship, obviously, but they're going to do things and have budgets that far exceed ours. So, we're going to try as hard as we can.

5.3 2024 Visitors Bureau Events Plan

Liz Dillon, Communications Specialist, stated I'm happy to share the 2024 Event Schedule for Discover Cottage Grove:

- Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints: We have a tentative date of Saturday, June 8. This is an opportunity to get in front of a really large crowd that may not know of all the happenings in the City. Our biggest event, of course, is Strawberry Fest, which is our largest community event, and this is the one we will be promoting the most heavily.
- Strawberry Fest, June 21-23: We are excited to be back. At the fest, in the Strawberry Fields Marketplace, this has an expected attendance of 20,000-25,000 people.
- Food Truck Festival, September 14: We had a lot of success in our inaugural year. With the support of the Food Truck Committee, we are going to add more food trucks this year and are hoping to increase the perimeter of the event so folks can spread out a little bit more in the grass. Last year's attendance was about 6,000 people, and we're estimating between 8,000-10,000 attendees this year.
- Eric Dowdle Painting Unveiling: September 14, in conjunction with the Food Truck Festival, and the kickoff to the puzzle sale.
- Hometown Holiday Celebration: In 2023, we enjoyed unseasonably warm weather, which helped increase attendance. This is a free event, there were carnival games for the kids and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and of course, Sparkle the Elf. With Thanksgiving falling on

the last Thursday of November, this will either be held in late November or early December, so the date is to be determined.

- CPKC Holiday Train: They release their train stops in the fall, so we will know later this year when the train will stop in Cottage Grove. Our stop is one of the most popular, expected attendance is 5,000-8,000. So, we're looking forward to welcoming the train once again.

Before we set our events for 2024, we need to replenish our giveaways. The backpacks were very popular and are showcased in this photo. We're looking to ordering more of those and other items to be decided at a later date.

Specialist Dillon stated before you is a recommendation, and I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Director Olson stated I have a question about, chronologically here, the St. Paul Saints game. It sounds fun, I believe we did it last year; I personally didn't attend, but I heard it was a fun get together. How do we promote and advertise that within the community? Thinking CGAA baseball/softball, obviously there's a connection. How do we promote that; educate me on that and how we can grow some attendance.

Specialist Dillon said thank you for the question; I'm going to pivot to Jaime because I wasn't here last year.

Director Olson said coupled with that, do the Saints allow us so many tickets, or is it first come, first served, or how does that work?

Jaime replied this is our third year of attendance. We've had great success in the past two years attending, it's a fun event to work. I would happily invite all of you to join us at the event to work the booth that day. We are allotted some tickets with the package that we purchase; they have shifted their packages a little bit, I'm still working with them to figure out what's included for this year so we can update you once we know. They do open a ticket portal for Cottage Grove residents to purchase the tickets right through the portal as well. I don't know that they allocate a certain number to us through that portal, but as long as there are tickets available, I think our residents can purchase them.

Chairman Olsen asked to chime in a little bit on that. He stated I want to try to add a little color to the purpose behind the Saints partnership for those of you who may not be privy to why we started it, etc. And Jaime, Jennifer, whomever, feel free to chime in and correct me when I'm wrong.

Two years ago, the Saints approached us when we were brand new as a Convention and Visitors Bureau about a local partnership. Essentially, the theme was Cottage Grove Night at the Saints game. One of the reasons we chose to take advantage of that partnership and utilize the timeline that we utilized, which this year also, as you noted, includes tentatively a June date, is because we wanted to be there to feature Strawberry Fest. We made sure that we had a bunch of giveaways; in fact, I think we ran out the first year and last year, too. So, a bunch of us got together from the CVB and the City staff and dressed up in our CVB gear, and you saw the pictures. We had the CVB awning there, etc., and people were very interested. A lot of people stopped by, we had a few of us standing out in front, on the concourse, handing out gifts and talking to people about Cottage Grove. Again, the intent was this is a Convention and Visitors Bureau, we wanted visitors, and boy, did we ever get them. Because that Strawberry Fest two years ago was the largest Strawberry Fest that we, I think, had ever had. Now, the caveat to that is we'd been off for a few years because of the pandemic. So, there was probably some built-up demand, plus I think we had absolutely beautiful weather, we were very blessed that year. But we had just a massive turnout, and so we thought to ourselves, gosh, this is something we need to keep doing.

What the Saints did, Erik, is they opened up that portal for tickets, and I don't know if you remember this, but they picked a local charity, and the charity they chose was the Lions. Anybody who bought tickets through that portal got to contribute a portion of that revenue towards a charitable donation to the Lions Club; then, of course, the Lions passed that through to the CVB.

Last year, that changed. The portal last year was still open and you could still purchase tickets, and they had sort of three sections of tickets right in front of our CVB booth that they designated for Cottage Grove folks; but they didn't do the charitable donation last year, which was fine. It was a couple hundred bucks, no big deal. But they did make sure that they allocated a certain chunk of tickets, but there again, we set up, we made sure to hand out a bunch of things. We had some cool stuff last year, we had fishing lures last year that I think everybody really liked; we also used those at the Community Showcase. Again, we had just an amazing Strawberry Fest last year, it was huge. The weather again was good, but turnout was just magnificent. So, it feels like there's some really good synergy there, it feels like it's mutually beneficial, the Saints get a bunch of people at their games.

It got a little cold that night, but we still had people who went down on the field and did some kind of field event; Jaime stated it was a horse race, where they were on inflatable horses. So, the Mayor participated in that, I had a sore knee or something so I couldn't get down there at that time, but I know Commissioner Bigham also went out there. So, I think it's a fun thing to do for the City; I think people enjoy it, it's close, it's in St. Paul, so, it's not just a hideous drive. It seems to be working out well for our friends at the Strawberry Fest as well. So, I just wanted to add a little color to that and let people know why we're doing this, and the Saints have been tremendous partners, they've been really, really good. It's not a massive expense; I think the most expensive thing is the stuff we give away.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other thoughts or questions since we're still talking about it.

Director Levine stated I had just one idea that came across my desk yesterday that I may use down the line, but as long as you were talking about looking at different giveaway items, something that was really cool is the reusable snack bags and they were logoed. And I thought how fabulous is that because every mother and parent is carrying those snack bags around for years and years and years. And, so, to have some, I have no idea on pricing or whatever, but I just thought it was a fantastic long-term giveaway to spread around our community.

Liz said thank you for the comment, yes, having something sustainable.

Chairman Olsen stated it's a great idea, it really is, and now is the time to share those because they haven't placed an order yet, so they're just brainstorming in terms of what to do. He asked if there were any other thoughts or comments at all.

Director Olson stated back to the Saints booth, of course promote Strawberry Fest, two, three weeks past the Saints game, but we might want to consider also having some literature or touting the September Food Truck Festival, as that's roughly 90 days away. And that's the same type of crowd, right, baseball, food truck, and fun.

Jaime replied yes, thank you. Last year we had huge success with having a backpack with a giveaway, so we were able to stuff flyers and the Visitors Guide into all of the backpacks to give away. So, yes, we will absolutely promote the Food Truck Festival, along with Strawberry Fest and our Visitors Guide, which we would love to include as well.

Chairman Olsen noted to Jaime that last year we gave away the backpacks, and we had different things in there. I think the comment by Director Olson was definitely relevant because I know you and I met about the Food Truck Festival here a couple weeks ago; Liz briefly mentioned we're going to do the puzzle reveal at the Food Truck Festival this year instead of Strawberry Fest. Can you maybe walk us through a little bit of how that came to be, what the vision is, etc.

Jaime stated with the puzzle, we learned that it was going to be slightly delayed for the date that we wanted to reveal it. So, if we couldn't capitalize on having it available for sale at Strawberry Fest, we wanted to go to our next biggest community event, which is our Food Truck Festival. As Liz said, we had an estimate of about 6,000 people last year at the event, so, this year, we're hoping for higher attendance with more food trucks and kind of a larger event. We're looking at other possibilities with the committee on things we can do as well; everything is to be determined right now, we just started meeting as a committee for that. So, we thought that was a great opportunity to reveal the painting and start puzzle sales. While we don't have exact timing, we'll probably start off early in the day; I know the Food Truck Festival starts at 11:00 a.m., so we'll probably start off early in the day with the painting reveal so we can sell puzzles for the entirety of the Food Truck Festival.

Chairman Olsen stated for those who aren't aware, I think that date is September 14, is that right? Jaime replied yes, Liz mentioned it in her presentation.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions about the Events Plan; it certainly looks like it's going to be a lot of fun. With that, I'll entertain a motion based on the recommendation on your screen.

Recommendation: Approve budget spend of up to \$15,000 for event giveaway items to be chosen at a later date.

Director Levine made a motion to approve budget spend of up to \$15,000 for event giveaway items to be chosen at a later date. The motion was seconded by Director Hanson. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

5.4 2024 Visitors Guide

Chairman Olsen stated we're moving on the 2024 Visitors Guide. Jaime just mentioned that we were stuffing backpacks with the 2023 guide, so Jaime will be speaking about the 2024 Visitors Guide.

Jaime stated we have a new graphic designer on staff, Courtney, and she has created a fantastic updated 2024 Visitors Guide for you. For those of you who are fairly new to our Board, I will tell you our first Visitors Guide was in 2022; in 2023, we did a refresh, so the content remained basically the same, but we changed the cover, some of the photos, and obviously, dates of events and such inside the guide changed.

