



MINUTES OF MARCH 13, 2026

9:00 A.M.

TOURISM RESERVE FUND (TRF) COMMITTEE MEETING

The Tourism Reserve Fund Committee Meeting was held on March 13, 2026, at City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, Peoria, Illinois 61602. The TRF meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman J.D. Dalfonso.

1. Call to Order/Declaration of a Quorum:

Present: Patrick Urich, (Non-Voting); J.D. Dalfonso, (Non-Voting); Dan Kouri, (Voting); Bernice Gordon-Young, (Voting); Gregory Wilson, (Voting)

Others Present: Ronda Guyton, Phil Newton, Nikki Romain, Isra Shaikh, K.C. Murphy, Sravan Surya Devara, De'Marcus Hamilton, Liz Klise, Kaylee Drea, Sharon Gramm, Kelsie Barnhart, Robert Newton, Angela Washington, Michelle King

Absent: Marwin Spiller

2. Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young and seconded by Gregory Wilson to approve January 9, 2026, meeting minutes, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

3. Financial Report:

Finance Manager Angela Washington shared the TRF Local Fund balance is currently at \$92,333, if applications totaling \$44,000 are approved today this will leave the balance in the Local Fund at \$48,333. There is one application request for \$2,500 from the Convention/Tourism Fund. The balance is currently at \$32,718, if application is approved today, it will leave the balance at \$30,218. Peoria Marketing Fund will remain at \$702,043 with no application requests. One of the finance accountants – noticed one of the ARPA checks had not been cashed for \$10,000 in quite some time, it was deemed to be voided, and stop payment was issued and will discuss during meeting how the funds will be used. City Manager Urich said money needs to be spent by end of the year and there are two events coming up that we can apply the \$10,000 to close out the American Rescue Plan Funds which we have to do per the federal government. J.D. shared we will declare in the votes where the allocation will come from. J.D. noted for the financials the estimate on the Peoria Marketing Fund includes an estimated accumulation of where it sits and we hope for the number to come to fruition between the good work that we do with TRF and the City.

Dan Kouri motioned to receive and file, seconded by Gregory Wilson, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4. Items for Approval

Local Fund:

4a. Sisters Rock – April 11, 2026, - \$2,500

Phil Newton introduced Ronda Guyton the CEO and founder of The Living to Serve Foundation that began in response to a growing need in this country for health, equity for low income, and minority women. Low income and minority women have a higher-than-normal occurrence of hypertension, heart disease, cancer and other life-threatening conditions. The Living to Serve Foundation helps to provide information, advocacy intervention, and other necessary services for a population that is not always marketed effectively. The theme this year is “We grow stronger together.” Ronda shared so far registration has over 150 women that are registered from Chicago,

Bloomington, Springfield, Peoria, and all over the state. We have been doing the event for 12 years, have 20 vendors, we have a medical panel and one of our expert medical panels is from UIC. Someone will be teaching entrepreneurship, there will be someone speaking on how to take care of mental health, will have chair yoga, lip balm making, and lunch will be provided. Each attendee will get a bag where they can take back information, will have health vendors, including Carle Health and OSF also coming together as a community and will start off with mammograms. There will be advertisements through social media, Facebook, Instagram and on Sisters Rock web site. Top donors are listed on their bag, also listed Discover Peoria and City of Peoria because Ronda was born and raised here. Participants will receive brochures on upcoming events. They have provided over 500 mammograms and are on target to issue another 200 this year and are fortunate to work with Carle Health who gives us a state discount that allows us to pay for more mammograms so if you are underinsured or not insured at all only have to ask for the mammogram. This event will be on Saturday, April 11 from 9am to 1pm located at the Life Together Center, 3625 N. Sheridan Road in Peoria.

The motion was made by Gregory Wilson and seconded by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4b. Juneteenth Celebration – June 13, 2026 - \$10,000

De'Marcus Hamilton shared the event will take place on Saturday, June 13, 2026, at John Gwynn Park on Richard Pryor Place in Peoria from 9 am to 6pm and is free to the public. The event is brought to you by YANI Collective and previously by the NAACP. YANI Collective has been coordinating the event since 2021. There will be food, alumni basketball games, music, Ernestine Jackson Freedom Day parade and education on Juneteenth provided to the community. and statewide. The event started with several food vendors, and had over 5,000 people attended last year, expecting over 6,500 this year. This event grows every year. Advertisements and promotions will include print and radio media, as well as social media and digital marketing. The Juneteenth Fest will draw audience members from Bloomington-Normal, Springfield, Decatur, Rockford, and Chicago.

Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young applauds the efforts made for this event; she attends the event and shared it is one of her favorite events in the community. Numbers seem off and say this because so many people attend. Bernice said culturally it's relevant and significant for the community and applauds the efforts.

A motion was made by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young and seconded by Gregory Wilson, all in favor, opposed by none, with unanimous approval.

