Convention & Visitors Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes 03/25/2026
In-Person Meeting | SpringHill Suites (3921 S. MacArthur Boulevard)

I. Meeting called to order by Chairwoman Jean Bruner-Jachino at 8:01am.

II. Attendance: Jean Bruner-Jachino, Karen Conn, Mike Murphy, Jay Kitterman, C.J. Metcalf, Jacob Blair, Brandon Doherty (pending approval), Darin Dame, Betsy Dollar, Jodi Davis, Scott Dahl

III. Motion to approve meeting minutes from 2/25/2026 by Mike Murphy, seconded by Jay Kitterman. All ayes, no discussion.

IV. Chair Report: Before giving her report, Jean had the group introduce themselves to Brandon Doherty, a prospective board member. She began with recounting the success of the recent St. Patrick's Day parade, which was the year's first Route 66 co-branded event. The parade was very well attended. Jean mentioned the Rumble Around the Lake float having a Route 66 logo, too.

V. Route 66 Events Funding Initial Discussion: The group has already given FY26 money to co-branded events for this calendar year, but there is now $35,000 to disperse from the FY27 budget. Scott mentioned the national kickoff event in Springfield, Missouri, on April 30th. He asked the group whether we should try to do a kickoff event here. The Illinois Office of Tourism is already doing something at the Joliet prison site. Scott wondered, "Do we support the state, or do something here? Or both?" Mike followed with a question about whether there's a benefit to Scott being in Joliet for that event. Scott mentioned that it would be more of a showing of support for statewide efforts. In response, Mike reasoned that it would be better for Scott to attend the state event than to try to do something here in less than a month. Karen agreed. Scott mentioned that he might be asked by Mayor Buscher to make sure there's something happening here for the centennial kickoff. Karen and Darin agreed that we should try to have a strong presence at the Joliet event. Betsy suggested that we use April 30th as a marketing tactic in Joliet to let them know where we're doing in Springfield.

Scott suggested that the board supports the 11/11/2026 event in Springfield, as the state is also supporting the event. It would also show support for the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

Jean thought the CVAB needed to do cobranding in Joliet. She asked how many people there should be in Joliet. Scott thinks Springfield should show up in force. Darin wondered if there was an agenda for the Joliet event. Scott does not currently have one. The group then suggested that some of the Route 66 money should go towards transportation to get a large contingent of people to go up to Joliet. Scott also suggested using money to cover some hotel room expenses. Mike repeated his sentiment that Springfield should have a strong presence in Joliet. "We're here with you at the start. Come see us at the end." Jean suggested that the group votes on giving money to the

Joliet trip. The group is interested in taking a mid-sized bus to Joliet. Jean asked for a motion on transportation to Joliet. Mike made a motion to support the IOT's Route 66 centennial event, allocating up to $10,000 to cover transportation and other expenses for board members, staff, and community members to travel to Joliet on April 30th. Karen seconded. All ayes, no further discussion. Darin offered to see if SHLA could help cover accommodation expenses. Scott said they would need to figure out who's attending.

VI. Old Business: Scott mentioned several previously discussed events to the group. The Cozy Dog eating competition—in conjunction with the Mother Road Festival—has been announced for Saturday, September 26, at 1pm. Scott thinks this will draw a new crowd. Reisch Charities is sponsoring the event. There will be a guest appearance by a previous eating competition champion.

The Old Fashion event was approved by City Council, with the Springfield Art Association organizing the program. The date is set for Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th.

The Chamber of Commerce arranged for the July 4th fireworks. Scott explained that partners around downtown are being encouraged to have activations that day leading up to the fireworks show. The SCVB will generate a cohesive list of events for that day.

Lastly, Scott mentioned that The Great Race will have a display at the June 18th Levitt AMP concert.

VII. New Business: The group began by reviewing the three Local Tourism Grant applications that have come in so far—Artists in the Park, Rolling Laughs, and the Corvette Car Club Show. This grant program features a total sum of $35,000 to be dispersed for community-focused and destination events. Scott anticipates a few more applications. Board members will receive digital copies of the applications, so they have time to review and grade events against the rubric before the next meeting. While the next scheduled meeting was meant to be April 22nd, Scott asked if the group would be able to do April 15th instead so that they could review right after the grant program cut-off date two days prior.

Darin asked if the recipients will be required to provide receipts. Scott said they would not be required to turn in receipts, but a summary of the event for City Council will be required.

Mike was impressed with the Artists in the Park program last year. He thinks we need to get out the word about that event, and that we need to keep encouraging this type of offering. He also shared that food trucks are a great feature for events.

The group also discussed upcoming events, including the David Schwartz photo exhibit opening at The Pharmacy on Friday at 3pm. Scott invited the board to come see this new Route 66 photography exhibit, which will be up for the rest of the year alongside the Bob Waldmire art exhibit. The new Visitor Guide cover will also be revealed at the exhibit opening.

Members explained upcoming events at their respective jobs. Jean mentioned working on a co-branded event with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Brandon shared that over eighty teams were coming to the Scheels Sports Park this weekend, with a projected attendance of 7,000 people. Jacob added that the Easter Bunny was at White Oaks Mall currently, and that a 7 Brew Coffee shop is going in at the Denny's corner. Jay mentioned that LLCC will be getting a new president soon. Mike shared that the Chamber of Commerce will have a new person focusing on development starting on staff. Karen mentioned the DSI "Shop Hop" event this coming weekend, as well as the DSI annual dinner. Mike commended Karen and Leah Wilson with the Kidzeum for their My Heart's Downtown campaign.

The group confirmed that they will meet on April 15th.

VIII. **Adjournment: Jean moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:59am. Karen Conn made the motion, seconded by Jay Kitterman.**