



May 28, 2013

Dear Chamber Members,

Some of you may have read the article in the Daily Star Journal or heard rumors concerning future plans by the City Council for the visitors and tourism initiatives currently overseen by the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce. This informational letter is meant to clarify the situation and keep the Chamber Membership abreast of what is happening.

On May 10, 2013 the city released proposed plans through their City Council agenda that would strip oversight of the Visitor and Tourism Center from the Chamber of Commerce and put the operations under city supervision. Other changes include significantly reducing the use of the historic train depot as office space and access to the Chamber. Historically, the City and Chamber have worked as partners to ensure optimal service for the Warrensburg community and its visitors. The Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center has operated as a team in the train depot since 1998, after the Chamber of Commerce and Depot Renovation Preservation and Maintenance Foundation restored this grand historical landmark for the community. The use of the depot facility was granted to the City and the Chamber through an agreement signed in 1985 between the City of Warrensburg and the Missouri Pacific Railroad Co.

The city, without consulting or advising the Chamber, chose to develop a radical departure from the current, well-functioning arrangement. The Chamber Board of Directors was surprised, dismayed, and disappointed in learning of the proposal, which they learned of days before the City council meeting on May 13. The proposal further dismayed the Board because it contains mis-information, distortions and lies about the current Visitor Center operation. Based on the Chamber of Commerce's mission, to create opportunities to promote business success and welcome visitors, the true motive for the city council's proposal is unclear.

100 South Holden Street Warrensburg, Missouri 64093
Phone: 660-747-3168 Toll-free: 877-OLD-DRUM Fax: 660-429-5490
E-Mail: chamber@warrensburg.org Web site: www.warrensburg.org

Below is an overview of what the Chamber currently oversees and what the City Manager is proposing.

Current Chamber Oversight:

- Chamber receives lodging tax collected from city hotels and motels. This tax is collected by the City and disbursed to the Chamber for operational use, as dictated by a formal agreement signed in 1998.

The operational distribution of the tax revenue is as follows:

- The Chamber employs a Visitor Center Coordinator (at 50% of the lodging tax revenue). *\$151?*
- Fifteen percent of the lodging tax revenue is earmarked for Visitors Center operations. The Chamber houses the Visitors Center, adding 3 additional staff members to partner in assisting visitors. *(how is this allocated/spent)*
- 35% of revenue is allocated for marketing and promotional expenses for Warrensburg.

And is allocation on paper?

Other pertinent points:

- The Chamber is the designated not-for-profit organizational entity authorized to deliver tourism services. *[gov't can designate another as the DMO]*
- A Convention & Tourism Advisory Board (CTAB) consisting of 5 members (3 City appointees, 2 Chamber appointees) oversees Visitor Center activities. *[minutes? who's doing, when]*
- The Chamber Executive Board provides final payment for Visitor Center expenditures. *?*
- The Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center serves as the Destination Marketing Organization for Johnson County. *See above - county commission can change.*

City Manager's Proposal

- City would collect and keep revenue collected through the Lodging Tax.
- City would employ a new full time Director of Tourism at a salary of 100% of lodging tax revenue to staff the Convention and Visitors Bureau. *excessive*
- City would designate an existing or new not-for-profit organization to deliver tourism services.
- City would appoint and designate an Advisory Board to oversee the Convention & Visitors Bureau and have final approval of the Convention & Visitors Board.
- The new tourism director would take over the front offices of the current Chamber of Commerce Office at the depot for tourism operations and gift shop (direct competitor to local business), *note - gov't should not compete with local business* displacing the Chamber of Commerce staff. The Chamber staff would occupy the president's office, workroom, meeting room, and corridor and toilet area. Chamber members and new businesses would then enter into the Chamber offices through the Amtrak waiting station past the restrooms.

has anyone failed in Sedalia?

In conclusion:

In appears, and was stated, in the city proposal that the City Manager is interested in promoting Warrensburg for Sports Tourism. Warrensburg is home to the University of Central Missouri with Whiteman Air Force Base being a close neighbor and partner, but Warrensburg is not a tourism destination nor has the capacity for lodging large groups that would come in for proposed events. Presently, the community cannot accommodate visitors for events such as UCM graduations and Homecoming. For business to grow in Warrensburg, the City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, and Main Street must be business friendly and visitor friendly and work as partners in support of each other. This proposal was placed on the Council agenda with no previous conversations with the Chamber.

The Chamber of Commerce directors, staff and ambassadors have been good stewards of the depot. In 1985 the Chamber ambassadors and community leaders came together to remodel the depot and formed the Depot Renovation, Preservation and Maintenance Foundation. There is history and loyalty connected with the depot and the Chamber in this community that should be honored. - Depot - my impression is coop has been good

The proposed changes have not been vetted in the community and almost fell capricious in nature, and thus the Chamber of Commerce Board is faced with the need to inform its membership and solicit community feedback on the proposal.

Sincerely,

David Less

David Less
Chamber Board Chair

Comments: Chamber has not
promoted events for overnight stays
promotes only chamber members

Initially chamber 12010 ROTO off top,
then changed overhead to tourism - has
this changed?