**CHESTER BEAUTIFICATION/TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES**

May 18, 2023

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**  Carla Draves, Cynthia Lawder, Bob Lockhart, Jodi Moreno, Brenda Owen, Linda Rader, Linda Schafer, JoAnn Simmons, Mary Ann Heberlie, Barry Harle and Melissa Gross. Jay Cooper was also in attendance.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Members stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Motion to approve was made by Cynthia Lauder, seconded by Mary Ann Heberlie. Motion carried.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Linda Rader presented the Treasurer’s report.The balance on hand $15,746.13. Stone Cottage 847.17. The Penny Machine fund has $2,134.38. Mural donations total $2,775.00 to date. JoAnn moved to accept the Treasurer’s Report, Cynthia seconded. The report will be set aside for audit. Brenda explained that the Penny Machine was purchased in September of 2021 and has now collected 64% of the cost of the machine to date. The mural donations collected to date are 40% of the mural cost.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Take Pride Award:** The two recipients for the month of May were Stacy Search of 1844 Swanwick and Gary and Diane Kelkoff at 209 Mora Lane. Both winners of the Take Pride Award were very appreciative. The winners are listed on the City’s Facebook page and the website. If anyone has any recommendations, please send your information to the commission.

**Planters:** The plants this spring are a little smaller than before. Tony is watering after work. He will find out soon if he is on the list for a new position and may have to relocate. If this occurs, we will need to find someone to replace him with the watering. He used extended release fertilizer so will need to do another application midsummer.

**Riverboat/Tour Programming:** There is no update from Patti Carter. American Cruise Line did not renew their contract with the City. She hasn’t heard from the American Queen and there are no scheduled stops until at least August. There was some contact with Viking but no further updates.

**Tourism:** Brenda Owen reported that she has been in contact with Discover Illinois South regarding the new Chester brochure. The brochures should be ready for distribution for the eclipse and the riverboats. Brenda also reported that she forwarded Kenny Wagner’s contact information to the Tourism group since he printed the existing brochure.

Brenda is trying to meet with Patti Carter about the special cancellation stamp for the 2024 Eclipse. No new information from Patti about this.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Riverfront Improvement:** JoAnn Simmons reported that she has the five additional planters filled. Barry put 20 buckets of colored rock around the area. It takes 7-gallon jugs of water to complete the watering at the riverfront. JoAnn Simmons asked for some help with the watering weekly. Jodi volunteered to water on Monday, Jay will water on Sundays, and Bob on Fridays. JoAnn will continue to do the remaining days. The City is supposed to put the banners up including the 5 by the light poles and 2 by the anchor.

**State and Swanwick Green Space:** Ameren will install the dusk to dawn light free of charge. Cynthia is working on getting a bid in writing from Ameren for the City of Chester for the monthly cost. The cost should be $15.00-$20.00 per month. The mayor gave his approval for this.

**Recognition for donors:** Cynthia reported that she is working on getting the metal plaques however the quotes were not completed. Hopefully will be completed within the next month and then some recognition event can be scheduled.

**Chester signs:** The signs coming into Chester on Route 150 was blown down in the wind.

**Eclipse April 8, 2024:** The T-shirts have been designed along with keychains, glasses for viewing, slap bracelets, and eclipse books. There is a post on the Chester Recreational Facebook page for prices and further information.

**COMMISSION FUNCTION REPORTS:**

**Public Relations:** The eclipse committee is working on getting a banner to advertise for the eclipse. Core drilling samples were being done on May 18, 2023, at the bridge. The area being sampled was upstream of the current bridge. Folks from Guatemala, Ecuador, Australia, as well as Texas visited the Welcome Center recently. There were also some visitors from Monterey headed to Washington, D.C. on a bike trip.

**City Council Update:** No report as newly assigned alderman Bryce Hill did not attend meeting.

**Welcome Center Update:** Bob Lockhart reported that he collected another $123.00 from the penny machine today. There was previously a schedule for the Welcome Center workers. No one on the commission knew who was in charge of this. Brenda is also working on collecting the information from the Welcome Center sign-in sheets regarding who is coming to Chester and the reason for the visit. This could be important information for writing grants, marketing, etc. The majority of the people visiting the City of Chester visit Popeye. The significance of the sign in sheets at the Welcome Center are that they are our only source of information as to who comes and why. If you don’t live here and are staying here in Chester, then you are a tourist. The Popeye Museum is the only museum in the world dedicated to Popeye. The museum and store are vital to the tourism industry of Chester. Debbie Brooks also has a book at the museum that she keeps on who is visiting.

**Program for Women’s Club and other clubs in Chester:** It would be a good idea to present a program at these various organizations as to how we can better utilize our volunteers at the Welcome Center. An updated commercial video was discussed that could be placed on continuous loop at the Welcome Center. Members of the commission reported that there was a video that was professionally made a while ago, however, the television is broken and has not been repaired for viewing. Additional ideas were discussed concerning the tourism including tourist times for the Cohen Home, County Museum and the Art Guild as well as others.

**Randolph County Tourism:** No report**.**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Commission Openings:** Jay Cooper should be on the next City Council agenda for approval as a Commission member

**Plant Hanger fund raiser:** Melissa Gross reported that she found another source in Steeleville. She showed examples of both sign thicknesses. The 3/16 thickness of the metal really increases the price. The price for this sign would be at least $100.00 per sign. He could make it from a thinner metal 14 gauge 1/16 thickness. The thinner sign would cost approximately $60.00. It would not bend in the wind however it could not include the hook for the planter. There would be a minimum order of 25. This decision was tabled by the group and Melissa will continue trying to reach Mr. Inman.

**Evergreen Cemetery Comes Alive:** Mary Ann gave a report on the program. Jodi and Jay volunteered to possibly sell tickets for this event. Brenda reported that Mike Coffey would most likely have historic information and may portray a character. Ideas were discussed including a family friendly event in the afternoon with a twilight timing for a true crime type of program. Mary Ann will continue to gather ideas as well as volunteers for this event. Members were asked to check calendars and the event date will be set at the next meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Update contact list and organizational chart:** Corrections were made to the chart and revised copies will be available at the next meeting.

**Elect officers:** The following slate of officers was presented to the commission: Brenda Owen-Chairperson, Linda Rader-Treasurer, and Melissa Gross-Secretary. Linda Shafer moved to accept this slate of officers for another term. Cynthia Lauder seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Mural request from Mr. Conder:** Mr. Conder was contacted when the mural was updated at the gazebo to see if he wanted the mural updated on his building. At the time he was not interested in this and reported that he had other plans for his building. Since then, he reported that he now realized that the number of people who visit this area and take pictures is much more than he previously thought. In the pictures, his side of the building needs a touch up. He has approached the mayor and 2 aldermen. The mayor sent him to our commission. While we are excited by the fact that he wants to be a part of the plan now, we will have to create a plan regarding how to partner with him what he wants He is now interested in sharing the cost. Brenda reported to him that we would discuss it at the meeting. The commission asked Brenda to get in touch with Mr. Conder again to get a concept for this commission to consider and we will get more information at the next meeting.

**Any other business that may come before the Commission:** Barry discussed some information about “treasure hunting” using “Popeye clues”. The commission will explore this idea further.

**ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING:**

Cynthia Lawder moved to adjourn; Linda Rader seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 P.M.

The next meeting is June 15, 6:30 PM, City Hall.