

Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce
Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 8:30 am
161 Building, Columbus, WI
Google meet: meet.google.com/qhb-mnaf-pvt
Join by phone (US) +1 727-873-0110 PIN:808006072

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am by President, Cheryl Besaw. Members present: David Bennett, Suzanne Walcott, Barbara Oelke, Nick Sharrow, Tommy Kempfer, and Patti Walker. Kara Rake, Libby Gilbertson, Ruth Hermanson, and Vicki Buss were also present.

Motion by Patti Walker, second by Nick Sharrow to approve the agenda with February date correction. Motion carried.

Motion by David Bennet, second by Patti Walker to approve the January minutes. Motion carried. Need to locate and approve the minutes of the November meeting.

Citizen Comments:

Rith Hermanson and Libby Gilbertson were here to discuss the future of the Summer Concert Series and the future of the program. Short of help and want to see the program continue. Mark Croft works with agent to obtain talent; banners are able to be reused. They have obtained Tourism grants and have things set up but need sponsors and help. They will have a meeting later in February and let us know their decisions. Their focus is for money received to go to the further restoration of the Rest Haven.

David Bennett updated us on the Tourism entity designation of the Chamber by the City's Tourism.

- The City of Columbus would be looking to designate a local non-profit, preferably the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, in order to fulfill State Statute and to enable more funding opportunities for tourism. This would involve the City allocating some room tax funds to the Chamber, in which 100% of the funds would be used for tourism promotion and activities and/or to help fund staff that would be dedicated to tourism efforts. City staff will bring this up to the Tourism Commission and work out details from the City's side and look to see if the Chamber would be willing to accept the designation. The goal would be to designate in 2026, then budget accordingly in 2027. If designated, the Chamber would have to report to the City annually for accountability.

Treasurer's Report: Forty memberships are on file for 2026. Still waiting for the refund from the imprinting company, Cheryl will contact again.

Digital Report: Cheryl Besaw reports that we have 2148 followers, which continues to increase. Questions have been raised about how to place things on the Event Calendar. They are referred to the Chamber website.

Old Business:

Membership tags need to be delivered for previous years. 2026 plaques are a problem to mail and are expensive. Patti is looking into window clinging signs.

Need to get the Chamber Handbooks printed. Suzanne Walcott volunteered to take care of this.

Left over wine from the wine walk will be aged in the climate control environment at Wyverns Trove.

Chamber needs to educate our members on Connects on the website. Perhaps an article or hold an instruction meeting.

New Business:

Motion by Patti Walker, seconded by Barbara Oelke, to nominate Suzanne Walcott as the chamber secretary. Motion carried.

Motion by Suzanne Walcott, seconded by Barbara Oelke, to send a donation of \$50 in honor of Doug Caldwell. Motion carried.

Kelda Roys for Governor has requested to come to a Chamber meet and greet. Suggested attending one of our Board Meetings.

Red Bud Days, City Wide Garage Sale and the Oddfellows Food Truck will be held May 7th – 9th. Plans are underway. Kara Rake will take care of the advertising.

May 13, 2026 @ 6:00 pm is the awards ceremony for presentation of the Elaine Baerwald Scholarship, given to a graduation senior who will be pursuing a Business Degree. Cheryl Besaw will present.

Columbia and Dodge Counties are preparing their Tourism guides. The Chamber has had an ad in the previous issues; do we want to place one in this year's issues? Motion by Patti Walker to place an ad in each guide, second by Cheryl Besaw. Motion carried.

The savings account money and how to handle it was tabled until the next meeting.

Further discussion on the date of the Wine Walk was tabled until the March meeting. We need to decide on the date and get the plans in motions.

Motion by Tommy Kempfer, seconded by Patti Walker to adjourn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Walcott, Secretary