

***Pulaski County
Tourism Advisory Council***

Monday, 9 February 2026
Pulaski County Courthouse
Winamac, Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 28 April 2025
Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex
Winamac, Indiana

Members present: President Dave Scott (Winamac Town Council (W.T.C.), Vice-President Tom Miller (W.T.C.); Vernon Gillum (County Council (Council)), Raymond Heabel (Board of Commissioners (Board)), Jeff Litke (The UPTOWN Project). Department of Community Development (D.C.D.) Executive Director Nathan P. Origer, D.C.D. Assistant Taylor Bailey. Christie Nicholson (Council) arrived at 12:07 *p.m.*

Members absent: Secretary Sue Kast (Board); Beth Hargrove (Main Street Winamac), Kelsie Zellers (Board) [personal].

Guests present: Diana Day, Brandi Larkin.

Call to Order

President Scott called the meeting to order at noon. In the absence of the secretary, Mr. Gillum agreed to review Ms. Bailey's draft minutes prior to dissemination.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Motion: Mr. Litke; second: Vice-President Miller; no discussion; approval: all.

Old Business

Tourism strategic plan: The director reported that he had finished about 40 percent of the first draft and would send it to the Strategic Planning Committee upon completion.

2025 tourism-marketing budget — use of a consultant: After the last meeting, Director Origer had met with Brad Conn of Concepts Marketing, who had agreed to six-month, \$6,000 terms; half of the fee would pay for Concepts' services, with the other half covering advertising boosts and printing. Mr. Conn anticipated focusing on Facebook and YouTube while not likely venturing into other platforms. He also would be designing a new rack card; once drafted, the TAC would be able to provide input regarding the card's design and content before final approval. The campaign would run from May through October. The director noted that some of the \$6,000 could be paid through the Department's Professional Services or Printing appropriations.

2025 tourism-marketing budget — digital-marketing allocation: Director Origer reviewed the provided breakdown of 2025 allocations, noting that an estimated \$7,025 remained, and that he recommended keeping a \$350 cushion, leaving approximately \$6,675 to put toward digital marketing. The director clarified that, because he had not yet received an invoice, the remaining balance did not account for the \$500 pledged to Francesville Fall Festival at the March meeting — but that the use of another appropriation for part of the Concepts invoices would likely offset this.

The director mentioned a couple of popular, Indiana-focused social-media influencers whom Mrs. Nicholson had recommended and noted that Parke County has an impressive Instagram presence, which he would have Ms. Bailey explore further. Mrs. Nicholson spoke highly of Parke County's social-media work, arguing that matching that should be the TAC's long-term goal and urging members to investigate. Mrs. Hargrove had recommended a few podcasts to explore; the director saw value in some of the options that she had provided but feared that some had too broad of a geographic reach, suggesting that initially focusing more narrowly would be advisable. The director opined that the remainder of the Marketing budget should be spent on TikTok and Instagram partnerships rather than on static advertisements. Vice-President Miller inquired about the cost of these types of partnerships; the director had not been able to obtain any estimates yet.

Discussion ensued regarding the remaining budget and whether it should all be spent on social media, or if some should be set aside for future events. President Scott suggested that focusing

on influencer partnership would be the best option, and members agreed. Brandi Larkin asked what the primary goals of the TAC are and if specific return-on-investment metrics exist; Director Origer advised that establishing metrics would be part of the strategic-plan–development process. Mrs. Larkin emphasized the importance of benchmarking to justify the expenditure of tax dollars. Mrs. Laring also suggested using self-created content that has a shelf life; the director confirmed that the TAC had already intended to do so.

Conversation began regarding decisions made at previous meetings, contemplating whether the TAC had been rushing through decisions, and how the TAC is seeking to modernize the County's tourism-marketing efforts. Mr. Litke suggested leaving part of the Marketing appropriation unallocated in case a fourth-quarter need might arise

Mrs. Larkin then suggested hiring a consultant to develop the tourism strategic plan; Mrs. Nicholson raised concerns about the cost of a consultant given limited remaining funds and further explained that the TAC had already begun addressing many of the matters that Mrs. Larkin had raised. Mrs. Larkin suggested that a landing page on the tourism component of the County's website that directs users to the websites of local attractions might be advisable. Further discussion between Mrs. Larkin and the TAC ensued regarding what the TAC's limited budget might allow. Mr. Litke reiterated his preference for leaving part of the appropriation untouched until the fourth-quarter.

Addressing Mrs. Larkin's earlier about data tracking, Director Origer noted that he had been exploring options such as Placer.ai; he added that there may be merit in hiring a consultant to facilitate conversations with the public after the first draft had been completed, but that he did not see value in rebooting the process with outside assistance. The money for a consultant would not come from the Marketing allocation, but from the Professional Services line item.

The director revisited Mr. Litke's suggestion about holding funds in reserve; President Scott and Mr. Heabel both recommended allocating the entire remaining balance. Mrs. Nicholson echoed this sentiment and suggested that the cushion might be best directed toward supporting local festivals, while the vice-president suggested spending half of the remaining balance and setting aside half until later in the year. Mrs. Larkin inquired as to the decision-making regarding financial support for festivals and events; historically, any event manager requesting support had received it. Mrs. Larkin asked how entities request help, Director Origer advised that he typically receives emailed requests, and Mrs. Larkin suggested a quarterly advertisement in the local newspaper highlighting local festivals and events with their dates and locations. President Scott contended that the TAC's mission is not to inform the locals, but to attract visitors from the outside. Mrs. Nicholson confirmed her willingness to use the proposed \$350 cushion to support local events and seconded the idea that visitor-attraction efforts should be focused farther away from the community. Discussion ensued regarding the appropriate attraction-area radius, trickle-down benefits of tourism marketing, and whence members' businesses attract guests.

Mrs. Larkin suggested using packages to attract visitors to engage; the director and Mrs. Nicholson advised that this would be addressed in the strategic plan, and that conversations had previously occurred regarding how the TAC could facilitate those packages as well as business-to-business connections in informal gatherings. Vice-President Miller explained that he keeps a book at his vacation rentals showcasing local restaurants and attractions; Acorn Oaks Campground's website has an attractions page.

After significant discussion, The TAC agreed to spend the remainder of the unallocated Marketing funds on social media excluding a \$350 cushion, with staff working with members to review possible options for partnerships.

Motion: Mrs. Nicholson; second: President Scott; no discussion; approval: all.

New Business

KIRPC CEDS tourism focus group: Director Origer gave a brief overview of KIRPC, the eight-county regional planning commission serving Pulaski County. KIRPC writes applications for most of the State grants sought for the County and its Towns. Every few years, KIRPC has to adopt a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as required by the United States Economic Development Administration. This year, KIRPC had hoped to approach the process

differently, seeking to establish focus groups for each of several subject matters. The director asked for a volunteer to serve on KIRPC CEDS tourism focus group is the process would go forward in this manner. Mrs. Nicholson tentatively agreed to serve, noting that scheduling could be difficult, but that she would do her best to participate.

Other Business

Conncepts Marketing proposal: Mr. Gillum asked for and received confirmation regarding the duration of the services to be provided.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Motion: Vice-President Miller; second: Mr. Heabel; no discussion; approval: all,
12:55 *p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Taylor Bailey, Assistant/Recording Secretary

Vernon Gillum, Secretary *pro tempore*