

Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce
Tuesday, January 13, 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 Katie Nichols. Members present: Katie Nichols, Suzanne Walcott, Barbara Oelke, Nick Sharrow, Cheryl Besaw and Patti Walker. Kara Rake and Melanie Thompson were also present.

Motion by Katie Nichols, second by Cheryl Besaw to approve the agenda with date correction. Motion carried.

There were no minutes of the December meeting presented, we will approve at the next meeting.

Melanie Thompson from Associated Bank is Educator for Financial Wellness and there are many programs available to Businesses and individuals to help with financial problems or questions. She has provided Health and Wellness Fairs and talks to Non-Profit organizations. Interested in membership for the Columbus Branch and assisting the chamber.

Treasurer's Report: Membership renewals are coming in. We are able to make payments to Web Wisconsin for our website and updates. The money in savings is designated funds from an insurance claim of many years ago. Perhaps we should investigate changing its designation. There has been some confusion on individual and senior status online. Motion by Katie Nichols, seconded by Nick Sharrow to eliminate the senior category and rate and combine with individual membership. Motion carried. Patti will make the changes.

Mail has primarily been membership renewals.

Digital Report: Cheryl Besaw reports that we have 2141 followers, up 25 from last month. Phone questions regarding Amtrak can be referred to the chamber website. Please be aware of email scams which are circulating.

Old Business:

Website update: Web redirect has been completed. However, there is still a question about the gmail portion. This still needs to be resolved.

Membership tags needs to be completed for previous years. 2026 plaques needs to be ordered.

Wine walk cup order was cancelled, and refund needs to be issued. The company has been contacted several times; Katie Nichols will contact them again.

Motion by Katie Nichols, seconded by Nick Sharrow to nominate Cherly Besaw as President, motion carried. Tommy Kempfer has agreed to continue as Vice-President and Patti will continue for Treasurer for now. A Secretary is needed. Suggested that the position rotate responsibility each meeting.

Annual dinner is scheduled for Jan 26, 2026 at Magnolia's. Presently 21 are signed up.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. Newsletter will be sent after the Annual Meeting.

New Business:

Handbook is on the Google drive. Needs to be printed for new board members.

Wine Walk was discussed. Ticket sales were down; businesses have commented that they were not as successful as last year. The chamber uses 2-ounce glasses and cancelled the order for cups so the chamber should be receiving a refund.

Below for information only:

David Bennett reported:

- 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.
- The City is not requesting any action, just providing information. There may be a joint Chamber / Tourism meeting(s) in 2026.

CHLPC has requested help with the Summer Concert Series 2026 in the form of a partnership and possible future management of the program. Suggesting that it be expanded to include additional weekends. This will need further discussion as we are only allowed a certain number of picnic licenses. We will have to investigate this and see if co-oping with businesses that already have licenses in the area.

Motion by Patti, seconded by Barbara Oelke to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Walcott, Secretary