For 2024, it's a completely new, revamped Visitors Guide. Courtney was unable to be here today, but did a wonderful job, and before you is a printed copy of the draft Visitors Guide for your review. It was also sent in your packet. You can see a few of the layouts on the screen in front of you, too, so our cover features probably our most unique item in Cottage Grove, which is the treehouse, which is at Hope Glen Farm. That actually is a paid ad for us this year. We offered them the opportunity to advertise on our cover, which we haven't done previously; so, they paid for their treehouse to be featured on the front cover of the Visitors Guide. We also had additional ads throughout the guide, as you can see when you look through it; I'm not going to talk through every single ad in there, but it turned out beautifully. We are open to feedback, it has not gone to print yet as obviously its before you for the first time today. We've kind of broken the features down into five categories: Explore, Eat, Play, Events, and Extras. I'm not going to walk through everything in each category, but I'm going to point out a few new things that are in the guide this year that we haven't had previously: There is an article on Accessible Cottage Grove, which includes our accessible playground. We also partnered with Strawberry Fest to include some of the winning Top Chef contest recipes in the guide, so there are two recipes featured from the Top Chef Contest at the Strawberry Festival. We also have Top 12 Book Recommendations, which actually came from the Park Grove Library; they told us their top

checked-out books from 2023, so that's a new feature as well. Our photo contest winners are now actually called out as the Photo Contest Winners in the guide; we've previously been able to use their photos, but this is actually featuring them, and there's a call to action on that page that tells people to share their photos with us, tag us in their photos on Facebook, Instagram, any social media. So, that's kind of a quick overview of a couple new things that are listed.

We also have standard things, like our Strawberry Fest is featured, our Food Truck Festival is featured, our Events are listed. So, things to do, like the golf course and all of the great things to do in Cottage Grove, Oakwood Park, which is disk golf. There's a ton of information in the guide that you can review.

Now, onto the business side. So, in 2023, we purchased 5,000 guides. We ran out in about October; we had such great giveaways between the Saints game and Strawberry Fest that it depleted our stock of guides faster than the previous year. When I went back for a quote to reprint, it was almost as much as the initial printing of 5,000 copies, and I was only asking for about 2,000 copies. So, this year we want to increase the guides that we purchase; we are hoping for approval from you to purchase 7,000 guides for 2024. We think that amount should get us through the entire year of 2024, between Welcome Centers, the events that we go to, and people can also request these online. We have an online submission form where they can request them, and we mail them out to them as well. We also have them here at City Hall, so if people stop in, they can pick them up. I believe the Chamber has them at their office as well, so, they're available throughout Cottage Grove, including at the Ice Arena. One thing to note, we can offset a little bit of that cost with the six ads that are in there. We had \$4,450 in ad sales, including that cover ad that you see of the treehouse on the front cover.

Jaime said with that, before you is a recommendation, and I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said thank you, Jaime, this is really neat, I really like the look of it. Before I share any comments, I'll open it up to the Board here. Any questions, thoughts, comments that you want to share with Jaime and the team.

Director Levine stated I'll just make a quick comment, this is beautiful. It's a beautiful guide, and on behalf of the Chamber, we're really excited to be a part of it this year; we hadn't in the past, and so, I was excited when Courtney reached out to ask if we wanted to be a part of it. On top of that, as much as we wanted to be a part of it, I didn't have a marketing person that was able to create the ad, so she jumped in and helped with that as well. So, I'm so impressed with everything that she did and excited to be a part of this.

Chairman Olsen stated thank you very much, and for those who aren't aware, Director Levine is also the queen of all she surveys as it relates to the Cottage Grove Area Chamber. She's changed titles several times, so I'm probably going to get it wrong, but I mean I think you're basically Chairman, C.E.O., so, you're everything, right? You do it all? Yeah, so it's great to have the Chamber in lockstep with us on this partnership.

Chairman Olsen stated before we get to the recommendation, Jaime, first of all, just my general impression: The layout of this is much better than what we've done in the past, and I know you mentioned that we have a staff person who has some expertise in here, and it really shows. Definitely a much easier to follow layout. The second thing is some of the little things that we're doing in here in terms of just font changes and what have you, they really stand out. I mean, if you didn't have a basis of comparison, you probably wouldn't notice it; but because we've seen the last couple, it does stand out and it's a nice document. I know you mentioned that we have it, I believe, out at the airport, and we have it at all of our various City facilities and lots of other places, but we also give a lot of these away, which is why you're asking for the additional 7,000 copies. Can you just briefly touch on the

partnership we have with Explore Minnesota and how that all links together with our friends at Sievers regarding the guide, please.

Jaime stated I will make one correction. We actually didn't get our bid for the airport this year, but we will be at the Mall of America. So, the airport is a lottery, so, you have to submit your name every year, and that didn't come through for us this year. We do partner with Explore Minnesota, especially on grants and advertising. So, they are a great partner with us; once to twice a year, they put out a grant opportunity for us, which helps fund some of our social media paid advertisements. We also work with them to be in six-or-seven Welcome Centers throughout the State where our guides are also distributed. So, they will contact us, asking can you send us one-or-two cases of your Visitor Guides, and we send them directly to the Welcome Centers throughout the State, which are a part of Explore Minnesota as well.

Chairman Olsen stated fantastic, thank you, and I just received a text message from our former Board Chair, former Council Member Dennis, and he loves the guide as well and is all in favor. I'm supposed to tell you guys that, so perfect.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions before we get to the recommendation.

Director Nute stated I have a comment. I do like the book, it looks really nice, I like everything about it, the pictures and everything. I do think that we need a few more pictures of diversity to see what our community really, truly looks like. And, then, just a question; so, it is six ads that were sold, are all of the ads being sold at the same price, or are they at different prices depending upon where you are in the book?

Jaime replied yes, there is different pricing. I don't know it off the top of my head, but the front inside cover is a different price than a quarter-page ad. So, we have different sizes of ads that you can choose, I think starting at a quarter page, up to a full page ad, and the inside front and back cover are different prices as well. So, while I don't know the exact pricing off the top of my head, we do have a different breakdown, depending on what size they would prefer.

She stated as far as the diverse photos, we are working on building a library, being that we are still a newer CVB. We go out to every event that we can to try to take photos. So, we have made a conscious effort to try to include diversity in a lot of our photos so we can include them in publications such as this as well.

Director Nute asked is there only six ads available in each book, or that's just who wanted it this time?

Jaime replied we opened it up to everybody; we sent it out through an email database we have of businesses, so everybody is welcome to advertise. We only had six interested this year, I think last year we had eight. So, it's kind of about average for our advertisements in the guide; being it is still newer, we don't have a huge history of distribution. There are cities like Bloomington or some of the bigger tourism cities with the Mall of America and all of the things happening in Bloomington, they kind of have that history where we don't have a long-term history of how many guides are distributed.

Chairman Olsen thanked Director Nute for her comments. I talk every year about that, don't I, how important it is that we have photographs in the guide that reflect our diverse community. As our diversity continues to ramp up every ten years in the census, we see that, it becomes more and more apparent that Cottage Grove is a great place to live, work, and play for people of all backgrounds, experiences, etc. One notable item that I did not see in the guide, and I may have missed it, so if I did, I apologize, is the One Family Festival that we do in town. Is it in there, did I miss it?

Jaime replied yes, I believe it's on our calendar where we have Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. If it's not, I will make sure it gets added on there.

Chairman Olsen stated the reason I bring it up is it kind of coincides with the comment about our diverse community, because that festival is geared towards the Hmong community, and it draws a ton of people to Kingston Park twice a year, as it happens twice a year. So, just a thought there. And I did notice in the photographs that we're making a conscious effort at showing our diverse population base, but there's always room for more, so thank you for the comment, and thank you for such a positive response to that comment.

Recommendation: Approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2024 Visitor Guide through GDI, Inc. for \$10,566.

Director Hanson made a motion to approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2024 Visitor Guide through GDI, Inc. for \$10,566. The motion was seconded by Director Nute. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

6.1 PUBLIC HEARINGS - None.

OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 CGCVB Comments

Director Levine stated I'll just add real quick to our last conversation that the Chamber of Commerce as well is working with a new Chamber Member to collect video and photography throughout all of our events as well. I'm happy to share any of that, as that might be helpful for this guide for next year. So, between the two of us, hopefully we can get some nice library of photos. Chairman Olsen stated thank you very much.

Director Olson stated I like the cadence of our events. If you look at a calendar, 12 months, the cadence to me feels right; there's not too many, there's not too few, so I think seasonality is good here. I'd like to make that comment, I think we're on the right track. Chairman Olsen stated wonderful, thank you very much, I would agree with that wholeheartedly.

Chairman Olsen said I am going to ask Jaime to step to the podium one more time because she and I had the opportunity to meet a couple weeks back about this year's Food Truck Festival, and it was shortly before that that we learned that we would be doing the painting unveiling and the Dowdle Puzzle Project at our Food Truck Festival. But I know there are some big plans in the works for the Food Truck Festival, and in my view, it would be very helpful if the members of this body could participate in the planning process. I know that everybody's busy, there's a lot going on, but could you tell us a little bit about when your team is meeting to create some of the excitement and the plans, so that if folks do want to participate in that, that they can.

Jaime stated absolutely, thank you Chairman, Members of the Board. We meet about every three weeks to plan; actually, Director Levine is on the committee for the Food Truck Festival already, but we would welcome anybody else who would like to volunteer. It's Thursdays when we typically meet, usually from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. I don't have the exact date off the top of my head of when our next meeting is, but at that time we talk through all things, vendors, food trucks, music, timing, everything that's included in the event. We are looking at potentially adding a marketplace, that's not 100% confirmed yet, whether it's this year or next year. So, we are just starting the process; if anybody would like to be a part of the planning committee, feel free to reach out to me, and I can add you to the meeting request for those meetings.

