

**COLUMBIA COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE (CCTC)**

Tourism is a critical component of the economy and economic development in Columbia County. It affects employment, revenue for the County and the livelihood of many residents.

The tourism industry has the potential for significant growth. The Columbia County Board of Supervisors created an independent tourism committee to support the tourism industry, originally promoted by the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC).

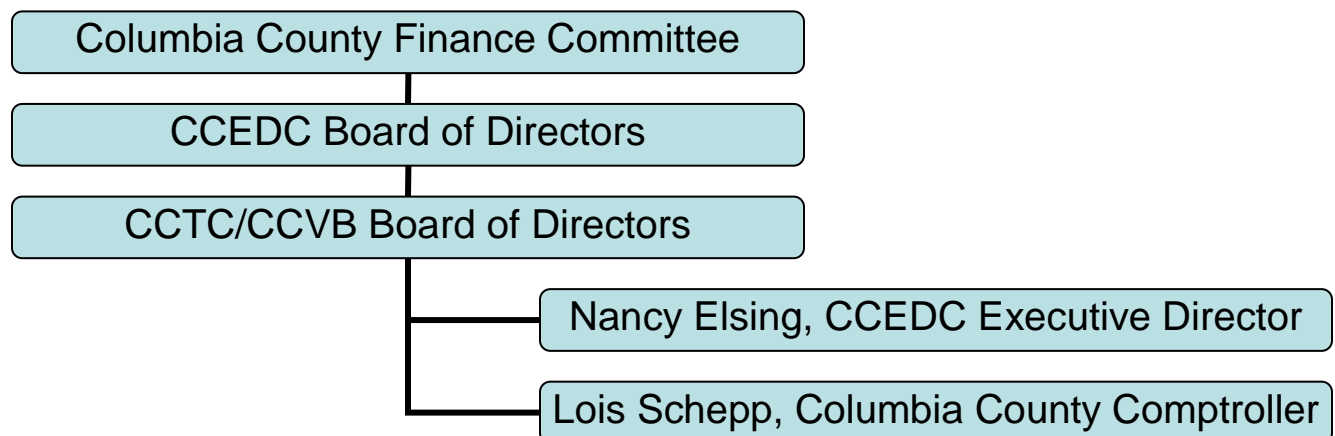
The Columbia County Tourism Committee (CCTC) is responsible for the coordination and promotion of tourism within Columbia County. Tourism Committee Members may be from an organization, group, community, or tourism-oriented businesses, or any individuals with an interest in tourism from Columbia County.

A Columbia County Visitor’s Bureau (CCVB) has also been formed, with the same committee members that serve on the CCTC. The move to create the CCVB was suggested in the Columbia County Tourism Diversification Plan. This Plan was created with funds from a Department of Tourism grant with assistance from Columbia County Comptroller Lois Schepp.

Both the CCTC and the CCVB have a close working relationship with CCEDC, who is their fiscal agent. Both develop plans for the advancement of tourism within Columbia County.

Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) has responsibility to oversee the operation of CCTC. The CCEDC Executive Board must approve of any expenditure of funds budgeted by the Columbia County Board of Supervisors.

**Organizational Chart**



## Statistical Performance

In this budget year, the CCTC/CCVB moved ahead to further the goal of a sustainable tourism industry in Columbia County. The Tourism industry provides sales tax to the county and this amount is growing each year.

- Held twelve (12) meetings of CCTC/CCVB in 2017
- CCTC/CCVB Executive Board Members Robert Becker and Stan Stofflet attended the 2017 Governor's Conference on Tourism. Both provide many volunteer hours for this effort.
- Advertised in Our Wisconsin Magazine for summer June/July issue. This publication is a paid subscription with a distribution list of over 100,000 subscribers.
- Learned about the Barn Quilt Tour of half of Columbia County with organizer Margo Holzman
- Developed a new CCVB 10-page website with Portage Daily Register through their company Amplified Digital. Pages reflect community listings, places to stay, local foods, shopping, things to experience, maps along with photographs to attract tourists to our county.
- The Tourism Committee created a google calendar to use on the new website. Communities in the county can now list their own events on the website whenever they want. Tourists can now see in real time what is happening in our community, so they can plan for their trips accordingly. It was suggested that one person be the administrator for the calendar and each community have one individual that can add their own events to the calendar so that we can keep it updated every year. This calendar can also be used at the end for the year to export all the events needed for the Travel Planner.
- Attended WI State Fair to work jointly in the WI Dept of Tourism booth on August 3 – distributed information on Columbia County
- Assisted Capital Newspapers in delivering 60,000 Columbia County Travel Planners
- Held the 2017 CCTC/CCVB Awards Banquet on March 23, 2017 at Dinos in Portage:

### **2017 WINNERS WERE**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| BUSINESS AWARD:          | Mercantile and Artisan Foodie                          |
| DINING AWARD:            | Mullin's Short Stop                                    |
| EVENT AWARD:             | Portage Wine Walk                                      |
| HERO AWARD:              | Humane Society   |
| LODGING AWARD:           | Pride of America                                       |
| ORGANIZATION AWARD:      | Columbus Historic Landmark and Preservation Commission |
| VOLUNTEER AWARD:         | Mike Keller  |
| NATURAL EDUCATION AWARD: | MacKenzie Environmental Center                         |

- Advertisement campaign: Online digital summer campaign (May-August) in the Chicago markets promoting activities to do in the county. Three different marketing campaigns were launched over this period.
- Created a new 2017 Columbia County Map and helped with distribution of the piece along with the Portage Daily Register.

