



City of Loves Park, City of Rockford, City of South Beloit, County of Winnebago,
Village of Cherry Valley, Village of Machesney Park, Village of Rockton, Village of Roscoe;
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Rockford Park District

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

1:30 p.m.

Webbs Norman Center

401 South Main Street, Rockford, Illinois

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Winnebago County Tourism Facility Board was called to order by WCRTFB Chairman, Ian Linnabary at 1:31 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Mayor Greg Jury, Mayor Steve Johnson, Mayor Tom McNamara, Winnebago County Chairman Joe Chiarelli, John Groh President & CEO Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Bobbie Holzwarth RACVB Board representative, Ian Linnabary Rockford Park District Board representative, and Jay Sandine Rockford Park District Executive Director. (87.5% representation)

Mayor Ted Rehl arrived at 1:50 p.m. - (90.2% representation)

Absent: Mayor Jim Claeysen, Mayor John Peterson, and Mayor Mark Szula.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present who wished to address the Board.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Mr. McNamara, seconded by Mr. Chiarelli, that the Board **approve** the following item on the Consent Agenda:

A. December 1, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Approved 4(ayes) 0 (nays) 0 (abstain) 4(absent) (87.5%) by voice vote.

Financial Update

RPD Chief Financial Officer Penny Christians reviewed the reports provided in the Board meeting packet highlighting the updates from March and June, 2021. Ms. Christians said that the receipts from last year were down considerably, but we were still able to make the required payments on the debt. Year to date through June, we are still approximately

\$46,000 below normal receipts, but we anticipate that will resolve through increased hotel usage through the end of the year. Ms. Christians shared the results of the 2020 audit of the WCRTFB accounts with the Board, and provided information on where the complete audit can be found for review.

Marketing/Tournament/Facility Updates

Lindsay Arellano, Louis Mateus and Danielle Potter provided an update on the RACVB's and RPD's joint efforts to bring tournaments to the Reclaiming First facilities. They highlighted the challenges and successes of hosting the recent WNIT Division 3 Women's Basketball tournament at UW Health Sports Factory, which was the first large tournament hosted since the shut down during the pandemic. Danielle Potter reviewed the joint efforts of the RACVB and the Park District over the years, and shared about the renewed focus the two organizations have on working and winning together for the sake of the community.

Louis Mateus highlighted the Mizuno Showcase Volleyball tournament, and the National 7v7 Football Association tournament at Mercyhealth Sportscore One, and shared how the teams rely on each other to make these types of large tournaments happen. Mr. Mateus shared about the upcoming Midwest Regional Soccer Camps being planned for two weekends in July, and other softball and volleyball tournaments that are planned for the Sportscore facilities this year. Ms. Potter also shared that we are finding ways to make these large tournaments accessible to our local youth, and making it possible for them to take part in these events.

Board Discussion

Mr. John Groh provided an update on the formation of a TID (Tourism Improvement District), which was put on hold in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic. Mr. Groh provided information for the Board on the current status of the TID concept, which is being considered to generate additional revenues to put into marketing and grow sports tourism in our region, and for the Reclaiming First Facilities. Mr. Groh shared that they have been meeting over the past year with local hotel representatives to learn about their needs for revenue recovery following the pandemic. There is support for the TID from our hotel community, and the RACVB team has been working with the City of Rockford and City of Loves Park legal teams to draft the initial agreement documents, which are currently under review. Mr. Groh shared that he anticipates a public discussion of the matter within a few weeks as the agreement moves through the City Councils of Rockford and Loves Park for approval. The current anticipated timeline for implementation is September 1 to October 1, 2021.

Mr. Groh reviewed the information he provided as a refresher of the Board's previous conversations with Civitas representatives, and noted the refinement of the concept over the past 6 months. He shared the costs involved in bringing large tournaments that have great economic impact to the region, and said the TID would provide funding for bid fees rent abatement, and hosting costs for future events and tournaments at RCF and other facilities in the area. The TID would be a source of sustainable, ongoing funding voluntarily entered into on behalf of hotels for their benefit, and for the benefit of the tourism industry in our community. Mr. Groh said the City of Rockford and Loves Park are the primary communities we are looking at initially to be included in the TID, and we would expand into other nearby communities with hotels in the future.