Chairman Olsen stated okay, perfect. If you don't already know, at one time I was the president of the Strawberry Fest Committee, Mayor Bailey was president before me, and the current president is Laurie Olsen. One of the things that we learned, working together as a Strawberry Fest committee, is that more hands make for lighter work, and you can certainly get a lot more things done in a very timely fashion if you have more participants. Secondly, this is going to be a big deal, arguably our second biggest event of the year, next to Strawberry Fest. If we want to make it really special, whether it's a marketplace, whether it's some different live music, different bands, etc., it's going to take us a little bit of time to put those plans together. But we need people who are willing to take on certain jobs that are going to be part of the planning committee, just like we do at Strawberry Fest. Strawberry Fest has people in charge of fundraising, people in charge of the carnival, people in charge of the parade, people in charge of all the bands, and you can't put people in charge if you don't have people. So, we would very much like it if members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau would be willing to help out in whatever capacity they can to plan and execute this event. I certainly will do what I can within the scope of my other responsibilities, but I think this is our signature event, so to speak, and we should be part of making it happen. So, I wanted Jaime to just share a little bit, and maybe Jaime what you could do is at some point send an email out to the membership, just indicating this is our schedule of planning meetings, etc. That way, if people do have an interest, they can respond back.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any comments or questions on that at all; I see heads nodding so hopefully that means people want to help. And we're not talking about a 40-hour workweek to help plan this thing, but trust me when I tell you, the Strawberry Fest is as successful as it is because volunteers step up to help. We mentioned the marketplace; way back in the day, we used to call that the Business Expo, and I ran the Business Expo when the Mayor was president of Strawberry Fest. Then when he stepped away and I became president of the Strawberry Fest, Council Member Thiede ran the Business Expo and changed it to the Strawberry Fields Marketplace. Now, we have one of our Park and Rec Commission Members, Samantha Crabtree, running that, and she's just doing a magnificent job. So, this is one of those deals where a little sweat equity would be helpful.

Chairman Olsen stated the last thing I want to touch on, before we move on to the rest of the agenda, is for those who may not be aware, our friends at SoWashCo CARES have their Leap into Legacy event on the 29th, which is Thursday, at River Oaks. It starts at 6:00 p.m. and runs until 9:00 p.m. As the title of the event states, it's a Leap Year thing, so they only do it on Leap Years. And this is a way for them to raise funds for SoWashCo CARES, get members of the community to participate in learning more about what SoWashCo CARES is and does. They are their own entity, although they do work closely with the School District and the various cities, etc. I believe you can go onto the SoWashCo CARES website right now and still purchase event tickets. Our Cottage Grove Lions Club is an event sponsor, so, we'll have some of our Lions folks there as well. I'll certainly be there, along with Commissioner Bigham and some other folks. They also have a Silent Auction that is actually available to view and bid on right now. For more information, please reach out to SoWashCo CARES on their website, or if you want to reach out to me, I'll certainly direct you where to go. I know Director Levine, you're part of this event, too, and it's going to be a big one, it's going to be fun. So, I'm looking forward to it, Thursday night at River Oaks, 6:00 p.m.

7.2 Response to Previous CGCVB Comments - None.

8.1 Workshop - None.

9.1 Presentation - None.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

Director Levine made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 a.m. The motion was seconded by Director Grecula. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

Chairman Olsen stated the meeting is adjourned, and our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 7:30 a.m., right here in the Cottage Grove City Council Chambers. Have a great day, everybody.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager
Assistant to the City Administrator

/jag



**COTTAGE GROVE
CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
MINUTES
CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
June 4, 2024**

A meeting of the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau was held on the 4th day of June, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chairman Justin Olsen; he stated unfortunately, we do not have a quorum present this morning for the meeting, so we will not be voting on any items that are on today's agenda. Luckily, we don't have a very heavy agenda in terms of voting, but we will still take information from staff.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Olsen asked everyone to stand and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Chair Olsen stated he assumed Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist, had done the roll; that was confirmed.

Members Present: Justin Olsen, Chairman
Sarah Grecula, Director
Steve Hanson, Director

Members Absent: Tony Khambata, Vice Chairman
Laurie Levine, Director
Druscilla Nute, Director
Erik Olson, Director

Staff Present: Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager &
Assistant to the City Administrator
Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist
Zac Dockter, Parks & Recreation Director
Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director

Others Present: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of February 27, 2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes

Chair Olsen stated because we don't have a quorum, we will not be approving the minutes; those will be moved to our next agenda.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

5.1 Local Option Sales Tax Presentation

Zac Dockter, Parks & Recreation Director, stated the Preserve.Play.Prospers Plan is a program that's developed to enhance our park system and give the opportunity to the residents to vote on making those enhancements to our Parks & Recreation system. The goals for me today are to explain the referendum, so that you are in the know, and then you can respond to residents or visitors that come in and ask questions of you. This is an opportunity for the community to vote on these recreational improvements and that we're here to educate them on what those options are, but the choice is theirs when it's time to vote.

Survey after survey shows that Cottage Grove Parks & Recreation is a point of pride for community members. We do a lot, but we're a growing community and we take care of what we have, but we find ourselves struggling to fund new growth opportunities and capital improvements to existing systems.

Our forefathers had the intuition back in 1974, 1984 to do a couple of referendums that built things like Hamlet Park, Hearthside Park, Woodridge Park, the Ice Arena, and the taxpayers voted on that and got those in place. We haven't had a referendum that has passed since 1984, so we're asking again this year if the residents want to approve this measure to make improvements to three particular Parks & Recreation facilities.

Importantly, I want to make sure that everyone knows that this wasn't a knee-jerk reaction, that we're not just throwing these questions out there, kind of off the cuff; in 2022, we did a Reimagine Recreation survey, which took a lot of information, anything from middle school 6th grade projects to online surveys, Facebook surveys, and we were out in the community, trying to get people to tell us what they wanted from our Parks & Recreation system. Out of that, we developed this long laundry list of things that we thought the community wanted; then we tried to take those and we tried to narrow them down into okay, well, we can do these things at Hamlet Park, we can do these things at Mississippi Dunes Park, we can do these things at River Oaks Park. As a matter of fact, there were originally five projects, but we narrowed it down to three. Some of those other improvements that didn't make it in there, are in future planned parks where some of those facilities that people asked for will be built out at another date.

What we found our residents wanted were new recreation opportunities for people of all ages, preservation of natural habitat, enhanced connections to parks and nature; so, that's a high level view of what people wanted in our park system.

Introducing the Preserve.Play.Prospers Plan: Based on the community feedback, we're proposing to invest \$36M to renovate and revitalize our Parks & Recreation offerings and outdoor spaces. As I said, the plan focuses on three projects, which I'll review individually:

- 1) The upgrading and enhancement of Hamlet Park: Just a reminder, Hamlet Park is our oldest and largest park in Cottage Grove. Its received many updates over the years, we've been chipping away at things and trying to do little improvements, like adding the ballfields, adding a shelter, replacing the playground, but it hasn't received a significant infusion of cash to really revitalize that park since 1984. So, this would be the largest project of the three, \$17M, and that includes escalation and other things to make sure that we have the funds available when we need them to build out. So, things like upgrading the play equipment, expanding that footprint of the playground; building a new four-season building, so removing the existing building as its served its time, and it's done great, but it's time to replace that; install a small splash pad; create a new skateboard park. We got a lot of questions on the skateboard park, and we would actually get a group of skateboard park users together, and they would be our brains behind how we design and develop that because the trends in the skateboarding world are changing all the time. They're now saying the concrete skateboard parks are boring

because everybody's got a concrete skateboard park. So, we would get a peer group of folks to kind of help us design that skateboard park. Building and Amphitheater: Create an art sculpture garden with benches and informational kiosks. Add a synthetic turf sports field where the existing main football-soccer field is; finishing the south baseball complex by finishing those last two baseball fields. He displayed a rendering of what that might look like; the image on the right is actually the entrance off of Hadley and 80th. There are three entrances into the park: The north, which is a trail entry; the central area, which is probably what most people think of when they think of Hamlet Park, the main entry; a south entry, where the four field ball complex is called the Crockett Fields.

- 2) Mississippi Dunes Park: We have this unique opportunity for this 33.3 acre nature-themed public park along the Mississippi River; I'm sure you've seen some information on that. It's definitely a unique opportunity, our first significant access to the Mississippi River, which we've all been waiting for, for a really long time, so we want to make sure we can get residents and visitors down there to use it. The \$13M plan for this one would be: Restore and preserve natural habitat along the river; Build up the shoreline along the river; Provide recreational river access for canoes, kayaks, small boats, and fishing. He displayed a photo of what a launch might look like that can do all those things; it wouldn't be a large launch, it would be a smaller launch for smaller vessels. Construct new and enhanced existing walks and hiking trails; Create a nature-based playground, he displayed an actual 3D image of the playground on the right. Provide space for outdoor classrooms. Build an interpretive learning center; we're in the Concept Design phase for that right now to show what that might look like. Hopefully, we'll have those to people soon. Adding facilities for nature activities and picnicking. Again, he displayed another layout of what that might look like. We are redoing the Master Plan, it's going to be very similar to what you see here; we'll have some new, updated renderings of those within the next couple of weeks. Council is actually reviewing the Concept Building Design and that Concept Master Plan at their workshop tomorrow, so we're moving forward in that process, probably about 70-75% along the way for that.
- 3) River Oaks Golf Course & Event Center: Transform this into a multipurpose recreation destination for families and peoples of all ages and all year round. The first thing I'm going to say is this is not just about improving the golf course; as a matter of fact, golf is the smallest part of the project. The \$6M plan for this is to install multi-sport simulators, there's an image of that in the top-right corner. You can play golf, hockey, soccer, zombie shooting games or something like that; so, there's all sorts of things that you can do with these simulators, which allows us to use that facility year round. It would be over on the Pro Shop side. Adding a pickleball event court setup, kind of where the wedding venue is now, so a multipurpose court area. Creating a new winter mountain biking course, those fat tire bikes, so the course can be used more in the winter; we currently do cross-country skiing, and we could also use that for 5K runs. Upgrading the building, connecting the two buildings; right now, we have the clubhouse and the Pro Shop, and we would connect those together to make that a more seamless approach. So, things like adding a **similar** on the Pro Shop side now can be served by the Eagles Bar & Grill as well. Obviously, the patio is definitely a selling point and a point of pride in the community, so, we want to enhance the patio area, grow that, and just make it more of a dynamic setting. Last, build a 9-hole Himalayan putting green course, designed for all skill levels; there's a photo on the right that's overselling it a little bit, but it's just got all these undulations and it makes it a little more fun. A reminder that our putting course is free to the public, so it doesn't come with a charge. There are a lot of things that you can do at River Oaks for free: Including bocce ball, the putting green, mountain biking, and cross-country

skiing. He again displayed images of what the building, the multipurpose court with the bocce ball courts next to it, the Himalayan green with the connection to the clubhouse might look like. You can see on the court, obviously connecting those courts would be kind of champion-style pickleball, but you could also hold a small concert, a party, a small wedding, or whatever it might be there.

