

**BEREA TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES  
BUSINESS MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 5:00PM**

**City Annex Building  
304 Chestnut St, Berea, KY 40403**

Meeting called to order at 5:11PM, Will Gover, Commission Chair, presiding  
Roll call of attendance; all commissioners present

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**

- David Gregory
- Todd Holbrook
- Shelley Wolfe
- Will Gover
- Donna Brewer
- Jim Davis
- Laura Carpenter

**SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT**

- Nancy Conley
- Robert Elam
- Laura Poulette
- Hailey Howard
- Emily Reynolds

**GUESTS PRESENT**

- Mayor Bruce Fraley
- Shawn Sandlin
- Kiana Mahjub
- Lindsey Starns
- Jamie Morris

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- Jim Davis moved to approve the agenda. Laura Carpenter seconded this motion.

- Agenda passed unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF MINTUES**

- Shelley Wolfe moved to approve December 10, 2025, minutes. David Gregory seconded this motion.
- Approval of December 10, 2025, minutes passed unanimously.

### **SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS – Berea Dolphins & B.A.C.**

#### **BEREA DOLPHINS – Jamie Morris & Lindsey Starns**

Jamie Morris, Berea Dolphins board member, and Lindsey Starns, Berea Dolphins Board President, requested a sponsorship to assist with operating costs of the non-profit organization. Morris explained the Berea Dolphins program services community members ages 5-18 and has operated for 57 years. She further explained the Bluegrass Swim Conference, which the Berea Dolphins is a member, hosts over 500 swimmers from central Kentucky.

Morris stated the Dolphins hosts 3 regular swim meets that each bring in hundreds of people into our town. The Berea City pool is a preferred swim meet location due to our pool's grass space and parking. She continued to say it costs approximately \$18,000 to operate each swim season and to offer some scholarships. Some of this funding comes from swimmers (approx. 105 swimmers, charged \$125.00 each = approx.. \$13,000) while the rest comes from fundraising and sponsorships.

Jim Davis asked if the Berea Dolphins had a specific amount they were requesting. Morris explained they were not requesting a specific amount but needed the remaining balance after swimmer fees so the commission could decide how much to sponsor.

Todd Holbrook requested a more detailed breakdown of cost and if there was a possibility to host more than 3 swim meets a season. Morris said she could provide the commissioners with a detailed budget that was made in January and the Dolphins host a few smaller "tri meets" outside of regular season. Morris further explained that the Dolphins would like to host the conference meet which would bring in more people than a regular season meet.

David Gregory asked what kind of advertising the Berea Dolphins do, if any. Morris explained they utilize social media and word of mouth, but do not invest much in

advertising as it can be expensive and they have limited funds. The team and parents wear T-shirts to advertise the sponsors as well as sell the T-shirts.

Will Gover, Chair, asked Nancy Conley, Tourism Director, if she had the sponsorship amount from the previous year. Conley did not have the information available with her.

Laura Carpenter asked if the pool use was rented by the Dolphins or donated by the City. Morris stated the pool usage and lifeguards are donated by the city.

Shelley Wolfe asked if the scholarships (senior and hardship scholarships) were a fixed amount. Morris explained that the scholarship program is something they started in the last few years, and she explained the scholarship application process. She further explained the previous year they did 3 hardship scholarships, which was the \$125.00 swimmers' registration fees and 2 senior scholarships but did not specify this amount. After Shelley asked once more what the fixed amounts were, Morris said the senior scholarships are \$250.00 each.

Jim Davis asked if any families stay overnight when attending a Berea Dolphin Swim meet or conference meet. Morris said that could possibly be true as swim meet warm-ups begin at 7:00 am, so she would imagine some families would stay the night before a meet. She then stated she knows for sure that families dine locally while here, even if they do not stay overnight.

Will Gover, Chair, wanted confirmation that no specific amount was being requested. Morris confirmed this but shared her hope of keeping a relationship with Berea Tourism for sponsorships.

After a slight discussion with commissioners, Will Gover suggested they table the sponsorship discussion until the Commission meeting so they could discuss it in more detail with the detailed expense report from the Dolphins. David Gregory motioned to table the discussion. Jim Davis seconded. Passed unanimously.