Ms. Holzwarth inquired about a formal endorsement from the Board for the formation of the TID, and Mr. Groh said that would be something for the Board to consider for a future meeting, as it might assist with approval at the City Council level for Rockford and Loves Park. There was a discussion of the timing for a Special Board Meeting in July to allow an opportunity to provide a resolution of support from the Board.

Board members inquired about the parties that will benefit from the TID formation, the use of the funds for securing tournaments, the approval process and timing, and the formation of the governing board that will oversee the funds raised through the TID. Mr. Groh provided additional information, and reviewed the parties that would comprise the board that is formed for oversight and disbursement of funds. The board would approve an annual plan and budget for the use of the funds, and the entity to carry out the plan and the servicing for the tournaments would be the RACVB.

Mayor McNamara asked about any downside to the TID. Mr. Groh shared that there doesn't appear to be any downside to the idea, and shared the successes of TIDs that exist in other places in the country. Mayor Jury asked if there is a plan for the use of TID funds to make the Park District whole for the expense of operations of the RCF facilities, and Mr. Mateus also shared the need for funding to be returned to the facilities for upkeep of equipment and maintenance in the future, which will be important to continue to attract tournaments.

Mr. Groh said that local hoteliers are not in favor of providing a set amount of revenue to be designated for operational costs. They are willing to invest in individual tournaments or a series of events at RCF facilities or other facilities, to make the dollars and cents work for the facilities, and ultimately make them more profitable for the hotels. Mr. Groh said the hotels are interested in marketing with the funds that would be raised by the TID. He added that the Park District would be included in the annual planning process for the use of the funds, and would have a seat at the TID board table.

Chairman Joe Chiarelli offered the help of Winnebago County with the process, and Mr. Groh said having community support will be important as we work through the approval process with City Councils, the Park District Board, the RACVB Board and others. We need to consider growth in all tourism markets as we recover from the year of pandemic, and all support will be welcomed.

Mr. Jay Sandine reminded the Board that the TID was one of eleven potential options we had discussed previously to help address operational deficits for the RCF facilities, and now following the pandemic year, the TID is even more necessary to help bring back the tourism that has been lost. It makes sense that the TID funds would be used to help bring more tournaments and business to the facilities, but we must also continue to talk about finding ways to meet the costs of running and staffing the facilities. Those costs continue to rise every day, especially in light of the increases to minimum wage that have taken place. Mr. Sandine shared that he and Mr. Groh have discussed this, and he is confident that we will find a way to use some of these funds to help make the RCF facilities whole.

Mr. Sandine thanked the RACVB and RPD team for their presentation on our collaborative efforts to bring tournaments to the facilities. He shared that the next fiscal budget from the State of Illinois will include \$800,000 for Mercyhealth Sportscore 2, and thanked Senator

Dave Syverson for his help in securing those funds. He said the majority of that funding will be used to expand Mercyhealth Sportscore 2 outdoor concessions, which should provide great alternative revenues for that facility.

Mr. Dan Jacobson provided an update on the solar project with Trajectory Energy to install solar panels on the roof of the UW Health Sports Factory. Mr. Jacobson shared projections of \$16,000 to \$20,000 savings in energy costs for the facility annually, with no up-front costs for the equipment, and the possibility to sell energy back to the grid. The application for the project is due in early July, and we are very optimistic the project will be selected by the governing board.

Mr. Jacobson updated the board on issues with bubbling in the roof membrane on the Mega Center building at Mercyhealth Sportscore 2. We have had the roofing contractor and manufacturer in to provide a solution, which has been a batten material over the membrane. Since the original event we have had the same issue occur with other parts of the membrane, and are now evaluating the remainder of the roof, as we believe the method of fastening the membrane is causing the problem. We are working on the solution, and will be identifying the costs if battens are needed on the whole roof.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. McNamara, seconded by Mr. Chiarelli that the Board **adjourn** the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Approved 5 (ayes) 0 (nays) 0 (abstain) 3 (absent) (90.2%) by voice vote.

Board Chair, Ian Linnabary

Board Vice-Chair, Bobbie Holzwarth

BOARD APPROVED: