

**Mandan Visitors Committee**  
**May 19, 2022**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**Mandan City Hall**  
**Minutes**

**Visitors Committee**  
**Members:**

*Tim Helbling*  
Mayor

*Tyler Gangl*  
Term: 2021-2024

*Maria Walen*  
Term: 2020-2022

*Clint Boyd*  
Term: 2020-2023

*Karmen Siirtola*  
Term: 2020-2024

**Liaisons:**

*City Administrator,*  
*Jim Neubauer*

*Finance Director,*  
*Greg Welch*

*Communications &*  
*Community Services*  
*Coordinator,*  
*Kari Schmidt*

1. Introductions

*Helbling called the meeting to order. Members present are indicated with a . Also in attendance was Mandan Progress Organization (MPO) Executive Director Matt Schanandore.*

2. Consider approval of September 30, 2021, Meeting Minutes

*Siirtola asked about the appointment for Gangl's term that expired at the end of 2021. Neubauer stated Gangl submitted a letter to be reappointed, it was taken to City Commission and approved. Gangl's new term is through the end of 2024.*

*Siirtola also asked about follow up on the Rodeo request. Neubauer reported all contingencies were met and the request was approved by City Commission. The first contribution has been distributed to the Park District. The remainder will go out annually in August.*

3. New Business

- a) Consider request from Mandan Progress Organization for funding of the Holiday Lights Festival

*Schanandore presented a request for \$500,000 in funding for a Holiday Lights Festival that will*

*become a seasonal attraction in Dykshoorn Park during the weeks around Thanksgiving through the beginning of the year. The festival would be geared towards families and be an immersive holiday experience that gets people out of their vehicles and walking through the park. Displays would provide opportunities for photos, sponsorships, etc. This will activate the park for a consecutive 50-60 days during the late fall and into winter.*

*Schanandore provided an estimate from Extreme Lightsapes. He sought information from other companies, but this was the only company that would speak to him without signing a contract. They have experience working with municipalities and Walen stated she spoke the referral out of Garland, Texas and they thought it was a huge benefit for their city.*

*Schanandore said acquiring sponsorships to collect displays piece-by-piece would be difficult and not be something that would keep bringing people back*

*year after year. A big display all at once will allow for the “wow” factor and help provide an opportunity to bring people back. The display would be free to the public.*

*MPO will establish a capital campaign, with corporate and individual sponsorships. The plan is to change out displays and add new ones throughout the years. This campaign will allow the MPO to develop short-term events when the display is up, as well as for marketing and maintenance of the display. Sponsorships will help cover overage of the electrical bill.*

*Siirtola questioned the traditional Christmas display with a manger being incorporated. Schanandore said the manger is an existing piece the MPO has and it will be re-wired and on display as well. He did pitch them the traditional Christmas display, but the examples provided are what they came back with.*

*Schanandore said no other city in North Dakota currently has this kind of seasonal attraction yet. It will cost \$50,000 to \$60,000 for Extreme Lightscaapes to setup and teardown each year. The initial contract would include the setup and teardown for year one. The MPO will look to hire out or get volunteers to do it in the future. Storage of the displays should be paid for in the initial cost.*

*General snow removal shouldn't interfere or affect the displays.*

*Boyd felt this was a very unique event for the town. Siirtola was in support but did question if the school would be requesting or could potentially request from the Visitors fund. Helbling stated the school district has already been a recipient of fund from the Visitors Committee and he and Neubauer were confident the school wouldn't be coming to the committee with a request for the new high school and elementary school projects. In an email to Neubauer, Gangl said he reviewed the request and was in support of the committee funding it. Helbling would like to see more interactive displays for kids and a \$100,000 buy-in from the community or businesses. Neubauer stated he wasn't aware of or anticipating any other requests of the visitor's promotion fund at this time.*

*Walén moved to recommend approval of the \$500,000 request from the MPO for the Holiday Lights Festival with the contingency that they raise \$50,000 for a buy-in. Boyd seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

4. Other Business

*No other business was discussed.*

5. Future Meetings

*Meetings are scheduled as needed.*

6. Adjourn.

*There being no further business the meeting adjourned.*