

Tourism Commission Meeting  
Monday, October 9, 2023  
8:30 a.m.

Attendees: Commissioner Michael Grab, Commissioner Clint Wills, Commissioner Melissa Rasmussen, Commissioner Jim Ruetz

Also in Attendance: Bill Elliot, Wisconsin Hotel and Lodging Association, President & CEO; Kasey Rose, TownePlace Suites, Director of Sales; Leslie Flynn, Communications Coordinator, City of Oak Creek; Catherine Roeske, Clerk, City of Oak Creek; Doug Seymour, Community Development Director, City of Oak Creek; Andrew Vickers, City Administrator, City of Oak Creek

Commissioner Alicia Haase, and Leisure Services Assistant Paula Nevarez were excused.

1. **Welcome/Call to order** – Commissioner Clint Wills called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes September 11th, 2023, Meeting** – Commissioner Jim Ruetz made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting. Commissioner Melissa Rasmussen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

3. **New Business**
  - a. None.

4. **Informational and Discussion Items:**

- a. **Presentation on Room Tax Legislation**

Bill Elliot, President and CEO of the Wisconsin Hotel and Lodging Association presented an overview of the State of Wisconsin's Room Tax Legislation. The goal of the presentation is to provide clarity on how the legislation affects municipalities in Wisconsin such as the city of Oak Creek. Elliot began with a brief history of room tax for context. From the WHLA's perspective, room tax is essential for promoting tourism within cities, funding the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, and promoting individual hotel/motel marketing and advertising campaigns. Elliot adds that it is the responsibility of the lodging facility to collect the tax. With the addition of Airbnb, and other short-term rentals emerging in the market, the State law has been clarified to legislate that the online rental platforms are responsible for collecting tax and remitting them to the City. After the room tax has been collected, the City is then able to use 30% of it for general matters, and the other 70% must be provided to a tourism entity or the Tourism Commission for tourism promotion and

development. 70% should be spent in a way that reasonably assumes it will generate overnight stays for multiple lodging facilities, aid in tourism marketing, transient tourist information services, or building visitor centers etc. Elliot adds that another important provision within the law states that a tourism commission must contract with a separate tourism entity. A tourism entity defined by law is an existing non-profit organization, established before 2015, that spends at least 51% of all revenue on tourism promotion and development. A tourism entity would also provide all destination marketing staff and services. Because this provision is relatively new, the law also establishes what a municipality can do if this entity does not already exist for them. After the formal presentation was finished, Bill Elliot invited the commission to ask questions. Elliot was asked by the Commission if he could provide an example city with a strong model. Elliot replied that Green Bay, Appleton, and Fox Valley all have strong coalitions between their commissions, tourism entities, whereas they share the same goals, have strong communication and are always keeping the overnight guest in mind. Elliot was also asked if he is aware of how many “zone models” existed within the state. Elliot replied that he isn’t sure off hand but knows that Green Bay is a successful example of this model. City Administrator Vickers mentions that the city of Oak Creek does not have a pre-existing entity. Bill Elliot replies that Oak Creek is not the only municipality facing that challenge. City Administrator Andrew Vickers mentions that as local government, the city cannot directly create a non-profit. Bill Elliot offers support with whatever model the City decides to pursue. Commissioner Clint Wills thanks Bill Elliot for presenting to the commission.

- 5. **Adjournment:** Commissioner Melissa Rasmussen made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jim Ruetz seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

ATTEST:

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Paula Nevarez, Leisure Services Assistant

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Date