- Continued to distribute the 2017 Columbia County Bicycle Loop Maps. Worked on new updates to the map during the year to prepare for new printing in 2018. Update map is included on new website.
- Attended meetings consisting of members from Columbia, Sauk and Dodge Counties involved in Tourism, Economic Development, Chambers, etc. to promote regional tourism.
- Attend meetings for the Columbia County Silent Sports Trails Committee to assist with getting bike routes throughout Columbia County.
  - Chair Stan Stofflet is working with Rio Library and others to provide a repair station for cyclists on-the-go
- Attended many trade shows, cars shows, community events, etc. promoting Columbia County tourism.
- Travel entire Amish Community to make sure map in Tourism Travel Planner and Columbia County Map are current and accurate.
- Responsible for collecting and updating information on events and pages put into the Tourism Travel Planner each year. Many, many, many volunteer hours were utilized. Proofs were then reviewed before going to printers. Marianne Hanson, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce's Executive Director, held a Workshop to assist those with questions on how to add their community's events to the new Web Calendar.
- Promoted events on Facebook page
- Promoted local tourism with a booth at the Columbia County Fair July 26 - 30.
- Further marketing development of Farmer's Markets in Columbia County.
- Worked jointly with Dodge County and Sauk County to help promote tourism.
- Member of the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism to help promote Columbia County.

### **According to Wisconsin Department of Tourism –**

Tourism activity in the state was up nearly \$1 billion, from \$18.5 billion in 2014 to \$19.3 billion in 2015 according to research conducted by Tourism Economics and Longwoods International. This 4.4% growth was driven by increases in spending on lodging, lower gas prices and refined marketing strategies.

- The past five years have been outstanding for Wisconsin's tourism industry. Since 2010, the tourism economy is up by \$4.5 billion, a 30% increase.
- With continued economic growth and declining gas prices, visitor volumes topped 105.2 million visits, a growth of nearly 3 million from the previous year. The five year increase in visitor volumes is 12.7 million from 92.5 million in 2010.
- Direct visitor spending was \$11.9 billion last year, up 4.4% from \$11.4 billion in 2014, and up 32% from \$9 billion in 2010.
- Tourism supported 190,717 jobs in Wisconsin's labor market in 2015. Since 2010, tourism activity in the state added 18,717 jobs to the economy, an 11% increase in employment opportunities for Wisconsin residents.
- Personal income from jobs supported by tourism totaled \$5.1 billion, up nearly 5% from 2014.
- Visitors generated \$1.5 billion in state and local revenue. Wisconsin taxpayers would need to pay \$640 per household in order to maintain current government services.
- Tourism direct spending in Columbia County was up \$10.5 million, or 9.11% increase in 2015 over 2014, at \$126 million

- Tourism total business sales in Columbia County was up \$13 million, or 7.64% increase in 2015 over 2014, at \$182.6 million

## **Summary**

In 2017, the committee achieved many goals to promote a strong, vibrant and growing tourism industry. The committee continues to grow and utilizes the Columbia County Tourism Diversification Plan for direction. In the next budget year, the plan is to continue moving ahead to further the goal of a sustainable tourism industry in Columbia County bringing more sales tax to Columbia County.

### **Submitted by:**

#### **Columbia County Tourism Executive Board**

**President - Bob Becker**  
**First Vice President - Stan Stofflet**  
**Second Vice President - David Schneider**  
**Secretary - Marianne Hanson**  
**Treasurer - Roxann Brue**  
**At Large Member - Bob O'Brion**  
**At Large Member - Jan Clingman**

**Nancy Elsing, Executive Director**  
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**Telephone: 608-742-6161**  
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**Web site: [www.TravelColumbiaCounty.net](http://www.TravelColumbiaCounty.net)**

### **Reviewed/Approved by:**

- 02/21/18 - Columbia County Tourism Committee/Visitor's Bureau
- 02/21/18 - Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) Executive Committee
- 03/14/18 - CCEDC Board of Director's
- 03/15/18 - Columbia County Finance Committee
- 03/1/18 - Copy of the Annual Report submitted to Columbia County Comptroller

APPROVED:

Robert Becker, CCTC/CCVB President

Andy Ross, CCEDC President