



# Minutes (Board Meeting) – Visit Beloit, Inc. Board of Directors

---

**Location:** Virtual via Microsoft Teams

**Date:** January 26, 2022

**Time:** 8:00 a.m.

**Attendees - Members:** Patricia Diduch, Seth Frisbee, Jen Hall, Ann Sitrick Joyce, Spencer Waite, Jackie Jackson, Lori Luther, Ted Rehl, Aimee Thurner, Jonathan Webster

**Not in attendance:** Erica Daniels, Regina Dunkin, Jeff Vohs

**Staff:** Celestino Ruffini, Pamela Garland-Gjestson

**Guests:** None

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:04 a.m.
2. Quorum was established.
3. Consent Agenda  
A motion to approve the December 1, 2021 meeting minutes was made by Frisbee and seconded by Luther. Motion passed unanimously.

Waite encouraged everyone to speak their mind and ask questions during the meeting.

4. New Business
  - a. Approval of Roy Ward as lodging representative to the board of directors

Waite brought forward Ward's application that was reviewed and recommended by the executive committee and is now looking for full approval from the board. Ward is the general manager at Home2Suites in Beloit.

A motion to approve Roy Ward as a Visit Beloit, Inc. board member as the lodging representative was made by Sitrick Joyce and seconded by Rehl. Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Approval of Jan Smith as tourism representative to the board of directors

Waite briefly went over Smith's application as reviewed by executive committee and brought forward to the full board for approval. She is the general manager of the Fairfield Inn & Suites in Beloit.

A motion to approve Jan Smith as a Visit Beloit, Inc. board member as the tourism representative was made by Sitrick Joyce and seconded by Diduch. Motion passed unanimously.

c. Nominations for board vice chair and secretary

Ruffini confirmed there were no current nominations on the floor via email. Ruffini suggested waiting to ask the new board members during their onboarding if either of them is interested in an officer position. One more request will be sent out to the full board after speaking with the new board members. The current executive committee may need to make some nominations. Waite suggested moving the action item to the March agenda.

Ruffini added that duties for secretary includes monthly executive meetings and review of minutes from the meetings that Pam Garland-Gjestson prepares. The executive committee acts as an additional layer of governance and sounding board for Ruffini. The only additional commitment for the vice chair officer is the monthly executive committee meeting.

d. Update on the grant applications for the Visit Beloit office complex

Ruffini spoke on the current grant applications he's been working on with the grant writer. Visit Beloit submitted a Tourism Capital Grant for approximately \$5.1 million to the state. We found out recently that a decision will be coming shortly after February 1. We are prepared to get a federal grant submitted once we find out about the state grant.

e. Update regarding partnership with the village of Clinton

Ruffini noted that the Village of Clinton recently joined the GBEDC. Ruffini met with the village administrator and had a very positive meeting about expanding Visit Beloit's service to their municipality. Ruffini presented a few ideas including a services agreement, as well as the adoption of a room tax ordinance. There is not a hard timeline, but they are very interested in forming a partnership with Visit Beloit. Hall asked if there is any lodging there and Ruffini said none now, but there is potential for development along the interstate.

f. Update regarding lodging data

Ruffini reviewed the draft year end numbers for 2021. While almost all data points are up, we still have a way to go to see our occupancy rates back to pre-pandemic levels. Ultimately, we ended the year with a string of consecutive months with record revenues. Due to Ruffini's conservative budgeting in 2021, room tax revenue received will be about \$200,000 more than budgeted. We've continued to see similar numbers so far this year and hope things will continue this positive track.

- g. Ruffini asked the board to complete the board self-assessment, conflict of interest disclosure, confidentiality statement, as well as the board bios survey. All documents and questions can be sent to Pam.

5. Continuing Education (Ruffini)

The board discussed the Destinations International Shared Value workbook, chapters 4-8.

Ruffini reminded the board that the review of this workbook is to prepare for the strategic plan that will happen later this year and that these values are at the code of the decisions we make as an organization.

Turner asked about the conference center research and if our destination will ever be able to host larger meetings. The conference center study was done by Visit Beloit in 2018. Ruffini reminded the board that Visit Beloit commissioned a study to look for the need for a conference center within city center, but until we know about Ho-Chunk's final project, it's hard to move another project forward. Turner would like to revisit that conversation. Luther added that we should have some definitive answers soon from the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Jackson asked how long the Quality-of-Life survey will be open and Turner believes it will be open two weeks. It was supposed to go out Monday but is waiting on confirmation.

6. Informational updates

a. Board Chair

Waite explained that the executive committee completed Ruffini's annual performance review by scoring and commenting on about 13 points, in addition to Ruffini self-scoring. Scores are put together for a group score. Ruffini did very well, and the great thing is that all board members are in sync with their scores and comments. Ruffini tends to score himself a bit lower, but the executive committee is looking forward to another great year.

b. CEO

Ruffini called out two events that happened in January that have started the year on the right foot for the organization. Visit Beloit hosted the second annual American Cornhole Organization Beloit Major which sold out at 128 attendees at the Eclipse Event Center but would love a place double that size. We also hosted the inaugural Broadcast Symposium and Dream Job Competition. The event was a dream idea of Matt Bosen, Director of Sales and Servicing. It was hosted at ABC Supply Stadium and had 55 attendees, mostly college students that competed for a job with the Beloit Sky Carp. Larry Larson won the competition and was hired for the play-by-play broadcaster for the Sky Carp. Regional and national broadcasters were presenters including two Beloit natives and Beloit College graduate Joe Davis, the voice of the L.A. Dodgers.

c. Board of Directors

None

7. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 a.m.