

SPECIAL EVENTS
MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 21, 2021

Present: Michael Dougherty, Peggy Schneider, Candy Moore, Wayne Eichelkraut, Jani Eichelkraut and Heidi Eisert

Present by conference call: Jim Reilly

Absent: Sherra Blakely

Guests: By conference call: Stephanie Stacy, organizer of the 2020 Chris Kringle Market

Minutes: On a motion by Wayne and a second by Candy, minutes of the September 2020 meeting were approved. The committee did not meet in October, November or December.

Financial Report: From an allocation to the Festival of Lights Parade of \$8,500, a total of \$6,500 was spent on lights and other supplies for its covid-era substitute, Deck the Parks. The parade was canceled due to the pandemic. From an allocation to Music in the Park of \$10,500, a total of \$8,568 was spent. All other activities usually sponsored by the committee were not scheduled due to the pandemic.

Wayne reported that hotel-motel tax receipts are down \$180,000 from previous years, due to pandemic restrictions. He said the city might catch up on some of that deficit, but would not match previous years.

Action: On a motion by Jani and second by Candy, the financial report was approved.

Old Business:

Deck the Parks: The committee reviewed the Deck the Parks lighting. Wayne said the event would continue in 2021. There were reports of minor vandalism to some of the displays, but those incidents were not widespread.

Chris Kringle Market: The event was held over 3 weekends in December and attracted some 35,000 people – over half of whom came from LaSalle County and nearby counties. Her company handled most of the event publicity and did not use OVC. Downtown merchants' reaction was mixed, with some disputing that the market should occur during a pandemic and others thankful that spillover business boosted their bottom line in a tough year.

Stephanie unveiled plans for 2021, which she would like to position as an anchor draw to major downtown festivities/lighting displays. Plans could include: expanding to 4 weekends and featuring more vendors (from 35 this year to 50). Expansion would give people more reason to drive here and stay a weekend, she said.

Wayne said expanding to Thanksgiving weekend would conflict with the Festival of Lights parade when it resumes, and asked how well Ottawa could compete when other communities brought back their own German-style markets after the pandemic.

Stephanie said the market could work around the parade, and that Ottawa could compete because it would be an alternative to crowded suburban markets and cheaper for vendors. She said vendor interest was so brisk they shut off applications, and that there is interest for 2021.

Music in the city: Jim said the city should market itself as a mini-Nashville filled with live-music options, and said the CK market was another instance where OVC was not doing the job marketing it was being paid for. Wayne said he and Mayor Dan Aussem were scheduled to meet the next day with OVC with a contract in hand, ready to address some of those issues.

Music in the Park 2021: Peggy unveiled a proposed music lineup of 9 bands for concerts running from late June to late August. The council must still set the city budget and allocations before the lineup is finalized or publicized. Notice to publishers of year-long tourism guides, which are usually published in the spring, listed dates but no lineup. 2020 crowds were record-breaking for the event.

Mike said he was approached last summer by a business wanting to sponsor a band one night. Discussion continued. Music in the Park has never had business sponsors, unlike Riverfest.

Adjournment: 6:50 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled February 18 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Peggy Schneider