Convention & Visitors Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes 02/25/2026
In-Person Meeting | SpringHill Suites (3921 S. MacArthur Boulevard)

**I. Meeting called to order by Director Scott Dahl at 8:03am.**

II. Attendance: C.J. Metcalf, Jacob Blair, Betsy Dollar, Malinda Montz, Darin Dame, Scott Dahl, Jodi Davis, and Jay Kitterman. SCVB Director Scott Dahl presided over the meeting in the absence of Chairwoman Jean Bruner-Jachino.

**III. Motion to approve meeting minutes from 12/03/2025 by C.J. Metcalf, seconded by Jay Kitterman. All ayes, no discussion.**

IV. Chair Report: Chairwoman Bruner-Jachino absent, Scott gave a Director's Report instead. He started by mentioning that all eight ordinances went through City Council the night prior (2/24). All were related to the Route 66 event funding decisions the board had submitted to the Council after December's meeting. These ordinances included the Old Fashion event.

V. Route 66 Events Calendar Recap: Scott shared the blue Route 66 event listing documented created by the SCVB marketing staff. Scott mentioned that this document will continue to be updated. The Old Fashion event is not currently on this list, as it will only be added when the SAA's funding for the event has been finalized.

Related, Scott mentioned that there will be many events over the Memorial Day weekend. Sarah Adams, Edwards Place curator, wants to do the Old Fashion event on the Monday of that weekend. Sarah made a logo for the event and will also be using the Edwards Place logo. Betsy said she has been unable to connect with the Bourbon Journey businesses. Scott said that he would help her connect with them.

Scott also mentioned the November 11, 2026, Route 66 centennial event at Motorheads. Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byways is the main organizer. Scott would like board members to attend.

Lastly, Scott let the group know that the July 4th fireworks ordinance went through City Council. The SCVB is encouraging partners to put on their own July 4th events so there are activations throughout the city, especially downtown. The SCVB staff are very excited for a big year celebrating Route 66. If you are also excited about the Mother Road turning 100, then please stop by the Visitors Center to pick up a centennial patch.

VI. FY27 Grants Cycle: The FY2027 budget was approved, including money for local tourism grants and Route 66 events. The amount of $35,000 was approved for local tourism grants. Scott wants to start the enrollment period in March so the money can get allotted to groups sooner than last year. As Jacob is new, Scott briefly explained the Local Tourism Grant program to the group. Betsy recommended an enrollment/application period of 30 to 45 days. Group agreed. Scott proposed an

application due date of April 13th so the group can vote on applications at the April board meeting. Darin Dame made a motion to open the enrollment on March 1st and close on April 13th. Jay Kitterman seconded the motion. All ayes, no discussion.

VII. Old Business: Jay asked about the recent budget process. Scott mentioned that the department had no pushback on their FY2027 budget.

Scott mentioned that the Wyndham Hotel continues to be under litigation, but he wanted to emphasize that the city still has 3500 rooms. He added that the downtown still needs more hotel space for conventions. The group was encouraged to hear that occupancy was up 13,000 more room nights than 2024. With fewer options downtown, the hotels on the periphery have received a boost.

Darin asked about attendance numbers for downtown historic sites, which Scott noted have plateaued. Darin brought up the need for more lunch spots downtown to make the area more appealing for visitors.

VIII. New Business: For new business, Scott updated the group on several SCVB projects and upcoming events. He first explained the History Across the Tracks project, set to connect visitors to interpreted Black history spots in town. The city is waiting to hear from site owners regarding development plans. Scott also mentioned the pause in funding for the 1908 Race Riot park, which might affect the momentum of other Black history initiatives. Betsy recommended still putting History Across the Tracks sites on a map to at least note them there, even if the sites haven't been developed. Scott shared his thoughts about the area needing to amplify its connected to Obama and his time in Springfield, particularly with his foundation's museum opening in Chicago soon.

Scott shared about 30 Route 66 and America 250 streetlamp banners going up downtown. Route 66 bus benches have also gone up, featuring a "Heart of Illinois Route 66" theme. The SCVB developed this theme internally.

Scott invited the group to the March 27th Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for The Pharmacy's David Schwartz photography exhibit opening. The exhibit is going up in conjunction with the Bob Waldmire exhibit—meaning that there will be two fine art exhibits at The Pharmacy that focus on Route 66 this year. The Visitor Guide cover will also be released that day, although Scott showed it to the board during the meeting. Related, Darin asked about Visitor Guide distribution numbers.

Conversation shifted to the Scheels Sports Park. Scott shared that the SCVB's Scheels Sports Park container will be installed shortly, as an agreement has been reached. This box will serve as an onsite visitor center for competition attendees and will only be

staffed for certain events. Scott said that this is a soft opening year for the Sports Park while the grounds and buildings are still being finished.

IX. **Adjournment: Scott moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:01am. C.J. Metcalf made the motion, seconded by Betsy Dollar.**