The Preserve.Play.Prospers Plan is designed to invest in the Parks & Recreation and deliver activities and offerings that our residents want while trying to be responsible with the tax dollars. The Cottage Grove residents are asked to consider a half-percent sales tax in the General Election, which will be November 5. If approved, that will generate the \$36M over a 25-year period that will pay for these improvements that we talked about.

Why the Local Option Sales Tax? If this was a standard referendum, that gets assessed to property owners only, so it's based on your property taxes. The Local Option Sales Tax shares the cost of that across the community; so, people who are in apartments will help pay for the improvements, people who are visiting Cottage Grove, and that's the important one. Over 31% of the taxes will be generated by non-residents, people who are visiting Cottage Grove will help pay for these improvements.

Director Dockter stated the Local Option Sales Tax works the same way as any other sales tax, but the following items are NOT taxed: Groceries, clothing, prescription and over-the-counter medications, and baby products. Anyone who purchases qualifying items has to pay that 0.5% sales tax. It's the equivalent of 1 penny for every \$2 spent; so, on average, we figure it's going to be about \$24 per year for a resident, or \$2 a month, based on a study the University of Minnesota did for us. They did a whole bunch of comparable data analysis to get that information for us; so, it should be pretty solid.

The ballot questions is where it gets interesting; the State has to authorize Local Option Sales Taxes, so I want to make sure that this is clear. The key diagram is on the bottom right: There are going to be three questions, and there's only one tax:

- Residents will have to vote on Hamlet Park by itself, that has to stand alone; so, if they vote yes on Hamlet Park, there's a 0.5% sales tax.
- If they vote yes on Mississippi Dunes, it's still just a 0.5% sales tax.
- If they vote yes on all three, it's a 0.5% sales tax.
- If they vote on just one of those three projects, and the other two don't go, it's still a 0.5% sales tax.

So, what would happen would be that obviously the cash infusion would be prioritized towards one project, which would allow us to develop that project probably a little bit faster and reprioritize. Right now, the way we have it planned is these park projects would be built over phases throughout those 20 years, depending on how the revenue comes in. As you can imagine, the town is growing, as you know, the Business District is growing, so we anticipate revenues to rise. Based on how those revenues come in is how we would prioritize how those projects get complete, and we have a phased approach plan in place.

Director Dockter stated I should mention, too, that it's important to know we're working on a communication piece right now that talks about where you're already paying that Local Option Sales Tax; this isn't just a Cottage Grove thing. If you go to Woodbury, Bloomington, many other places around here, you're already incurring Local Option Sales Tax; St. Paul and Minneapolis have much higher sales tax additions on their local taxes. It's important to know, and we're going to create a map that shows people that when they're traveling, they're already paying a lot of these taxes in other communities, so it's not just Cottage Grove on its own little planet that's coming up with this. I believe

there are 18 cities that got State approval last year, so all of their residents will be voting on a project, too.

Director Dockter stated I shared a lot of information with you. We've been handing out postcards at shows and festivals; we'll be handing those out at Strawberry Fest and everywhere we go. We'll use these flyers as well, so we're working really hard on our communications, again trying to make sure people have the information they need to make an educated vote. Obviously, how they vote is up to them, and we'll respect that; but we want to make sure that people have all the information they need, and hopefully all of you can help share that information with us, too, and get them to the right direction. I will say it is a very well-done website, so, when in doubt, give people the website; there's a ton of information on there. With that, I will stand for questions.

Chair Olsen thanked Director Dockter, stated it was a nice presentation, very informative. He asked if Director Hanson or Director Grecula had any questions.

Director Hanson stated I just have one question, and maybe it's not an issue, but with the improvements of all the parks, including River Oaks, the plan is to draw more people into them. Has there been an issue with parking, or is that something that's going to be addressed? I know I've been to River Oaks a few times, and it gets pretty heavy there in the parking lot.

Director Dockter replied we don't have a current plan to expand the parking. We have talked about it, but the hard part with parking is always 5% of the time is when the parking's the worst, right? It's the other 95% of the time it functions. But we have talked about that, we have talked about potentially creating an overflow area in the future, but right now, there's no concrete plans to do that yet. We understand, and there are times when we wish we had access to another overflow lot.

Director Grecula said I have some questions: On the topic of parking, do you know if the golf course has ever spoken to Pine Harbor about just paying them a fee for overflow parking? My children attend school there, and it's right there.

Director Dockter replied we did in the past, it's a good comment, and I think we should probably have that conversation again.

Director Grecula stated I might have missed this one, but why would we be separating out the three park locations for the voting instead of just lumping them all together?

Director Dockter replied that is a good question, and that is a State law; each project needs to stand on its own merit.

Director Grecula stated that makes sense. I liked your illustrations on the parks; if you did have those fat tire bike trails, would there be bike rentals to go with that?

Director Dockter stated that is a good question, but we haven't got that far yet; but I think it's a great idea. Right now, we have snowshoe rentals that we've talked about putting out there, but I like the idea.

Chair Olsen stated I like that idea, too, that would be in keeping with our practices around snowshoes, and then we also rent kayaks down at Hazen P. Mooer, so it's something to definitely look into.

Chair Olsen said there's a couple things I'd like to add to this, and Director Dockter or Jennifer please feel free to chime in, if you'd like. You mentioned that the City has not passed a referendum of this nature since 1984, and I can vouch for that, I've been here so I'm fully aware. One of the things that we hear as City Council Members pretty consistently, at least in my tenure on the City Council, is we need more things for young people to do. One of the things that we take great pride in is our park and

trail system; I can't give you the exact number, but since I started on the City Council to today, I believe we've added somewhere in the neighborhood of a dozen or more parks and many, many miles of trails for families and residents of the community to enjoy. The idea behind the Local Option Sales Tax, which is different, as you mentioned, than a straight referendum is that we share the burden with those who visit the community, as well as those who live in the community and shop in the community. It's very popular across the country, frankly, but especially in the State of Minnesota, it works very well for many other communities. One of the things that we benefit from here is we already have a lot of visitation in the summertime for different tournaments and things for softball and baseball. We have hockey tournaments galore that come to our Ice Arena, and then of course we also have various tournaments and fundraisers and things at the golf course. Additionally, we have a very healthy Business Park, and it's my understanding, and again, please correct me if I'm wrong, but those who purchase goods or services from the companies that are based in the Business Park will also be participating in this Local Option Sales Tax. So, for example, if I'm a homebuilder outside of the State of Minnesota, and I purchase a whole bunch of windows for my development from Renewal by Andersen, I pay the Local Option Sales Tax because Renewal by Andersen is based here in Cottage Grove. So, I think the mechanics behind this really work well, but again, as we've always said as a City Council, when we have wants, we go to the voters. When we have needs, then that's a different conversation, and we have to accept the responsibility for funding those needs however we need to through our budget process. These things are wants, but they're wants that we've heard about for a really long time; and when and if we improve Hamlet Park, all that's going to do is provide us with additional opportunity to bring non-residents into the community for different tournaments that are bigger than what we can handle right now because we don't have the field space. So, there again, they will be paying for that Local Option Sales Tax as non-residents if they stay in our hotels, if they eat in our restaurants, etc.

With respect to the golf course, which is profitable, City owned and operated, just like the Ice Arena, City owned and operated and profitable, we get a lot of people who use the golf course for contracted purposes. For example, the School District contracts for some of their high school teams to practice and play at the golf course. We have weddings, we have all kinds of events, whether it's a charity golf tournament or somebody that is having a fundraiser and they want to participate at the golf course. We have the various end of year sports teams who come in and they have their award ceremonies and things of that nature. All of that is a community benefit, and the golf course is a community asset, but we want to make that asset even better for people; we want residents to be able to enjoy the very best experience they can get at the golf course, which is why that was one of the projects chosen here.

Then, of course, last but certainly not least, the new park down along the Mississippi. If I had a nickel for everybody who's come up to me and talked to me about how excited they are about that park, I could probably retire. People who live in this town have been waiting for so many years, ever since we were kids, Zac, to get access to the river. We have the most river frontage of any community in the metro, but we don't have access to it. So, you know, getting that park done and getting it done quickly and getting it done right and ensuring that all the various amenities exist, that is something that will not only benefit residents, but it will be of regional significance.

At the end of the day, though, if the voters choose not to vote for this, we will still proceed forward with what we can do, when we can do it, on these projects and others, but it will take significantly longer to get where we would like to go. We certainly hope that we can educate residents as to the benefit of this sort of a plan versus your straight let's just do a referendum and see if people will vote for that; it's a very different animal with different mechanics, not the least of which is when the projects are done, the tax goes away, it sunsets, it expires. So, the faster we can get the project done, the faster the tax will sunset. I think at the end of the day everybody's going to be very happy

with the outcome should we be able to pass this as a community. So, there's going to be a lot of education to be done. Never forget there are people out there who seem to really enjoy putting out misinformation any opportunity they can find to bash the City and the way the City does things. So, you have to compete against that in the arena, but I'm very confident that Zac and his team and the rest of the staff and the communications team will put forth maximum effort to give as many residents as possible the information they're looking for. Zac, if people have questions, you mentioned they can go to the website, right? Certainly, I want them to know they can reach out to any of our Council Members, whether it's Mayor Bailey, myself, Council Member Khambata, Council Member Garza, Council Member Thiede, we would love to talk to you about it. I know City staff is very well versed on this, so please let your friends and neighbors know that if they have questions or they bring it up, that oh, I heard the City's doing something, we would love to have that conversation. I had a text message just the other day from a resident who said is the City doing another referendum for something or another? I said yes. Well, is it for bonding, and I said no, it's Local Option Sales Tax. So, that generated some really good dialogue, and that person it turned out was somebody who was in favor of it, but wanted to have the nuts and bolts so that he could speak to his friends if and when it should come up over the bonfire, or at a graduation party, or something. So, I think the team is prepared to get the word out, but it's going to take more than the team. It's going to take those of us sitting up here, it's going to take the residents of the community, members of CGAA, who will clearly benefit from this. There's a lot of different stakeholders; so, again, please make sure that the right information is being disseminated to the public. The last thing I want to ask on this, Zac, is you know you mentioned that we sort of have a communications plan, right? We are going to be at the Saints game this weekend; do you know if there will be any information available to those attending from Cottage Grove, who might need to learn more about this at the Saints game?

