**CHESTER BEAUTIFICATION/TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES**

July 20, 2023

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**  Jay Cooper, Barry Harle, Mary Ann Heberlie, Cynthia Lauder, Wendy Lochhead, Bob Lockhart, Jodi Moreno, Brenda Owen, Linda Rader, Linda Schafer, JoAnn Simmons, and Melissa Gross.

**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 Bob Lockhart. Motion carried.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Linda Rader presented the Treasurer’s report.The balance on hand $16,112.28. Fund balaces: Stone Cottage 847.17; Penny Machine $2,451.13; 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.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:** Tom Gibbs will not participate on the Evergreen Cemetery Comes Alive Committee.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Take Pride Award:** The two recipients for the month of July were Dan and Sharon Ohlau at 943 Swanwick and Fred and Linda Davitz at 516 W. Holmes. 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 through JoAnn and/or Linda or write down the addresses and bring them to the meeting. More and more people are commenting on the awards being given out. It was suggested that we give awards out to business owners. This was discussed and the group decided to only do private residences. The group felt it was more appropriate for the Chamber of Commerce to consider an award for businesses.

**Planters:** Tony is continuing to progress through process for hiring for his new position and he is in the final phase. He is busy working on the physical portion of the job and no longer has time to water the plants. Brenda met with the mayor to ask if a city worker could take on the task of watering. Jay Allison will water the plants through the remainder of the season. There will be more discussion about the planters going forward once this season ends. Tony will take the plants out of the planters once the Fall Festival is over. Once the plants are removed then we will start on the Christmas decorations. Linda Schafer reported that there is one big snowflake for each planter. She is in need of pinecones, old Christmas Trees that are not pre-lit, garlands, wreaths, etc. Melissa reported that she has several wreaths to donate. Brenda asked to use some of these wreaths at the stone cottage for the Christmas season. Linda asked that donations be taken to Schafer’s Childcare and placed on the front porch at a time she designates in the future.

**Riverboat/Tour Programming:** There have been several visits from riverboats scheduled “at the last minute.” The Stone Cottage was opened and there visitors from a variety of countries and states. Two additional riverboat stops were added: September 23, American Queen from 7-2 and October 2, American Countess 7-6. Members that serve as tour guides were reminded to follow the route and the agenda for the tours. The routes are not to be deviated from the approved route. Our share from Saturday will be approximately $800.00. It was suggested that an email be sent to Patti to inquire about talking to the boat company to add a short loop by the new mural and down past the high school. Brenda volunteered to contact Patti about the proposed added loop.

**Tourism:** Brenda Owen reported that she has been in contact with Discover Illinois South and once the publication is finished for the fall, then work will begin on our brochure. This fall we will have an ad that includes Christmas on the River, Fall Festival, and Evergreen Cemetery Comes Alive.

Brenda met with Patti Carter about the special cancellation stamp for the 2024

Eclipse. The special cancellation stamp will have a black and white depiction of the eclipse behind the Popeye statue and bridge which the city has permission to use. Brenda will follow up with the post office about this. It was also suggested to purchase stickers and magnets with this logo.

 Devin Hunter, Associate Professor of History from the University of Illinois Springfield will be in Chester on July 25th and 26th to meet with Brenda and others that want to participate in a special project at the library. The Mythic Mississippi Project aims to create a survey of historical resources related to African American history in Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, and Randolph counties. For this purpose, a “historical resource” relates to a tangible place and/or structure. They will be discussing working with the community to identify possible places that may then be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The timeline presented includes: July – September 2023: locate and merge existing surveys, September-November 2023: Initial meetings with core local partners (historical societies, libraries, etc.), February-May 2024: series of local public meetings to introduce project, share existing survey data, recruit volunteers, solicit ideas for un-surveyed places. More information will be shared at the next meeting.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Riverfront Improvement:** JoAnn Simmons thanked Jodi, Jay and Bob for helping out with the watering. Jay Allison will now water 3 days a week. Some of the pots are very stressed due to the extreme heat. There was a tree that was cut down in the area and JoAnn discussed planting in the stump. That was tabled for this season. She is looking for some day lilies. If anyone has some, please let JoAnn know. JoAnn also thanked Mary Ann for the donation of the mulch for the planting.

**State and Swanwick Green Space:** Ameren will no longer be working with us. Cynthia reported that solar lights will be installed in the ground. There is a name needed for the area that we have referred to as the State and Swanwick Green Space. Jodi made the motion to recommend the name “Fairground Place” to the City Council for approval. Cynthia seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**Recognition for donors:** Cynthia reported that the donor plaque is up. It was suggested that the dedication take place at the Fall Festival. Cynthia will head up the dedication and send out invitations to the donors. Melissa volunteered to help with the dedication ceremony.

**Chester signs:** The signs coming into Chester are city signs. One was blown down in the wind. Brenda will talk with the Mayor about getting this repaired.

**Eclipse April 8, 2024:** The T-shirts have been designed along with keychains, glasses for viewing, slap bracelets, Eclipse books. There is a post on the Chester Recreational Facebook page for prices and further information. The special postmark is in the works and stickers and magnets will also be ordered. There will be a special book that is coming out for the Eclipse. The title of the book is Raina Eclipso and the author is Liz Bockelmann. There is a possibility of a book signing for this event. The book is scheduled to be printed soon.

**COMMISSION FUNCTION REPORTS:**

**Public Relations:** The commission discussed the possibility of placing an entry in the Fall Festival parade. It was decided not to place an entry in the parade due to the other commitments of the “Evergreen Cemetery Comes Alive” right after the parade.

**City Council Update:** Melissa reported that she went to the City Council meeting where Bryce Hill reported on the special postmark.

**Welcome Center Update:** Bob Lockhart reported that 159 people visited the Welcome Center last month and over half of them were there to see Popeye. According to the data collected from the Welcome Center approximately 85% or more of the people visiting the City of Chester visit Popeye. JoAnn will send a letter to the churches to ask for additional volunteers. We will be in charge of scheduling the volunteers. Bob’s phone number will be added to the letter.

**Randolph County Tourism:** The brochures with updates should be ready soon for distribution for the eclipse and the riverboats.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Evergreen Cemetery Comes Alive – October 22 from 2:30-4:30** Mary Ann Heberlie discussed some ideas about using character cards (like baseball cards) Graveyard trading cards. The speeches for each of the characters depicted will be about 3-5 minutes in length. She also discussed having a mad ax murderer running through the event toward the end. The ax murderer could carry a head. The committee is meeting soon to work on the plans. More information at the next meeting.

**Updated contact list and organizational chart:** Brenda Owen distributed the updated contact list and organizational chart.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Any other business that may come before the Commission:** A discussion was held about a VIP gathering at the Cohen House during the eclipse with a limited number of guests invited. Alison Heuer is in charge of the Cohen Home. Brenda will talk to Patti about this and Melissa volunteered to assist with the VIP gathering.

The Welcome Center will not be closed during the building of the bridge and the road will not be closed.

JoAnn suggested that an article be written each week on what there is to do in Chester. She suggested that it be published on Facebook, website and the County Journal. Jay and Cynthia volunteered to work on this and highlight different areas along with others helping out by writing articles. Brenda volunteered to edit.

Brenda passed out attendance prizes to Jodi and Wendy.

**ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING:**

Mary Ann moved to adjourn; Jay seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

 The next meeting is August 17, 2023, 6:30 PM, City Hall.