4c. St. Patrick's Day Parade – March 17, 2026 - \$4,000

This event is a long-standing tradition in our community and hosted by the St. Patrick Society of Peoria since 1981. The event is run completely by volunteers and until recent years has been self-sustaining. They have been able to cover operating expenses with entry fees paid by participants. K.C. Murphy shared there were over 5,300 spectators last year. Based on emailed inquiries, we have guests from Springfield, Washington, Pekin, Farmington, Eureka, Mackinaw, Canton, Manito, and Chicago that attend. The event supports many local businesses. Those attending the parade are likely to purchase food and beverages at many of the local bars and restaurants in the downtown area which means tax dollars for the city and increased revenue for local taxis, Lyft, and Uber drivers. We do have a sponsorship commitment from the Illinois lottery that will help. Funds raised in the past from the application fees have made our event self-sustaining but also covered a portion of our annual operating expenses for society. However, in recent years the fees for the city's necessary expenses with the street department and Peoria Police have increased to just under \$8,000 and in the last two years we have operated at a loss. So, if awarded these funds we would ask if any TRF funds granted would be to offset a portion of the city fees to allow us not to report our event as a loss. On the budget it was projected to bring in \$9,400 registration fees; the actual total was \$8,400 so it came in a little low. In 2023, they paid \$3,900, and in 2025, they paid \$7,950 in operating costs. While we realize the necessary services provided by the City have a cost, we have come to a point where we need assistance to not end the event in a negative number.

Gregory Wilson will be in the parade and looks forward to participating and is excited to participate in the event. Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young asked how many participants will be in the parade. K.C. shared there are 105 entries.

A motion was made by Gregory Wilson and seconded by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young for \$4,000, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4d. FIRST Robotics Central IL Regional – March 19-21, 2026 - \$5,000

Sravan Surya Devara is the Regional Director for the Central Illinois Regional FIRST Robotics Competition here in the state of IL. This is a three-day event. This is K-12 non-profit global STEM education organization that works with students from all over the world to inspire and empower them in science and technology and encourage them to be general leaders of tomorrow. Traditionally, they have over 3,000 attending this event. The midwestern and global outreach regional event is open to all teams around the world. It has been around Central Illinois and Peoria for about a decade now. They are hoping to expand and get more engagement within the community. Due to travel conflicts some of our international teams dropped out due to world events going on right now. Still attending will be Taiwan along with three teams from out of state, 2/3 of teams will come from Chicago and Southern Illinois. These visitors tend to stay multiple days. Total of 32 teams and 10 from Peoria. The Peoria Public Schools, Chillicothe, Tremont, and Dunlap have merged together to form teams for this event. This brings regional, national, and international visitors to the City of Peoria. Most recent estimates are 900 students and 100 volunteers for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, additional spectators will attend. Anticipating 530 hotel room nights for the weekend and expecting restaurant dining during this event. This event is free and open to the public and will be held at the Renaissance Coliseum, 1600 W. Main St., a multi-purpose athletic facility at Bradley University in Peoria. J.D and Patrick said this will use \$5,000 of ARPA funds if approved.

A motion was made by Gregory Wilson and seconded by Dan Kouri for \$5,000, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4e. That's What She Said – April 25, 2026 - \$7,500

Nikki Romain is the CEO and co-founder of ART Inc. and produces That's What She Said (TWSS) event. Here with Nikki today is her Marketing Coordinator Isra Shaikh. This started in 2022; this is the 5th year here in Peoria sharing this event with the community and beyond. TWSS was founded in Champaign-Urbana in 2013 and has grown to this annual event celebrated across Central Illinois. The event continues to increase in size year over year. It will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2026, and amplifies women's voices in our community. This is a one-night live storytelling performance that will feature 10 local women speakers. Marketing efforts are through social media, flyers, and radio ads. There will be vendors, photographers, and videographers, all from our local area and that is what the application request will go towards funding. There will be a post-show after party. Nikki's platform is women empowerment. This event sells out every year and will eventually move to a bigger space. The event amplifies women's voices and is a fundraiser for ART Inc. which is an after-school culture facility and helps support the programs.

TRF member Gregory Wilson loves what ART Inc. stands for and what it does for our community. Member Bernice Gordon-Young said what you do for the community has forever changed me, it's therapeutic and worth continuing this event.