#### BEREA ARTS COUNCIL – Kiana Mahjub, BAC Executive Director

Mahjub explained the BAC's mission which is to sustain the arts in Berea and that the BAC has been in operation for 40 years and has benefited Berea. She stated that since 2026 is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BAC, they would like to bring back the chili night out supper and concert night as this event has been gone for 25 years. She further explained that these types of events are essential to the funding and operation of the BAC as funding is more

competitive and costs of goods are up. Mahjub reiterated the importance of the BAC to the culture of Berea and that providing free entertainment for locals and tourists alike is important and sponsorship is essential. Mahjub stated, if granted, the sponsorship would be used to fund the “Chili Night Out.” A chili night out will offer 200 tickets, and Mahjub expects the event to sell out. This event is hosted at Churchill Weavers and will be held on the evening of February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

Mahjub stated the BAC brings in a lot of Northern Kentuckians but also gets travelers from Chicago and other large cities, as well.

Gregory requested a revenue and expenditure sheet which Mahjub said she would submit. Gover asked if the BAC was requesting an exact amount. Mahjub stated it was up to the commissioners but would appreciate the highest level of sponsorship.

Gover asked for a motion to vote on an amount. Brewer made the motion to provide \$500.00. Wolfe seconded. Passed unanimously.

#### **FY 2026 BUDGET AMENDMENT OVERSIGHT**

- Nancy Conley brought attention to line item “54090 – other professional services” and stated the spending was at \$440.00 for drug and alcohol screenings for employees but requests for it to be amended to \$620.00.
- Gover motioned for the amendment of \$620.00 be made to the 2026 budget. Gregory seconded. Passed unanimously.

#### **DIRECTOR’S REPORT – NANCY CONLEY**

- Cynthia Main, Sunhouse Crafts, donated hundreds of tulip bulbs to tourism and helped plant them around town.
- Upward Pro Lighting completed taking Christmas decorations down.
- Two Berea College students, Victor and Dallas, assisted Laura Poulette in organizing Christmas decorations after tourism bought new storage totes.
- Tourism will have 2 new Berea College students. One student will work under our media manager, while the other will work at the tourism reception desk.
- Fencing replacement/repair in the Carloftis garden by the welcome center, and next to the Chestnut Street Pavillion, has been completed by Eades Fencing.
- Water heater was replaced in the welcome center.
- Nancy Conley and Hailey Howard completed training with our marketing agency and on the state tourism website to help learn how to make proper updates on both websites.

#### **GROUP TOUR REPORT – EMILY REYNOLDS**

- 2025 had 9 less groups than 2024 but projected to see improvement in 2026.

- No exact number on 2026 buses yet as Emily is still working with some groups to book more dates.
- Booking tours with new companies due to conferences but won't see those until 2027 and beyond.

#### **PROGRAM MANAGER REPORT – LAURA POULETTE**

- LearnShops will start at the same time as the Craft Festival and continue for the next 9 days. July 10<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026.
- Based on recommendations of the Commission, the LearnShop class list was curated to offer classes that have done well in the past and we know will create a lot of interest.
- Instructor invites have been sent.
- The LearnShops have been rebranded to simply “The Berea LearnShops” and updated the logo.

#### **MEDIA MANAGER REPORT – HAILEY HOWARD**

- Howard has been building connections with our community.
- Hoping to start a “Coffee Week,” similar to Lexington’s “Burger Week.” This event has received a few submissions already.
- Working with Fox56 to expand Berea’s reach to other locations such as Chattanooga, TN, Asheville, NC and other towns that may have interest in the crafts and outdoors we have to offer.
- Updating the Berea brochure.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- N/A

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

- Carpenter loves the partnership of Tourism and Berea College students as it can provide many benefits for the town and college’s relationship as well as our community’s future. Carpenter also praised the Holiday decorations.
- Gover praised the Holiday decorations.
- Davis praised the Holiday decorations and hopes to grow next year’s display. He also thought having the LearnShops and Craft Festival at the same time would be a wonderful idea.
- Wolfe praised the Holiday decorations and the Holiday parade stating it was the largest it has ever been.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- Carpenter motioned to adjourn. Davis seconded. None opposed.