Director Dockter replied I don't think we were going to just because we're trying to reach out to people from outside the community, rather than inside.

Chair Olsen stated fair enough; so, we're going to keep it to our festivals like Strawberry Fest, Food Truck Festival, those kinds of things. Perfect. Well, thanks again. Did you have anything you wanted to add, Jennifer or anyone else?

Director Dockter stated just one more; don't hesitate to send people to me because there's no secrets, I'm happy to share information and get people to the right spot. So, if you get yourself into a spot where you think someone needs to talk to me, send them my way, I'm happy to respond.

Chair Olsen said perfect, and I assume you're doing the same presentation to all the various City commissions, etc. Director Dockter said yes; Chair Olsen said thanks again, good information.

6.1 PUBLIC HEARINGS - None.

OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 2023 Annual Report

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Director, stated before you and included in your packet that was sent out Friday is an actual copy of the Annual Report that has a lot of detail. Basically, it's a recap of what we did last year. I'm going to be touching on some of the highlights as we go through today's presentation.

We did our second publication of the *Discover Cottage Grove* Visitors Guide last year; we printed 5,000 copies that were distributed by mail, they're at the Mall of America, and last year we had them at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. We also had them at Explore Minnesota Welcome Centers throughout the State; they'll email us and tell us when they need more guides, then we'll email them out to them. If you stop as you're coming into Minnesota, you should be able to see our Visitors Guide

throughout the Welcome Centers. We also had them here at City Hall, at the Ice Arena, the golf course had them for a while, the Chamber office had them, as well as having a digital version online, on our website; people could request a printed copy, so we would mail them out on demand. Last year, we had ten advertisers in the guide, which accounted for just under \$5,100 in revenue for our budget.

We also had our website, which is one of the biggest places where we drive visitors to; it has an events calendar on it, which we update with every event that we are aware of that's happening in Cottage Grove. So, you can find information on our website, and we also have a monthly E-Newsletter, called The Insider, that we send out at the beginning of the month, which includes things happening during the month. We just sent out the June E-Newsletter that talked about Strawberry Fest and the Saints game and the events coming up; that also really drives them to our website. Photo and video production is a huge part, as we're still building our library of photos and videos, we spent quite a bit of money last year on photography and SWCTC did seven videos for us. We're looking to keep that going this year. While we have a great database of photos, there are always new events happening in Cottage Grove, so we continually look to build our photo library.

Social media is probably our biggest avenue to reach people and tell people about all the great things happening in Cottage Grove; before you there are a bunch of statistics, I'm not going to read through them all, as they're also included in your Annual Report. Facebook is probably our biggest touch point for people, it's where we have our largest audience, followed by Instagram, but then we also have people watching us on YouTube as well. Our top performing campaign last year was our Food Truck Festival, which obviously was the large event that we hosted for the first time last year; our most-watched video was the information on Cottage Grove Bike Park.

We also always want to nurture our partnerships that we have in place, so again we have the Saints game this year, so we'll be partnering with them for Cottage Grove Community Night. We love working with Strawberry Fest to help promote the largest event that we host here in Cottage Grove. The Cottage Grove Area Chamber is a great partner for us. Explore Minnesota is a fantastic partner, they're a great resource for us; they also help us with some grant funding throughout the year. Last year we got a \$14,000 grant through them, which we matched for another \$14,000, so we could pay to promote Cottage Grove even more.

Community engagement is another big piece of the CVB so we attended large and small events last year; these are highlights of outside events in which we participated: We were at the Saints game, we had a booth at the Strawberry Fest marketplace, and we were at both the Memorial Day and the Labor Day One Family Fest, which is a big Hmong sports tournament at Kingston Park that they do over Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend.

We also hosted our inaugural Food Truck Festival; we estimate between 6,000-7,000 attendees joined us at that event last year. We had 23 food trucks, four sponsors. We had live music, the Lions were there serving alcohol for us. We had a booth there, and we partnered with SoWashCo Cares, who sold wristbands for the beer tent. There was lots of great food, lots of people, happy faces, people dancing, and it was a great time last year.

Budget: Here is an overview of the budget. I'll note that these numbers do not include the salary and benefits of our two communication specialists because those have been previously covered by ARPA funds through our budget. One thing to note is for next year we will be showing those to you on the budget because the ARPA funds are done now, so those will fall under our CVB budget.

Building the Strategic Plan: Looking ahead to 2024, I know it's kind of interesting to talk about planning for 2024 in June, but a few things that we've talked about internally for our Strategic Plan for this year:

- Revamping our website (desktop, tablet, and mobile), maybe look at who is hosting our website, update that a little bit more.
- *Discover Cottage Grove* welcome video with SWCTC.
- Increased partnerships=Increased exposure. We always want to continue to nurture and grow our partnerships of Cottage Grove.
- “Tour the Town” via a *Discover Cottage Grove* passport: A things to do and see in Cottage Grove; right now, we’re looking at kind of a free option for people to use for maybe our parks or small businesses.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I): We always want to look at including DE&I in our imagery and our videos, anything we put out, including people of all ages, races, and abilities.
- Billboard: We’re potentially looking at costs associated with a billboard.

Jaime said with that, I would be happy to stand for any questions.

Chair Olsen thanked Jaime, said that’s a lot of information in a pretty short, compact presentation, but it was really good stuff.

Director Grecula stated I know that you mentioned that we’ve been beefing up the budget for photography; have we ever worked with any of the Park High School students to see if they could help us out for free, for class credit?

Jaime replied we have actually not looked at that; I don't know if anybody’s ever thrown that idea out there before, but it’s absolutely something we could explore.

Chair Olsen stated he liked the idea about working with our students. When I was part of the cable commission board, one of the things we recommended for SWCTC is a program through which some of the high school kids who were interested in audio and visual may work on some of the one-act plays, etc. to potentially do a summer internship and learn a little bit more about the nuts and bolts. Perhaps this is an opportunity for us as well, something really kind of fun to think about, so thanks for the recommendation.

7.2 2024 Quarter 1 Lodging Tax & Revenue Collection

Jaime stated I will put this disclaimer on: We are missing one month, we are missing a January Lodging Tax payment from one of our facilities, so this number is slightly lower than it will be, probably next time when I present the budget to you.

For Quarter 1, we had just over \$14,000 in Lodging Tax collected. The other revenue listed there is from our Visitors Guide ad sales; we had almost \$4,500 in ad sales for our Visitors Guide, which basically helps offset the cost of printing our guide. So, we came in at just about 19% under budget for our 2024 Quarter 1. I will tell you that Quarter 1 is typically our lowest Lodging Tax revenue received, but when we do our Lodging Tax budget, we just average the Lodging Tax out over the course of the year. One thing we had talked about as we’re looking at putting together our 2025 preliminary budget, which will be presented in August, is maybe fluctuating the Lodging Tax numbers so the quarters make sense to what we’re actually receiving. So, that’s why it looks a little skewed, but we typically come back in Quarter 2. When we’re looking at next year’s budget, we will look at fluctuating those numbers a little bit.

With that, Jaime said I’ll be happy to stand for any questions. No questions were asked.

Chair Olsen said okay, it’s good to know that we’re still chasing that payment from January; I’m eager to find out when we actually collect that.

7.3 Visitors Bureau Events Update

Jaime said I get to talk about some of the upcoming events that we have throughout the summer that *Discover Cottage Grove* will be at, and we'd love to invite you to attend with us:

1) St. Paul Saints Game: This weekend, on Saturday, we will be at the Saints game for Cottage Grove Community Night. The game starts at 6:07 p.m., doors open at 4:30; I have a ticket for each of you if you'd like to attend with us. If you'd like additional tickets, they are general admission, so you can just go on the Saints' website and buy additional tickets if you'd like to bring family members with you. We will be giving away information on Strawberry Fest, we'll be giving away a Visitors Guide. We had partnered with the Chamber to kind of swap brochures, so we included a brochure in their Community Showcase bag, and they gave us a brochure to include in our bags as a giveaway at the Saints game. Also, in front of you, you have an example of the swag that we ordered for this year; so, we have a backpack that will include some glow in the dark *Discover Cottage Grove* cups, there's a fun flexible pencil in there. We have looked at doing the snack bags, which were recommended at the last meeting, but those kind of don't draw kids in, so we took those and they were used for the City Community Showcase event. While we had great excitement from the parents on those, the kids weren't quite as excited. So, we wanted something colorful and kind of entertaining for kids for our giveaways here. We still have some luggage tags remaining, so we will be handing those out as well at the Community Night.

2) Strawberry Fest: This is our largest event of the year, at Kingston Park, from June 20-June 23. *Discover Cottage Grove* will be at a booth on Friday, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00, or 9:00; on Saturday, we'll be there all day, from after the parade until about 7:00 p.m. Again, we'll have the same giveaways for people. People tend to think of us as the information booth at Strawberry Fest, even though they have an information booth; in previous years, we've been kind of right on the end of an aisle, and people come to us and ask questions, so we usually get Strawberry Fest maps to hand out as well. We just kind of help the Strawberry Fest information booth by passing out the same information they are, but we're also trying to get the word out about *Discover Cottage Grove*. That's a great event because it's not just residents that come, they bring in a lot of visitors as well. Most of the people that we talk to are not from Cottage Grove.

