

CITY OF LEBANON
TOURISM & MARKETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 15TH, 2025

BE IT REMEMBERED that the Tourism & Marketing Advisory Committee of the City of Lebanon, Missouri, met on July 15th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m., in the Mother Road Meeting Room at the Cowan Civic Center located at 500 East Elm Street.

ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF A QUARUM

Upon roll call, the following members were present: Rod Reid, Liz Mitchko, Randy Palilla, Michelle Cochran, and Jim Rogers.

A quorum was declared.

Staff members and others in attendance: Tourism Director Rebecca Rupard, Promotions Event Coordinator Stashia Porter, Downtown Lebanon Director Sarah Angst, and Lebanon City Administrator, Troy Schulte.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Liz Mitchko made a motion to approve the April 29th, 2025, meeting minutes. Michelle Cochran seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSIONS OF AGENDA ITEMS:

Website Stats/ Social Media Stats-

Tourism Director Rupard provided an update regarding the City's advertising reach and growth. She reported that a promotional swag bag was sent to Prague to represent Lebanon. She also noted that she is currently working with models on new tourism photography, a project made possible through grant funding.

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING:

Route 66 Centennial Update-

Director Rupard reported that the Grand Opening of the Route 66 Centennial will be held in Springfield, Missouri, from April 30–May 1, 2026. The event will receive national television coverage and is projected to be a multi-million-dollar celebration. She emphasized the need to expand advertising in anticipation of 2026. She will be representing Lebanon at this year's Springfield event.

Lebanon's Boswell Park will serve as one of the tour stops. Data from Placer.ai estimated that approximately 3,000 people attended the 2025 Route 66 Festival. Rupard further noted that the 2026 Route 66 Festival concert will be held on Friday evening rather than Saturday, the day of the festival. The committee feels this will increase the number of attendees.

Committee Member Reid provided an update on federal Route 66 initiatives. He reported that Senator Schmitt and Congressmen Graves, Smith, and Burlison are supporting a U.S. postage stamp series, with one stamp representing each state along Route 66. He also shared that the National Auto Museum will be driving Route 66 next year and will spend the night in Lebanon en route from Chicago to the Detroit Auto Show.

America 250

Director Rupard discussed the progress of the America 250 planning committee. Scheduled events include:

- A free concert at the Cowan Civic Center on April 25, 2026.
- A community picnic in Downtown Lebanon on July 3, 2026.
- A public fireworks show at the Lebanon Airport on July 4, 2026.

Upcoming Events-

Director Rupard reported that the City of Lebanon is beginning a rebranding initiative, which will include new colors and logos for all departments. The process is expected to take approximately six to seven months.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Committee members provided updates on their respective industries and businesses:

Michelle Cochran and Randy Palilla reported that Elm Street Eatery is experiencing record business, and bookings at The Manor are increasing for the upcoming year.

Rod Reid shared details regarding the Case Knife Celebration on September 6, 2025. A Congressional Medal of Honor recipient will be interviewed during the event, which will also feature *This Country Life* podcast. Shepherd Hills sales have increased by 4–5% this year, with online sales through Amazon contributing significantly. Reid also emphasized the importance of pursuing a use tax on online purchases. Administrator Schulte confirmed that this measure can be placed on a ballot at any time.

Liz Mitchko reported that this year marks the 16th anniversary of Fiber U. She will be recognized at the Missouri Botanical Gardens in October as part of the “Best of Missouri” awards. With over 200 students registered from 14 states, the event continues to grow. Mitchko has also secured multi-year event contracts with the City of Lebanon for the Cowan Civic Center. She further noted that the I-44 Speedway will host the nation’s largest race purse on August 16, 2025, featuring baby grand cars.

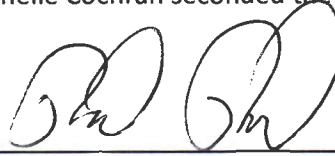
Sarah Angst provided an update on the use of Placer.ai for Downtown Lebanon analytics.

Jim Rogers reported that Bennett Spring State Park sold more than 70,000 trout tags last year. To date, over 62,000 tags have been sold in 2025, though attendance is down approximately 30,000 visitors due to weather. He noted that 5,500 fish are being stocked weekly and announced the opening of a new splash pad and playground. The new hatchery is projected to open on March 1, 2026.

Troy Schulte updated the Committee on the City’s hotel market study. He stated that new hotel developments could help address business-class needs. He also reported that the Munger Moss sign restoration project remains under consideration, with plans for the sign to eventually become City-owned as a historic landmark. Additionally, Robert Headley and Steve Plaster will be donating signs to the City.

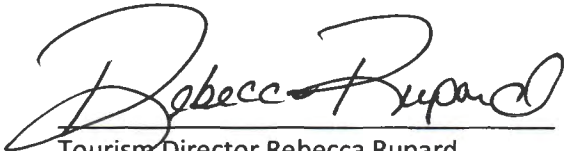
ADJOURNMENT

Liz Mitchko made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Michelle Cochran seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.



Chairman Rod Reid

ATTEST:



Tourism Director Rebecca Rupard

Minutes Approved: 11/18/25