A motion was made by Gregory Wilson and seconded by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young for \$7,500, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4f. Hidden Peoria – May 2-3, 2026 - \$5,000

Elizabeth Klise is the Executive Director for the Peoria Historical Society, along with her today Board of Trustees member Kaylee Drea. This is a brand-new event, that will be held on Saturday, May 2 from 11am – 5pm and Sunday, May 3 from 11 am- 5pm. Location is Murray Place, 100 Walnut Street with cost of \$30.00 tickets are available via 309tix.com. In its first year the tour will concentrate in downtown Peoria but, in future years will expect to expand to other parts of the city. This event will provide behind the scenes access to 13 downtown

buildings. Peoria has an amazingly rich history and built landscape from historic structures such as our award-winning Peoria City Hall, the Grand Army of the Republic Hall, and 1881 Easton Manor, to newly reimagined spaces like Distillery Labs, Pop-A-Shot, and the Sealtest Building, to Sacred Heart Church, the University of Illinois Peoria College of Medicine, and artist studios at The Mill. Other cities have had great success offering similar tours. Kaylee Drea shared in order to highlight all our downtown has to offer, were sending a letter to a long list of our, restaurants, bars, and coffee shops that the event is happening and we are going to include both on our paper map and on a map within our interactive app for the Hidden Peoria Event so people know there are a lot of places you can go if you get hungry before, during, or after the tour. J.D. Dalfonso shared this will be ARPA consideration to round out the \$10,000 balance.

Gregory Wilson said he loves the idea and asked Elizabeth how they are marketing it which she shared within the last four weeks they have someone that will be doing social media advertising and has started creating reels and promoted posts on Facebook. Will also do digital postcards, radio, and television. J.D. shared Discover Peoria will help promote as well.

A motion was made by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young and seconded by Gregory Wilson, all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

4g. Peoria RiverFront Market -Saturdays May 23 – September 26, 2026 - \$10,000

The Riverfront Market is a weekly farmers and artists market featuring produce, meats, eggs, breads, cheeses, pastas, baked goods, and a wide variety of local art. Every Saturday morning from 8am to Noon. Located along Peoria's beautiful RiverFront in the River Station parking lot, 212 SW Water Street, directly across from the Peoria Riverfront Museum. There is plenty of free parking available in surrounding lots and streets. Sharon Gramm shared this is the 23rd season with a diverse group of vendors and shoppers. They had over 88,000 people that attended throughout the season. Our sponsorship went down a little along with our attendance due to what we believe to be some weather issues with rain and high heat. The majority of these are local businesses within the city of Peoria and majority within 40 miles of Peoria. We're getting more and more businesses opening up around the market area while the market is open. Such as the Peoria Riverfront Museum, Blue Duck sells sandwiches, Catrina's Express, and Creve Coeur Club are going to participate this year along with Martini's on Water. Sharon said they really have become a community not just the block of the market but also expanding further into downtown as well. Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young asked how people sign up for the Market and if there is a vendor fee. Sharon shared they have a waiting list for vendors and vendors that participated in the past do have first shot at spaces, and there are rules and regulations, it's mainly by the date signed up. There is a limit on certain types of vendors and do limit the number of ready-to-eat vendors. We want to stay true to being a Farmers Market. Seniority based and uniqueness of product. The fee is \$475.00 per vendor.

A motion was made by Council Member Bernice Gordon-Young and seconded by Gregory Wilson for \$10,000 all in favor, opposed by none, unanimous approval.

Convention Fund:

4h. OVC Softball Championship – November 30 – December 3, 2025 - \$2,500

J.D. shared this application will be deferred to next month's meeting April 10, 2026, due to unavailability to attend today's meeting.

The motion was made by Gregory Wilson and seconded by Dan Kouri, all in favor, opposed by none, with unanimous approval.

- 5. Items for Discussion from prior months reporting:** Kelsie shared Big Picture Film Festival is a successful event and they sell out at all four showings, it is capped out as far as growth due to limited space, ended at \$8,000 profit year for this event and will not roll that over to operating, so next ask will be a little lower, 16 overnight hotel stays. Their attendance was 700 across 4 shows. Santa Claus Parade updated 3 floats last year and doing updates to 2 additional floats this year, attendance is continually going down each year. They projected 12,000 and ended with attendance of 9,000 this last year. Their marketing could be modernized and grown, they are using traditional avenues through

Journal Star and WMBD but if they could branch out into some social media ads, Facebook and Instagram campaigns and could possibly boost attendance again this year, did end up being a little over \$1,000 loss for them. J.D. said the Park District would like to evaluate the parade this year with intention of taking over the year after learning from the old guard and bringing in the new guard with someone that can run events. Yule Like Peoria is now run by the Hanley family, formerly run by P.A.C.E. as always, the weather is unpredictable and right before we received 8 inches of snow, so they had projected 750 attendance and ended with 600, so weather did affect their attendance. Main organizer is working to do a starting location with wristbands and better calculate attendees and incorporate better outdoor signage that they can follow signs and know where the next location is. They ended with a profit so that they will roll over into next year's funding. Christmas in the Village, Peoria Hair and Fashion Showcase, and MLK Luncheon will be discussed at next month's meeting along with any others we may receive.

6. New Business: None

7. Public Comments: None

8. Next Scheduled Meeting: Friday, April 10, 2026.

9. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by Dan Kouri and seconded by Gregory Wilson at 10:10 a.m.

Motion carried unanimously.