

Belmont Tourism Commission

Meeting Notes: April 9, 2024

Submitted by Dena Nechkash

Attending: Julie Abing, Cathy Frontz, Dena Nechkash, Kay Austin, Kathy Reichers, Dave Spensley, Kim Heinrichs, Allison Taylor, Drew Nussbaum

Meeting was called to order by Cathy.

First Capitol Painting

- Julie had a painting of the First Capitol, painted in 1982 by Florence Bennett; wants to donate it to the First Capitol Historic Site. Was suggested to ask Susan Caya-Slusser.

Billboard

- Julie signed a two-year contract to continue to have the billboard at the exit to Belmont. The new image is \$1,200, plus the regular monthly rental.

Potosi Kiosk Brochure

- Cathy passed around a brochure about Potosi's kiosk fundraiser. Dena said she will drop some Belmont brochures there.

Main Street Facade

- Allison talked about Shullsburg's recent ordinance that allowed the city to charge a fee for building owners who aren't actively operating a business in a commercial district building. Belmont has several empty buildings that could use some encouraging to beautify the downtown and attract additional businesses. Allison recommended talking to Shullsburg about how they did it.

Saputo Buildings

- Allison reported that Saputo hasn't sold its buildings yet. She has had several inquiries from businesses, but lacks the info from Saputo to assist with the sale.

State Tourism Representative

- Drew Nussbaum from the WI Department of Tourism talked to the group about furthering its tourism impact in Belmont. A few notes from his discussion:
 - Need to list community's assets on the Travel Wisconsin site.
 - Group should sign up for the Travel WI newsletters.
 - Belmont should determine its marketing plan. Can find details by tracking data from the hotel, historic site and more.
 - Should determine a public relations plan; this isn't the same as a marketing plan, but sometimes overlap the marketing.
 - When determining where to spend money on marketing, consider spending a smaller amount on traditional media. Visual, social and digital media drives tourism faster/better.
 - The group should prep an elevator speech about Belmont Tourism
 - What do you need to complete Belmont's inventory to promote overnight stays?

- We have lodging and outdoor recreation.
 - Could use breakfast/family-friendly dining.
- Should create an internal document of who we are and what we promote and review it every year as a group.
 - What does the Tourism Commission do? It is the advertising agency for Belmont.
- Create a sales pitch of why people should visit Belmont.
 - What is the niche? What is different about Belmont?
 - You can only promote reality, not things that haven't been established yet.
- Who is Belmont's audience?
 - Don't think just about cities to promote in, but focus on demographics.
 - Get a sample of visitors already attending events and activities in Belmont.
 - Determine who we WANT to be here.
 - Travel WI is working to attract ages 25-35 and 45-55. The average traveler in WI is 48 years old.
- ATV is a HUGE opportunity throughout the state - Wisconsin is currently #1 in the country. Yet we don't promote it enough. Some neighboring states don't have the infrastructure we have.
- People are driven by product (activity/attraction), not by name (county line, city name, etc.). People typically don't know they are visiting a particular place, but want to do a specific activity.
- Lafayette County has the lowest unemployment in the state - could use more people to work. Drew recommended promoting a visit - live - work message.
- It was recommended to network with other communities to share what we are doing and build partnerships throughout the region. Strong groups in the area are WI Great River Road, Grant County Tourism and Southwest Wisconsin Chamber Alliance. Should also work with all of the local chambers to promote Belmont's happenings.
- Customer Service is one of the most important facets of positive tourism.
- Drew recommended exploring social media for Belmont tourism. It's where the world is.
- Lodging and dining are 50 % of visitor spending when on vacation. Need to make sure those assets are top-notch for a positive visitor experience.
- Can/should look at adding other neighboring municipalities to Belmont's room tax to allow for a larger fund to use for promoting.
- To help the First Capitol Historic Site opening more than just Saturdays, could establish a Friends group of volunteers to sit at the site to greet visitors additional days during the summer. This would have to be a proposal presented to the WI Historic Society for approval. Drew is happy to help facilitate that discussion if/when we need it.

Next meeting: June 11, 2 p.m., at Belmont Community Building

12 Things to Consider as a Tourism Partner

#1 Contact Your Wisconsin Department of Tourism Development Specialist / Tourism Regional Office

- Andrew Nussbaum
Tourism Development Specialist
Wisconsin Department of Tourism
TravelWisconsin.com
PO Box 803
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
(715) 299-5422
Andrew.Nussbaum@TravelWisconsin.com
- <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/about-us/tourism-department-arts-board/tourism-development-specialists/>

#2 Free Listing(s) on TravelWisconsin.com

- Our website serves over 11 million people a year
- TravelWisconsin.com is the call to action with all Wisconsin Department of Tourism marketing initiatives
- Your info is added to our database by Business/DMO
- The cost to list your business or event is 100% free
- Open to qualified tourism businesses
 - <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/travel-promotion/event-business-listings/>

#3 Subscribe to Travel Wisconsin Newsletters

- Wisconsin Department of Tourism newsletters highlight important tourism related aspects such as marketing updates, media topics and inquiries, and industry events
- Don't miss out on grant announcements, marketing opportunities, and the chance for media engagement
 - <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/industry-resources/travel-wisconsin-email-communications/>

#4 You're Never Too Small to Have a Marketing Plan and a Public Relations Plan

- Develop a unique and effective marketing plan for your business utilizing earned media and owned media opportunities
- Some of the best advertising and promotion is FREE and it often comes from proactively engaging the media
- • Consider creating a press release or a press kit for your business
- The media is often looking for story ideas – especially if it's something new or different
- • Always have an elevator speech/pitch

- Utilize the Travel Wisconsin Co-op Plan
 - <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/travel-promotion/co-op-opportunities/>
- Utilize the Joint Effort Marketing Grant Program
 - <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/industry-resources/grants/>

#5 Have A Point of Differentiation

- Your elevator speech/pitch should concentrate on what makes you unique or different
- Be prepared to promote your unique “experience”
- Quirky aspects of your product or business can often be your key selling point

#6 Know Your Audience

- Do you know who your customer is and are you tracking that information?
- Have you identified a demographic / clientele base you would like to potentially grow?
- The Wisconsin Department of Tourism has conducted consumer research on various segments of the tourism industry, let us help you locate the appropriate reports and documented trends
 - <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/research/>

#7 Use Your Public Relations Plan, Point of Differentiation, and Audience Base to Drive Your Workforce Recruitment Efforts

- Hire Right the First Time
- Be Clear About the Role
- Offer Flexibility When Appropriate
- Show Off Your Company Culture, Make Values Clear
- Always Be Hiring (or Thinking About Hiring)
- Don't Settle for Just Anyone
- Recruit Your Team to Help Recruit
- Remember to Impress the Candidate
- Remember to Onboard with Proper Training and Hospitality

#8 Networking and Industry Expertise

- Use your industry association to connect with like-minded businesses
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- Learn from industry experts
- Attend trade events

#9 Partner with Your Local DMO

- DMO = Destination Marketing Organization
- Benefits from DMO programs are numerous
- Invite DMO staff and members to your business (cross promotion)

#10 Customer Service

- Do you have a customer service strategy for your business / DMO?
- Never discount the importance and role of excellent customer service

#11 Use the Department of Tourism to Navigate State Government

- Government interaction can be challenging at times
- Are you having difficulty navigating state government agencies?
- Let us help you connect with State of Wisconsin agencies and legislators

#12 Attend Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT)

- Annually, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism hosts WIGCOT, the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism
- Over 1,000 industry members in attendance
- Conference is held at a different Wisconsin city every year
- Network, education, legislative connections, and FUN!

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