3) Second Annual Food Truck Festival: We're hosting this at Kingston Park, on Saturday, September 14, from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., so we added an hour on to the end of the event. Right now, we are at 33 food trucks that have said they want to participate; six have completed the paperwork process and have paid. We're promoting them on social media. We are also putting together sponsorship and marketplace information, and that will be coming out probably in the next two-to-three weeks for us to start promoting our marketplace area and the sponsorships that we have available. We will have a booth there as well, with giveaways for kids or families that come up to us.

4) The Dowdle Painting Reveal: Also on September 14, the location has shifted from the Food Truck Festival to Cottage Grove Middle School. The painting reveal will start at 8:00 a.m., and we will have puzzles for sale at the Middle School during the reveal, but we'll also be selling them at the Food Truck Festival.

Jaime said there are some exciting things happening in Cottage Grove, and with that, I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Chair Olsen stated okay, more good information from Jaime. Are there any questions?

Director Grecula stated I noticed that the Minnesota pen is something I found in my own house, and I think my kid picked it up at a Schooley event. Do you know if we'll be representing that Schooley again this summer?

Jaime replied they have not reached out to us, but that is something where we can reach out to them. We work with SoWashCo Cares for the Food Truck Festival, I think our next committee meeting is next week, so we can touch base. I believe that one of the people that's on our committee runs that program.

Director Grecula stated that sounds great because it was very popular because of the pens.

Chair Olsen stated we do a lot with Schooley through the Cottage Grove Lions as well, and they're just tremendous people to work with, so that's a really good callout.

7.4 CVB Strategic Plan Update and Recommendation

Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director, stated good morning, it's good to be with you today. We're going to review the RFP process. If you'll recall, in February, we had issued an RFP, but we didn't receive a lot of proposals. So, we recommended that we extend that, and you all agreed with that, and then we ended up receiving ten proposals. Out of those ten proposals, the top four firms were interviewed on Monday, May 13. Of those four firms, Chandler Thinks, the proposal that's in your packet, was recommended by the evaluation team as the most experienced firm to complete the Strategic Plan; they had extensive tourism and destination branding experience, more so than any of the other firms, who kind of wandered over into the economic development side. As you know, they are very similar processes, but they're not the exact same thing. So, that was the recommendation that we shared with the Chair and the Vice Chair, and they agreed to just bring it to the full Board. The total cost for that project is \$35,750, with \$1,500 earmarked for post-project consultation; that was the only group that also left some of the money in the budget so that when we have questions after the plan has been approved by all of you, that we could have that experience, ask questions and try to tweak it, to make sure that we're implementing it the way it should be.

One thing that hardly ever happens in the life of the RFP process, they were also the actual lowest proposal of the entire group, which is very unusual, so they are what we believe is the top firm and the lowest proposal. It made a lot of sense that they would by default be the highest recommended.

The \$35,750 is recommended to come from the Economic Development Trust Fund. Now, this actual item for the approval of the agreement, I know you cannot make a recommendation today, but it is also on the Council agenda for tomorrow because the Council has to approve the funding. They also have to approve the agreement should you have recommended it to move forward to them.

With that, Director Larson stated I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Chair Olsen stated this is one of those items where we wish we had the quorum here today so that we could recommend moving forward, but I will ask if any of our Board Members have questions or anything they'd like to share with Gretchen regarding this. No questions were asked.

Chair Olsen stated I will tell you that I had the opportunity to read through each and every one of these proposals, and Gretchen and the team were kind enough to ask for recommendations from the Vice Chair and myself. This group had a very strong proposal; one of the things that I look for when I look through these various proposals, whatever it might be for, is are they willing to spend time in the community, are they willing to connect with the community? Does it look like they're invested, or are they trying to just get another opportunity to fill out a bunch of reports and get paid for doing so. This team seemed very roll up your sleeves, you know, let's work together. So, I think it's a great recommendation, I'll look forward to voting for it tomorrow at our Cottage Grove City Council Meeting.

One thing I also wanted to add, and Jennifer, I'm going to ask you if you wouldn't mind to just take a brief minute, could you explain to people what the difference is between the ED Trust Fund and the ED Fund.

City Administrator Levitt replied I'd be happy to. In regards to the EDA Trust Fund, we have one business in town that makes a large financial contribution to the Fund and the efforts that we promote economic development within the community. So, there's no taxpayer dollars associated with that, so there's no tax levy, and there's no taxes going into that fund; so, it's purely by donation made from that one company within the community. So, there's been a longstanding relationship with that company, and so that enables us to do unique projects like this for greater value within the community.

Chair Olsen thanked Administrator Levitt for that explanation; I always want to clarify that because it's easy to get it confused, but the reality is the ED Trust Fund does fund projects like this or the City's recent trip to ICSC in Las Vegas, and that's all paid for through money that is donated from a local business for the purpose of economic development and growth, here in the City of Cottage Grove. Of course, we're very grateful that they continue to make that donation; this has been in place for a very long time. It's one of those things that is kind of a nice gift from this organization back to the community, and we try to use those funds very wisely.

Chair Olsen thanked Director Larson for that excellent information.

8.1 Workshop - None.

9.1 CVB Comments

Director Grecula stated I loved seeing this plan, I think this is such a nice way to raise money to improve our parks, and I'm really excited to see these events and hopefully a yes vote on all of these coming forward.

Director Hanson stated just to go off what Director Grecula said, I didn't know this much about this plan until today. I think what you said, it's going to be about education, so we've just got to talk to our people around us, go from there, and hopefully, it works.

Chair Olsen stated I'll tell you that is always the case. Misinformation tends to travel faster than accurate information does. So, you have to work twice as hard to get half as far sometimes, which is why the team is really working to communicate, whether it's at the Chamber Business Expo that we recently attended or various other Chamber events, various other commissions and boards, to make sure that people have the right information. That's really our job, our job is to inform. I appreciate your comments on that, but again, I would encourage you, I promise there's a neighbor or two, who are going to ask you about it or talk about it. If they need help understanding how this is supposed to work, send them our way; we would be happy to answer any questions that are out there.

Chair Olsen stated as far as my own comments are concerned, real briefly, I want to thank everybody who was able to attend this year's Memorial Day event. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't super cooperative, so we had to have the event inside, in our Training Room here at City Hall. It was very well attended. Kudos to Herb Reckinger, who is the Chair of our Advisory Commission on Historic Preservation here in the City of Cottage Grove. Herb does just a ton of work with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund; as our guest speaker this year, he did a marvelous job of telling what I thought were very heartfelt stories. It was more of a conversation than a speech, and I think people appreciated that as our theme this year was a Salute to Vietnam Era Veterans. I also want to thank the staff down at River Oaks for providing the chairs, our Parks & Recreation Department for cleaning up the Veterans Memorial outside, fixing up all the plant beds, etc. to make it look really nice. Even though we weren't able to be outside, we were able to do the laying of roses as we do every year on the various markers out at the Veterans Memorial that represent each branch of our Armed Forces. The SWCTC team did a really nice job of some drone footage, so it turned out well. If you weren't

able to attend the ceremony, you can find it online at SWCTC.org, as it is on their website. I've watched it a couple times, and I think it was a very appropriate and moving ceremony for Memorial Day.

Chair Olsen stated the last thing I want to mention is we're about to get into the nitty gritty as it relates to our budget conversation for 2025. What that means is the City Council will begin holding meetings with staff, essentially on a weekly basis in July. We've done a lot of preliminary work, and we'll get more information as it comes forward, but we embrace the challenge of the budget each year; it is a very arduous process as we go through everything, line by line by line. The reason we do that is we want to provide the greatest value to our taxpayers. The City of Cottage Grove is the second to the lowest ranked city for tax rate of our Washington County communities; the lowest city is our neighbor, St. Paul Park. The difference is that St. Paul Park gets a lot of Local Government Aid from the State that helps support their budget, and the City of Cottage Grove gets very little, roughly \$50K. We have to be very diligent about using taxpayer dollars wisely and we have a staff that definitely does that and guides us in that direction. So, if you have any questions about the budget, how the budget should tie into this proposed Local Option Sales Tax plan, or anything else that we're doing in the community, again please reach out to your Council Members, Mayor Bailey, or the staff here at City Hall.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Olsen thanked those who attended the meeting. Though we weren't able to vote on things as we don't have a quorum, we still got some very good information. Chair Olsen stated I will adjourn the meeting, as we won't be able to vote on an adjournment motion; he adjourned the meeting at 8:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager

/jag



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

DATE: August 23, 2024

RE: 2024 Q2 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection

Discussion

2024 Q2 Lodging Tax Collections

The 2024 budget used a 63% occupancy rate when calculating our 2024 lodging tax projections. The average of \$6,023 was used when budgeting lodging tax revenue for each month of 2024. We know that lodging numbers typically go down in the winter months in Cottage Grove and up in the warmer months, so this average keeps our projections consistent throughout the year. The City of Cottage Grove has collected all 2nd quarter lodging tax and received the following amounts:

Lodging Tax Collections for the City of Cottage Grove

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lodging Tax Revenue	\$ 14,562	\$ 18,140	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 32,702
Other Revenue	\$ 4,450	\$ 3,200	\$ 16,100	\$ -	\$ 23,750
2024 Total Revenue	\$ 19,012	\$ 21,340	\$ 16,100	\$ -	\$ 56,452
2024 Budgeted	\$ 23,164	\$ 29,569	\$ 28,069	\$ 18,069	\$ 98,871

In total, lodging tax collections for the second quarter was \$18,140. Lodging tax revenue collections were slightly higher than projected by \$71.

We also collected initial payments for the Food Truck Festival beginning second quarter to total \$3,200. Quarter two totals show a deficit of \$8,229 based on our revenue projections but a higher amount of payments were expected to come in earlier for the Food Truck Festival. Those deficit numbers will be made up in quarter three money collected for the Food Truck Festival.

Recommendation:

Receive Q2 lodging tax collection information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

DATE: August 23, 2024

RE: 2025 Preliminary Budget Approval

Discussion

Revenue

In looking back at the past few years, the CVB have averaged a revenue of almost 65% occupancy for the full year. In 2024, the revenue forecast used a 63% occupancy rate. For 2025, the recommendation is to keep the same projected occupancy as 2024 and use a 63% occupancy rate for budgeting total lodging tax revenue which would give a projected revenue of \$72,300. This falls more in line with what has historically been collected from the city's lodging facilities yearly.

