**CHESTER BEAUTIFICATION/TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES**

February 15, 2024

Call to order: 6:30 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**  Jay Cooper, Barry Harle, Bob Lockhart, Cynthia Lawder, Brenda Owen, Linda Schafer, Linda Rader, Mary Ann Heberlie, Bryce Hill, and Melissa Gross. Guest: Scott Marcinkowski

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

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Motion to approve was made by Cynthia Lawder, seconded by Linda Rader. Motion carried.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Linda Rader gave the Treasurer’s report.The balance on hand $24,751.82 Stone Cottage fund $870.47. The Penny Machine fund has $3,461.63. Mural donations total $2,775.00 to date. The non-tax income source was corrected to $38,966.47 The motion to accept the treasurer’s report was made by Linda Schafer and seconded by Bob Lockhart. Motion carried and the report will be set aside for audit.

 The Commission discussed the budget and sources of income: there are two more outstanding payments from the boat companies that have not been paid since last fall and a water bill to the City that has not been collected from one company. The boats are a huge source of income for our Beautification and Tourism Commission and we would not be able to complete some of the larger cost items without this income.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:**

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Take Pride Award:** The awards will start again in May.

**Planters:** The City workers will be working cutting grass this summer and will not be available to water the planter boxes. Linda Schafer reported that David Casten has spoken about wanting the job of watering the planters and he will water the plants at the riverside. March 7, 2024 the members of the Commission that are available will meet at the Gazebo area at 9:00 to remove the winter decorations. Cynthia and Brenda will have their trucks available to assist. It was reported that we have lost only one decorative branch so far and would like to add more snowflakes and more sticks to the pots for next season.

**Riverboat/Tour Programming:** There are two payments outstanding from the riverboats this past year, so the tour guides have received partial payment. There are no riverboat tours scheduled from Patti – Melissa reported that she had read something on Facebook from Randolph County Tourism about the riverboats stopping in Chester. (There was an article in the news a few days after the meeting stating that the riverboat company was out of business.) There was some discussion about the Popeye Character Trail having some interest after the eclipse on April 8, 2024.

**Tourism:
 A. Update Chester brochure/map** – Brenda Owen distributed the new brochures. There are 15,000 brochures and they have been distributed to various sites around the city.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Riverfront Improvement:** The committee would like some way to identify the various flood stages from the various flood years. Ideas were discussed.

**Fairground Place:** Cynthia Lawder reported that Jeff Korando is working with the City of Chester and the City is in negotiations for abatement on the utilities. There should be more progress information reported at a future meeting.

**Eclipse April 8, 2024:**  Brenda Owen has ordered the stamps to be placed on the postcards and then they will be cancelled with the special postmark. The postmark will be used on mail for that day only. The post office is willing to do pre-stamped items and we will be able to sell these at 4 different locations during the event. The postcards have been ordered and will sell for $5.00 each with the proceeds going to the Beautification and Tourism Commission. There was discussion on some plastic sleeves to house the postcards in for preservation. The sleeves cost $25.00 for 1,000. The total cost for the cards with stamps and sleeves will be approximately $1,000.00 and if all are sold, we should have a net profit of approximately $4,000.00. There was also some discussion about using the stamp image on a magnet/stickers. Melissa made the motion to approve the purchase of stickers not to exceed $400.00. Bryce Hill seconded the motion. Motion carried.

# There is a special children’s book entitled, Rana Eclipso Rising: A Total Eclipse of the Sun Story, written an illustrated by Liz Bockelman. As a green frog, Rana, was living a wonderful life in the bog. But in the middle of the concert one night, a human girl caught him, dumped him into a frog tank, and took him home. He was to be part of her solar eclipse night noise science experiment. Being sad—and believing he would never be free—Rana made no noise at all. With the eclipse just days away would Rana’s silence ruin her experiment. The City of Chester is the setting for the story and is dedicated to the citizens of Chester. The book is now for sale. Mrs. Bockelman will do a reading and signing of the book on Saturday at 1:00 and again on Sunday at 5:00. The book also has a lesson plan for 3rd graders that Liz has developed. Brenda is checking into getting the entire 3rd grade classes city wide to have a copy of the book and participate in the lesson plan.

