**CHESTER BEAUTIFICATION/TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES**

March 21, 2024

Call to order: 6:30 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**  Barry Harle, JoAnn Simmons, Cynthia Lawder, Brenda Owen, Linda Schafer, Linda Rader, Mary Ann Heberlie, Wendy Lochhead, 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 Linda Schafer, seconded by Linda Rader. Motion carried.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Linda Rader gave the Treasurer’s report.The balance on hand $17,304.24 Stone Cottage fund $870.47. The Penny Machine fund has $3,507.63. The expenses were discussed. The Discover Downstate Illinois in the amount of $3,665.00 is for the promotional advertisements that go throughout the state. It includes a ¼ page ad as well as 3 other publications. The eclipse stamps for the postcards that will be canceled with the special eclipse postmark totaled $680.00. These stamps will be attached to the postcards and cancelled for the event. The cost of the soda was $2,200.00. We are selling the 4 pack of soda for $10.00 and the postmark and stamped postcard in the plastic sleeve for $5.00 each. The unstamped postcards will be sold for $1.00. The motion to accept the treasurer’s report was made by Cynthia Lawder and seconded by Wendy Lochhead. Motion carried and the report will be set aside for audit.

The Commission discussed the budget and sources of income: May 1st begins the new fiscal year. Brenda mentioned that the budget for special projects would need to be scaled back to $6,000.00 due to limited income. The remaining items in the budget would remain relatively the same. The special projects funds are almost completely spent.

Channel 4 News spent some time in Chester recently taking pictures and interviewing townspeople.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE: none**

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

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

**Planters:** Thank you to the Members and Scott Marcinkowski who recently cleaned out the planters. JoAnn Simmons, Linda Schafer, Scott Marcinkowski and Tony West recently met and discussed the plans for the planters. Scott would like to train with Tony and take over the watering of the planters. Linda Schafer made the motion to hire Scott Marcinkowski as the caretaker for the planters. He will provide the watering for the planters and for the riverfront. JoAnn Simmons seconded the motion. Motion carried. This will be referred to the City Council for approval. Scott will meet Tony to plan.

**Riverboat/Tour Programming:** 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. A copy of the article was distributed to the members. There was some discussion about the Popeye Character Trail having some interest after the eclipse on April 8, 2024.

**Tourism:** Brenda Owen distributed a copy of an article from Matt Donnelly entitled, “Popeye the Sailor Man Live-Action Film in Development from Chernin, King Features (Exclusive) According to this article, Popeye is coasting back to the big screen as the subject of a new live-action feature film from Chernin Entertainment and King Features. Popeye celebrated 95 years this year. Some devout fans (which Popeye still has) crafted a series of self-made movie trailers this year, all fictional, which have racked up millions of views combined. These trailers imagine the character as a castaway warrior. Producers are in the process of attaching a studio partner. We will watch this process especially as we prepare for the 100th anniversary of Popeye in 2029.

Mary Ann Heberlie found an article about the ISAS staff conducting fieldwork at a pre-1850 historic site on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. While assisting the Illinois Department of Transportation as part of the bridge replacement project, they found the remaining footprint of an early 19th century structure. According to the article, in 2019, the Illinois State Archaeological Survey encountered a pre-1850 historic site on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River (at the town of Chester) as part of a bridge replacement project conducted by the Illinois Department of Transportation. Wedged between a gas pipeline and a modern highway right-of-way was a remarkably well-preserved footprint of an early 19th century structure, and as well as a rich deposit of material culture associated with what turned out to be tavern-keeping. This article was very interesting and the group would like to know where the artifacts are going to be displayed or housed for a possible presentation in Chester in the future.

**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. Currently they are replacing water lines at the riverfront and they have dug right in front of the wall. The daffodils are blooming.

**Fairground Place:** Cynthia Lawder reported that Jeff Korando is working with the City of Chester on lighting for the mural. There is also discussion about some fencing to hide the dumpster.

**Eclipse April 8, 2024:**  Brenda Owen

**Postcards with specialty postmark** – the postcards are in. Several volunteers from the group will meet on March 27th to attach the stamps to the postcards. The postcards will be taken to the post office for cancellation. Once they have been cancelled then we will pick up the postcards and put them into the sleeves.

**Soda sales** – all soda will be delivered at 7:00 AM to pop up sales areas. Jay Alllison will be delivering it.

**Volunteers** – Linda Schafer and Cynthia Lawder will be at the Gazebo, Linda Rader and Barry Harle will be at the BV Bank stand. Still need volunteers for Cole and Cohen areas. Barry will meet with Patti to discuss soda transfer. Bob Lockhart will be at the Welcome Center.

The inventory will drive the accounting. Each volunteer is asked to bring own food and chairs. There will be a money box at each station and the shuttle buses will be running.

**COMMISSION FUNCTION REPORTS:**

**Public Relations:** The Southern Illinois Scout magazine has a ¼ page ad for $275.00. Linda Schafer moved to purchase an ad in the Southern Illinois Scout magazine at the cost of $275.00 with Brenda Owen to work on the wording for the ad. Linda Rader seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**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 we still 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:**

**Star on the Water Tower –** No update as Jay was not at the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Bridge Demolishing event –** During the summer of 2026 the new bridge will be completed and the old bridge will be demolished. Discussion of possible event for the demolition – possible theme, “Well Blow Me Down.”

**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.

**ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING:**

Melissa Gross moved to adjourn; Wendy Lochhead seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:48 P.M.

The next meeting is April 18, 2024 at 6:30 PM, City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gross, Secretary