Previously, the CVB was able to apply for Explore Minnesota Tourism Recovery Grants. When the new guidelines came out for the grant for 2025, cities are now excluded from being able to apply for the grant as now only non-profit organizations are eligible to apply. This will impact our revenue numbers and limit our promotional efforts.

As the Food Truck Festival had not been completed before budgets were compiled in June, 2025 estimates for the Food Truck Festival are based on the projections from the 2024. It is estimated that the CVB will collect \$10,000 in food vendor payments and \$1,500 from sponsorships of the event and marketplace participation.

In total, it is estimated that there will be \$88,300 in revenue collected by the CVB in 2025.

Expense

As in previous years, expenses are being broken out into three separate categories: marketing, operations, and other. With the payback to the city for initial expenses being complete, moving forward the breakdown of expenses will be into two categories: marketing and operations.

Marketing expenses are core to the organization's mission of "*promoting Cottage Grove as a premier destination for leisure travelers, weddings, and outdoor enthusiasts, a recognized and successful host city for meetings and conventions, and a prominent and respected venue for sporting events.*" A reliable history for activities by the CVB is still being established so funding levels for each line item and initiative for the 2025 budget are based on actual and projected spending for 2024. Also, with the strategic plan that Chandler Thinks is working on, these numbers are subject to change based on recommendations that come from the CVB strategic plan.

Marketing Expenditures	
Website Hosting/Domain	\$1,680.00
Collateral Development & Printing	\$11,000.00
Marketing and Local Events	\$4,000.00
Food Truck Festival	\$14,000.00
Social Media	\$12,000.00
Professional Services	\$400.00
Advertising in Publications	\$1,000.00
Other Types of Advertising	\$900.00
Total Marketing Expense	\$44,980.00

In total marketing expenses for 2025 are projected at \$44,980. Website hosting is budgeted at \$1,680. Printing of the Visitors Guide for 2025 is estimated to be \$11,000. Social media will continue to be the main focus for the CVB’s marketing efforts so \$12,000 has been budgeted for social media to maintain the presence of the CVB on social media. Expenses related to the Food Truck Festival are budgeted to be around \$14,000. Advertising in publications includes the brochure program with the Mall of America and Minnesota Monthly have been budgeted at \$1,000. Professional services have been budgeted at \$400 and include transcription services. This leaves some areas that allow for flexibility in the budget in marketing at local events and other types of advertising which are budgeted at \$4,000.

The second expense category is operations and represents the funds needed to carry out the mission of the Visitors Bureau.

Operating Expenditures	
Marketing and Communications Specialist Salary and Benefits	\$23,000.00
Office Supplies/Equipment	\$300.00
Postage	\$800.00
Continuing Education/Classes/Seminars	\$1,700.00
Dues/Subscriptions	\$410.00
Administration Fee (City of Cottage Grove)	\$3,615.00
Contractual Services (City of Cottage Grove)	\$17,171.25
Total Operating Expense	\$46,996.25

Many of the operations expenditures are for day-to-day expenses like office supplies and postage that equal \$1,000. For 2025, the Visitor Bureau will continue its membership with the Minnesota Association of Convention and Visitors (MACVB) for \$410 and has \$1,700 budgeted for continuing education which includes attending the MACVB annual conference. \$3,615 is budgeted as the 5% administrative fee that is paid back to the City for facilitating the CVB. Contractual services to the City of 25% covers services like accounting, audit, clerical, and legal services and totals \$17,171.25. Finally, 10% of the salary and benefits of two Communications Specialists are included in this budget at a total of \$46,996.25.

With a total revenue projection of \$88,300 and total expenses projected at \$91,976.25 in 2025, equates to a net loss of \$3,676.25. The CVB is still determining best practices and methods for marketing the city therefore the 2025 budget is meant as a guide that allows for flexibility to adapt and change as we move forward.

Recommendation

Approve the 2025 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau preliminary budget.

Attachments:

2025 Preliminary Budget Worksheet

Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau
2025 Budget Worksheet

PRELIMINARY BUDGET

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	2024 Budget	Notes	
Revenue																
Lodging Tax at 3%																
3840 Lodging Tax	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 72,300.00	\$72,276.00	Based on a 63% occupancy rate
Total Lodging Tax Revenue	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 72,300.00		
Other Revenue																
3324 Grants														\$ -	\$10,000.00	
3574 Visitors Guide Ad Sales	\$ 4,500.00													\$ 4,500.00	\$5,095.00	
3575 Food Truck Fest Food Vendor Payments					\$ 10,000.00									\$ 10,000.00	\$8,750.00	
3812 Food Truck Fest Donations and Sponsors						\$ 1,500.00								\$ 1,500.00	\$2,750.00	
3816 Refunds & Reimbursements														\$ -		
Total Other Revenue	\$ 4,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 16,000.00		
Total Revenue	\$ 10,525.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 16,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 6,025.00	\$ 88,300.00		
EXPENSES																
Personal Services																
4100-4144 Salary, PERA, FICA, Health Insurance	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 23,000.00	\$87,790.00	75% of salary and benefits
Total Personal Services	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.67	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 1,916.66	\$ 23,000.00		
Commodities																
4200 Office Supplies / Equipment														\$ -	\$120.00	
4210 OP Supply - Other	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 300.00	\$240.00	
Total Commodities	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 300.00		
Contractual Services																
4300 City of Cottage Grove (5% Administration Fee)	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 301.25	\$ 3,615.00	\$3,613.80	automatically calculated based on lodging tax
4300 Contractual Services [City of Cottage Grove (25%)]	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 1,430.94	\$ 17,171.25	\$17,165.55	automatically calculated based on lodging tax
4300 Contractual Services/Professional Services		\$ 100.00			\$ 100.00				\$ 100.00				\$ 100.00	\$ 400.00	\$240.00	transcription services
4305 Website Hosting/Domain	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 140.00	\$ 1,680.00	\$1,380.00	
4311 Postage	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 66.00	\$ 66.00	\$ 66.00	\$ 66.00	\$ 66.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 67.00	\$ 800.00	\$720.00	
4340 Collateral Development & Printing	\$ 11,000.00													\$ 11,000.00	\$8,000.00	updated based on actual 2023 cost of \$7,158
4341 Social Media Advertising/Marketing Online	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	\$15,504.00	
4341 Advertising in Publications	\$ 1,000.00													\$ 1,000.00	\$1,100.00	brochure program (\$1100 January)
4341 Other Types of Advertising (Magazines, Billboard, etc)			\$ 900.00											\$ 900.00	\$300.00	
4401 Dues / Subscriptions						\$ 410.00								\$ 410.00	\$325.00	MACVB membership
4403 Continuing Education/Classes/Seminars	\$ 500.00				\$ 500.00				\$ 500.00		\$ 200.00			\$ 1,700.00	\$1,750.00	
4434 Marketing at Local Events		\$ 125.00	\$ 2,375.00		\$ 1,500.00									\$ 4,000.00	\$6,625.00	Strawberry Fest (\$125 February) / swag (\$2375 March) / Saints game (\$1500 May)
4434 Food Truck Festival								\$ 14,000.00						\$ 14,000.00	\$13,650.00	
Total Contractual Services	\$ 15,439.19	\$ 3,164.19	\$ 6,214.19	\$ 2,939.19	\$ 5,038.19	\$ 3,348.19	\$ 2,938.19	\$ 3,038.19	\$ 17,439.19	\$ 2,939.19	\$ 3,239.19	\$ 2,939.19	\$ 68,676.25			
Total Expense	\$ 15,464.19	\$ 3,189.19	\$ 6,239.19	\$ 2,964.19	\$ 5,063.19	\$ 3,373.19	\$ 2,963.19	\$ 3,063.19	\$ 17,464.19	\$ 2,964.19	\$ 3,264.19	\$ 2,964.19	\$ 91,976.25			
Net Income	\$ (4,939.19)	\$ 2,835.81	\$ (214.19)	\$ 3,060.81	\$ 10,961.81	\$ 2,651.81	\$ 3,061.81	\$ 2,961.81	\$ (11,439.19)	\$ 3,060.81	\$ 2,760.81	\$ 3,060.81	\$ (3,676.25)			



TO: Chairman Olsen and Members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director

DATE: August 23, 2024

RE: Chandler Thinks Strategic Plan Updates

Background

In June of this year, the consulting team of Chandler Thinks was selected to create a Strategic Plan for the CVB. In addition to being the best fit for the CVB, Chandler Thinks proposal was also the lowest priced proposal submitted at \$35,750 with \$1,500 earmarked for post project consultation coaching services upon finalization of the plan.

Updates

As a part of their research and planning the team at Chandler Thinks will do a site visit to the city on October 7 and 8. They plan to do in-person meetings with the City Council, the EDA and the CVB board members. They will also conduct meetings with the River Oaks and Parks and Recreation Department, area hoteliers, tourism related businesses, events managers, and others.

The team at Chandler will also conduct virtual interviews for those who may not be able to attend an in-person meeting as we want to reach as wide an audience as possible so that everyone has a chance to contribute to the plan creation.

We will update with a full schedule of in-person and interviews as soon as we hear back from all of the invited participants.

Recommendation

Receive report.



TO: Chairman Olsen and Members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director

DATE: August 23, 2024

RE: Dowdle Art Project Updates

Background

At the December 2023 EDA meeting, the board approved an agreement with Dowdle Art Studios to participate in their “Land That I Love” tour for America’s 250th birthday starting in 2026. As a part of the agreement, the city was allowed to select 20 unique people and 50 places and things to include in the folk art painting to be created by artist Eric Dowdle.

At the January 3, 2024 City Council Workshop, the ideas for unique people and places/things to be included in the painting, as suggested by a staff and commissions survey, were presented to the Council for consideration. In early February the finalized list was sent to the team at Dowdle and work on the painting began. Due to timing of other projects at Dowdle the original unveiling date was postponed from June to September 14 which is the same day as the Food Truck Festival this year.

Updates

- The unveiling event will take place on September 14 at the Cottage Grove Middle School. See invite and program outline below.
- As of this report the painting has been completed and is being framed. The puzzles to be sold and the wooden Giclee puzzle for the unveiling event will be completed next week. You may recall that the wooden Giclee puzzle is the part of the unveiling ceremony where Eric will call up to the stage several special guests that will contribute their puzzle piece to the wooden Giclee puzzle and share a brief history of their part in the painting.
- As a part of the marketing efforts a coloring contest for children ages 5 to 11 was created and an insert for the children to color was included in the August edition of the Cottage Grove Reports. See artwork below.
- Puzzles will be for sale after the unveiling event in the lobby of the school until approximately 11:00. After the event at the school, Eric and his team will proceed to the food truck festival where he will be at the Discover Cottage Grove booth for about an hour to visit with folks who may purchase a puzzle there.

- At approximately 12:00 on the music stage at the event he will present the top five winners of the coloring contest with a city medallion.
- Upon conclusion of the coloring contest presentations the Dowdle team will depart the event.

Recommendation

Receive report.



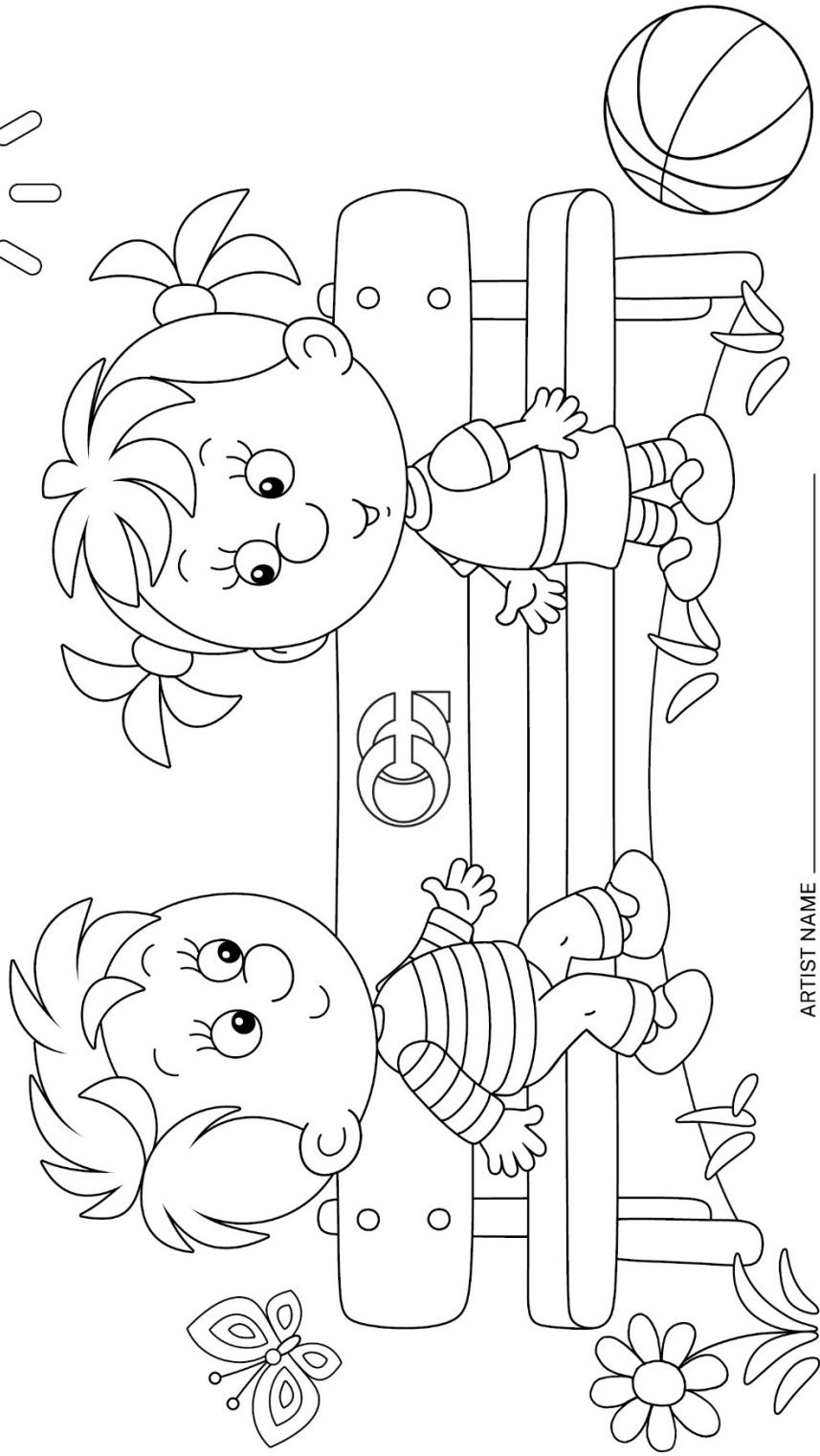
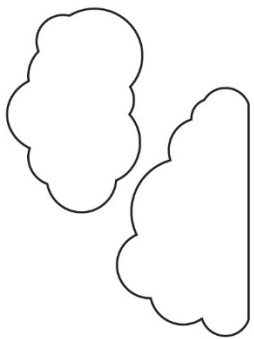
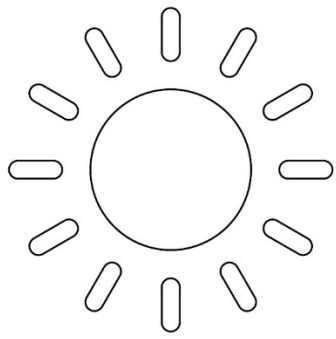


8:00 AM	Press
8:30 AM	Doors open
8:45 AM	Take your seat
9:00 AM	Event begins with opening remarks by Mayor and National Anthem by Park High School band
9:10 AM	Eric Dowdle takes the stage for the official unveiling
9:20 AM	Attendees are called up by Eric to contribute their puzzle piece, with each person or group announced with a brief background
10:00 AM	Mayor concludes the ceremony, directing attendees to locations for purchasing puzzles and taking photos.
10:00 - 11:00 AM:	Puzzle sales, photo opportunities, and puzzle signing with Eric Dowdle

Thank You

We want to express our sincere gratitude for attending the Cottage Grove puzzle unveiling. Your presence and support of our community is greatly appreciated. Thank you, and enjoy!

COTTAGE GROVE
MINNESOTA



ARTIST NAME _____



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

DATE: August 23, 2024

RE: Food Truck Festival Update

Discussion

Discover Cottage Grove is well on the way to planning our 2nd Annual Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival. The event will take place at Kingston Park on Saturday, September 14 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Plans for the 2nd annual event are shaping up to be bigger and better than last year.

Food Trucks

The goal this year is to get to about 40 food trucks. At the 2023 event, there were 23 food trucks in attendance. So far this year, there are 27 food trucks that have completed all steps of their paperwork and have paid their entry and license fees. Another 18 food trucks are in various stages of paperwork completion or are just waiting on submitting their payment. It is expected that a few of the pending trucks will drop off the list but there are still other food trucks reaching out to see if there is space available. Below is the list of food trucks that have completed all of their paperwork and paid their fees.

Food Trucks	
Asian Invasion Food Truck	Peppers & Fries
California Dip & Eat	Philicious Phillys
Coffee on Wheels	Pretty Great Cake Shakes
D&D Goodies	Sambusa Samosa
Eggroll Queen	Samurai Teppanyaki
El Mexicano Grill	Shoo-Ga Cane Juice Bar & Eatery
Fire Cream	Sincerely Eats
Grand-Line Donburi	Smith Brothers BBQ
HaDa Foodie	Sw33t Serenity
HomeTown Creamery	Thai Thai Street Food
Hydration Shuttle	Tiger Belly Eats
Inferno Wood Fired Pizza	Yang Yumm
Junebug Carolina Flare	Yum Yum
Paella Depot	

Sponsorships

The goal this year is to get to \$1,500 in sponsorship to help cover the expense of hosting and promoting the event. This year, sponsors have come out in full force to support the 2nd annual event. While sponsors are still being solicited, there are currently 10 sponsors of the event representing three of the four levels of sponsorship that are available. The current total of sponsorships is at \$9,000 but are expecting this to grow.

Sponsorships	
Fabricator's Choice	Platinum Sponsor
Holcim	Platinum Sponsor
River Oaks Golf Course & Event Center	Platinum Sponsor
SoWashCo Cares	Platinum Sponsor
Tennis Sanitation	Platinum Sponsor
Van Meter	Platinum Sponsor
Cottage Grove Lions	Gold Sponsor
Renewal by Andersen	Gold Sponsor
Gardenworld	Silver Sponsor
Justin Olsen for City Council	Silver Sponsor

Marketplace

This is the first time the CVB is trying to add a vendor marketplace to the Food Truck Festival. The goal this year is to get to have 10-15 vendors participating in the event which will run along the path to the north parking lot at Kingston Park. So far, there are nine vendors in some stage of paperwork completion. Marketing is still underway to attract more vendors.

Entertainment

The CVB is excited to announce the musical lineup for the Food Truck Festival. This year, the headliner will be Hailey James who will perform from 4 to 7 p.m. Also performing on the stage, Basic and Boring will open the day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During their break at approximately noon, Eric Dowdle will be on stage with the five finalists of the kid's coloring contest presenting them with their medallion. From 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. there is a break in music as we switch performers and Liv McNair will play from 3:30 to 4 p.m. before Hailey James takes the stage.

Discover Cottage Grove Booth

The CVB will be hosting a booth near the north entrance to the parking lot where swag will be handed out. The Board is invited to volunteer anytime between 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. to support the Discover Cottage Grove booth. The giveaways will be a combination of items that were purchased this year to support events that the CVB attended along with some remaining items from last year's swag.

Recommendation

Receive the 2024 Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival information.