# Cynthia Lawder and Brenda Owen attended the Eclipse meeting. The activities will take place Friday, April 5, 2024, through Monday, April 8, 2024. There will be places to watch the event with vendors, food and souvenirs at Cohen and Cole Parks and there will be two pop up shops at Gazebo Park and the BV parking lot.

# The website for the event is Chestereclipse.com and Mike McClure has put this website together. It is a wonderful resource for the event. There are approximately 597,000 people that live in the path of the eclipse and it is expected that between 76,000 to 304,000 visitors will come to Illinois for totality. One the greatamerican eclipse.com site, Chester was listed as the number one place to experience the eclipse and totality in Illinois.

# Brenda has spoken with Shane Wagner the Ranger at Fort Kaskaskia and he reported that the campsites are full for the event.

# Patti needs help with the pop-up markets at the gazebo and the BV Bank parking lot. There will be an eclipse meeting on Monday at 5:30.

# There is a great need for volunteers for this event. The members discussed where they would be most needed. Brenda spoke at the Women’s Club meeting on January 26, 2024 and she went over the eclipse information, passed out brochures and asked for volunteers for this event. The group met again in February and Brenda again updated the women on the information.

# The Excel Bottling Company in Breese, Illinois has produced some eclipse soda. The labels on the bottles glow in the dark and the carton for the 4 bottles has a wealth of information about the eclipse. Jay moved to allow Linda to purchase 100 cases of the black cherry soda for the eclipse at a cost of $2,400.00. There are 6 cartons per case. We will sell each carton for $10.00. Bryce seconded the motion and the motion carried. The soda will be delivered to Roziers and Barry will transport with his van and store them until they are need for the eclipse.

**COMMISSION FUNCTION REPORTS:**

**Public Relations:** We are due to renew the Tourism Times for the Spring/Summer. The ad has be submitted with 4 bullet points to include Shopping at Community Yard Sales June 7-9, Attending Rockin’ in River City on July 27th music festival for family, food and wine tasting, etc., play a round of frisbee golf at Cole park or a around of golf at the Chester Country Club, Visit the Popeye Character Trail, local murals, and historic sites.

**City Council Update:** The buildings downtown will be torn down. There has been no date given for the demolition.

**Welcome Center Update:** Bob Lockhart reported that there were 3 volunteers that worked today. 95 folks have signed in since the last meeting – 58 to see Popeye and the bridge. He collected another $36.00 from the penny machine. The machine has now paid for itself. Scott Marcinkowski is now volunteering at the Welcome Center. Many thanks to Scott for volunteering. Many thanks to Bob Owen for fixing the penny machine. It had a slight problem, but all is well now. We need additional volunteers at the Welcome Center, contact Bob Lockhart for further information. There is a copy of the Great River Road Magazine at the Welcome Center and Chester, Illinois is mentioned many times.

**Randolph County Tourism:** No report.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Tour Jerry Costello Lock and Dam -** It was decided to take the tour on Saturday, March 2, 2024. The Eagle Fest will also be going on that day.

**Christmas decorations –** Brenda reported that the snowflakes have been ordered.

**Star on the Water Tower -** Discussion was held about the water tower and an idea of a laser projector was discussed. Jay will check into what a laser projector will include.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Any other business that may come before the commission:** We discussed selling the Chester Ink pens that we used to give out with the riverboat tours for $1.00 each at the eclipse. There are 1,250 pens.

Linda is planning to do Chester and the eclipse “commercials” on her upcoming bus trip. She will pass out Chester information.

Future items for consideration – a Blowing up party for the blowing up of the bridge in 2026.

**ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING:**

Linda Schafer moved to adjourn; Jay seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

The next meeting is March 21, 2024, at 6:30 PM, City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gross, Secretary