

CITY OF VERONA
MINUTES
TOURISM COMMISSION
April 21, 2020
Verona City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Jason Hunt called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.
2. **Roll Call:** Charlie Eggen, Sara Hoechst, Jason Hunt, Charlotte Jerney and Patricia Wehrley were present. Also present: Adam Sayre, City Administrator; Brian Lamers, Finance Director; Ellen Clark, City Clerk; Le Jordan, Verona Area Chamber of Commerce (VACC) Executive Director; and Halley Jones, VACC Tourism Coordinator.
3. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: Approval of the October 29, 2019 Tourism Commission Minutes.**
Motion by Jerney, seconded by Wehrley, to approve the October 29, 2019 Tourism Commission minutes. Motion carried 5-0.
4. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: 2019 4th Quarter Room Tax Revenue Report.**
There were no questions from the Commission regarding the 2019 4th Quarter Room Tax Revenue Report.
5. **Discussion and Possible Action Re: Update on COVID-19 and impacts to the lodging industry and room tax collection.**
Eggen stated March 11, 2020 was the last day of occupancy for the hotels in Verona. Madison market is running at about 18% occupancy. True occupancy is likely under 5%. Occupancy in Verona is hovering around 3-4%. This is looking to persist at least throughout May. Recovery will probably be slow throughout the remainder of this year. The Epic UGM may still be held in August, and the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee is still being planned. If travel is back open in June, the highest occupancy for the year will likely be around 50% in October. Things may start to feel a little normal again in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2021. Room rates have fallen about 60%, as well. In terms of room taxes, that means there will likely be very little collected in the 2nd Quarter of 2020, though collections may increase a bit in the 3rd and 4th Quarters.

Jordan asked if there is any federal help for the hotels, and if any of the larger hotel chains are helping out their franchisees.

Eggen replied most of them have been cutting fixed expenses, extending terms, doing away with late fees, negotiating terms with vendors for better pricing, etc.

Jordan stated it could be decades before the economy completely recovers from this.

Eggen remarked that banking and insurance industries are going to think differently about the hospitality business, as they are seeing how quickly these businesses can be forced to shut down.

Jordan and Jones have been working with Destination Madison on some projects to bring people into the area.

Eggen stated on thing Verona has going for it is it's a small town, not a huge city.

Jones stated the Chamber's marketing for May is geared toward golf courses.

Eggen stated the local bike trails would be at the top of his list. He believes it has invigorated the family.

Jerney asked if hotels and the golf courses could put together package deals for visitors.

Eggen replied he would be willing to do that.

Eggen asked if there has been any outreach with the restaurants in town.

Jordan replied there has to be some coordination with the Badger Bounceback Plan put out by Governor Evers. Sometimes information goes out too quickly and without backup, which is confusing and frustrating for businesses.

Hoechst stated the Tavern League sent the Governor a request to allow taverns and restaurants to open beginning May 1st.

Hunt stated the vision center has been open only on a limited basis. It has been difficult keeping the correct amount of personal protective equipment available, as well.

Hunt is glad there is at least some discussion about opening up the economy, rather than waiting several more weeks before laying out some plans.

Eggen stated the biggest thing for Verona is Epic. If they open their campus to training again, the hospitality industry in Verona will be in good shape. It is his understanding that Epic is planning to require all virtual learners to come to the Verona campus to obtain the certifications of completion for their courses.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Jerney, seconded by Hunt, to adjourn at 2:41 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.

Ellen Clark, City Clerk