

Members Present: Linda Thorpe, Emil Bakka, Ron DeBruyne, Leon Kukanich, Ralph Sitzberger

Department Personnel Present: Cindy Burzinski, Vilas County Tourism
Janet Christianson, Vilas County Tourism

Others Present: Theresa Smith, Vilas County Chamber
Fritz Laeser, Edgewater Inn & Cottages
Jim Behling, Vilas County Board of Supervisors
Tony Rizzo, Fishing Guide
Al Soczka, Tall Pines Motel & Gallery
Russ Smith, Smith Bait Mfg.

Thorpe called the regular meeting to order at 9:00am in Conference Room #2 of the Vilas County Courthouse. The meeting was properly posted and notices sent to all media provided on April 26, 2011.

Motion by Bakka, seconded by Kukanich to accept the agenda to be taken in any order at the discretion of the chair; motion carried.

Motion by Kukanich, seconded by Bakka to approve the minutes of April 5, 2011 as distributed.

Thorpe requested an update regarding Behling's involvement with the VASSA organization. Behling indicated that as there had not been a VASSA meeting since this Committee's April 5th meeting, no final action had been taken. Sitzberger also requested a clarification regarding the County map and outstanding invoices; Smith noted the individual was still working on the situation and no County or Chamber monies were affected. **Motion carried.**

Introductions – All present introduced themselves as recent county committee reorganization has new member Ralph Sitzberger replacing outgoing Jim Behling.

Musky Marathon – Rizzo, Soczka and Smith were present to speak to the Committee in opposition of the elimination of the Musky Marathon Kept Divisions. Rizzo indicated he was opposed to the elimination of the Kept Division as it has been a part of the Marathon since the beginning, that an official weigh-in of kept fish keeps the reporting honest, and feels it should remain an option for visitors to the area. Soczka also felt there were enough restrictions on area fishing and that keeping or releasing a fish should be the angler's decision and not eliminate an angler from registering a musky (i.e., their first musky, etc.). Both Rizzo and Soczka indicated that if the Kept Divisions were eliminated, they would no longer sponsor by providing prizes. Smith also noted that there had been a Kept Division since the start of the Marathon. He further stated that many fish cannot be revived to swim away, despite every attempt, and that the Marathon should make some provision for those fish.

During discussion referencing previous comments, Christianson noted that registration rules required a witness for all registrations. It was also noted that the Committee had considered the declining numbers in the Kept Division. DeBruyne indicated Committee continually reviews the Marathon rules, registrations, angler comments, etc. to update the Marathon to promote a reason for people to recreate in the area the perception being released fish means more numbers; additionally not having the division will not stop people from keeping their catches. Sitzberger personally noted that he does not support catch and release. Soczka noted that while 90% of the fish may be released, the Marathon should provide for the 10% of fish that are kept (be it their first legal musky, not being able to revive

it or the angler just wants to keep their legal catch). Rizzo also provided some personal statistics on musky growth and development along with comments regarding the comparison of musky fishing in Vilas County to surrounding states and Canada. He further indicated the Committee should not be swayed by large groups that advocate catch and release.

The Committee thanked Rizzo, Soczka and Smith for attending and for their comments regarding the Marathon. The Committee will be watching the registrations during the coming year and urged Rizzo and Soczka to reconsider their sponsorship commitment. As the decision to eliminate the Kept Division for 2011 has already been made, the Committee will review the divisions, rules, etc. of the Marathon as part of its annual discussion for the 2012 Marathon.

Christianson noted the Fast-Tie Knot Tyer (incentive prize for Marathon registrants) had been ordered and received. Additional information on clippers, key chains, and towels (for a 2nd incentive prize) was presented. During discussion it was noted that the items indicated would be imprinted with the Marathon logo. Kukanich wondered if a towel with a corner grommet (so the towel could be hung in some manner) was available. Christianson will look into this type of towel. After discussion about the various items and feeling the towel was the more unique item, **motion by Sitzberger, seconded by Kukanich to order 250 imprinted towels; motion carried.**

Vilas County Chamber – Smith noted the Chamber reviewed a revised proposal for the Spring Fling Promotion, as the earlier proposal had not been approved by Corporation Counsel due to possible lottery concerns. With some concerns regarding the revised version, along with the ending of the target (spring) season, the Chamber decided to hold off on the promotion at this time.

The Chambers were busy promoting the public Business Securities Seminar scheduled for May 12th in Boulder Junction which is co-sponsored by the Vilas County Chamber, Citizen's Bank and the Vilas County Sheriff's Department.

Officer elections had been held and the Vilas County Chamber officers remain the same: Smith (Boulder Junction), President; Neider (St. Germain), Vice President; Logan-Weber (Presque Isle), Treasurer; and McMahon (Manitowish Waters), Secretary.

The Chamber continues to work on plans for the Fall Resort Tour, tentatively planned for mid-October in the Sayner/Star Lake – St. Germain area.

Pilch & Barnet – A copy of the banner ads scheduled for JS Online and Yahoo were passed around for review. Burzinski noted Pilch & Barnet had been able to secure a value added banner promotion so the banner ads will also appear on the Chicago Tribune enewsletter. Bakka felt it was good to cover the Fox Valley, Milwaukee and Chicago markets considering the increasing gas prices.

Burzinski distributed and reviewed Pilch & Barnet's February report, including website statistics such as referring sites and new visitors. The Committee felt this information was very valuable.

Burzinski briefly reviewed the 5-County branding promotion project and reported the survey portion of the plan had been extended to facilitate completing additional intercept surveys during the late Spring/early Summer season with an anticipated June completion date. Survey collection is scheduled for various events being held throughout the five-county area along with an additional on-line survey which will target area accommodations, businesses and tourism inquirers. The county and

local tourism entities (chambers) will be meeting after the survey tabulation to begin the branding efforts which will take considerable time; however, there are also plan timelines/grant deadlines to be met. As these meetings will be occurring during the busiest tourism season, the committee has expressed concern that all chambers (areas) be adequately represented. Several Committee members noted it was imperative that smaller chambers (with staffing situations that limit their ability to leave the office) be involved. Burzinski agreed and noted options are being discussed.

Out of County Travel – None not previously approved.

Department Reports – Copies of the April Department report were distributed with Burzinski reviewing the revised format, along with the comparison section, and the breakdown of ad placement responses. Kukanich questioned the drop in inquiries as compared to 2006 and Burzinski discussed how inquiries were received then (reader response cards, bulk inquiries from printed media) as compared to inquiries today (more targeted, via on-line and printed media).

Burzinski indicated the tourism numbers from the Davidson-Peterson Report were now available and distributed a copy of the Vilas County Economic Impact Fact Sheet for 2010 which would be included in the Department's 2010 Annual Report (for presentation at the June County Board meeting), and sent to the Chambers. A press release is also being prepared for distribution as part of Tourism Week. Also of note, while tourism's impact to the County doesn't appear on the Department's greenbar, some of the highlights of the Fact Sheet include:

- ✓ Travelers spent an estimated \$255,106,797 in Vilas County, an increase of 1.29% from 2009.
- ✓ Travel spending generated \$13,199,126 in taxes and other fees for local government in 2010.
- ✓ Travelers generated \$31,327,967 in state revenues (lodging, sales, excise and meal taxes, etc.) in 2010
- ✓ Traveler spending in Vilas County has increased from \$135 million in 1997 to over \$255 million in 2010 – an increase of almost 88%.

Budget/Approval of Bills – Burzinski distributed the monthly bills and budget report. **Motion by Bakka, seconded by Kukanich to pay the bills as presented: Lambeau, LLC - \$26.05; Sierra Stream & Mountain - \$823.72; US Postmaster - \$500.00; Pilch & Barnet - \$2, 700.00; Cindy L. Burzinski - \$106.59; motion carried.**

Motion by Kukanich; seconded by DeBruyne to approve the budget as presented; motion carried.

Correspondence/Communication – DeBruyne updated the Committee on the April 30th forum for the Landover ATV Club held in Eagle River and provided a copy of the proposed/tentative routes as presented at the forum.

Behling expressed his appreciation to the Committee for the last several years and noted he will miss being a part of the Tourism & Publicity Committee

Next meeting – The next regular Tourism & Publicity Committee meeting is scheduled for June 7, 2011, at 9am in Conference Room #2.

There being no further items on the agenda for discussion, **Thorpe as Committee Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:10am.**

Respectfully submitted, Janet R. Christianson

Minutes reflect the notations of the recorder and are subject to change by the Committee.