

Minutes of Meeting - March 10 2011

The March meeting of the Greater Searcy County Chamber of Commerce was called to order by President Clint Freeman at noon on March 10, 2011. Present at the meeting were Betty Watts and Dorothy Hare representing Operation Kindness, Cheryl Pruitt from Highland Court, Bob King, Bob King Photography, Jack Treat, Home Bank of Arkansas, Vice President Lee Walsh, Ozark Hardwood Flooring, Inc., Charles Baker, Poison Ivy Soap, Ben Henley from to town of St. Joe, Richard Groves, Ken Fariss and Secretary Merrily Hartwig.

Treasurer Jack Treat reported that there were no outstanding bills and that the Chamber had funds in the sum of \$7,197.84. Jack reported that there were several members who have not paid their 2011 dues. Several Chamber representatives will contact these members in the next few weeks to see if we can collect the dues.

President Freeman stated that the Master Gardeners had approached him regarding a "Welcome to Marshall" sign near Backbone Mountain. They would like to work on the sign and the area around it, but would like to have funds for materials. President Freeman said that they hadn't gotten back with him with a proposal as to how much they needed to take care of the sign. There was some discussion about the necessity of the area on the 65 corridor looking nice for our visitors. It was suggested that we get the probation department of the Sheriff's Department to have their inmates do some clean up along the main highways in and out of the area.

Merrily gave an update on the progress of the Buffalo River Spring Fling. Bob Younger with "In-Cahoots" had confirmed the past week that In-Cahoots would perform at the Ozark Heritage Art Center the evening of May 28. Lee has talked to Bill McIntire about the possibility of the folks who meet monthly at his barn performing at the Ozark Heritage Art Center on Friday evening, May 27, and Jack Treat will be looking into getting a gospel group at the OHAC for Sunday afternoon, May 29. In-Cahoots performs for free, but the charge at the door is \$5 per person. All proceeds from their monthly appearances, plus the monies collected from the concession booth help to pay the bills for the Art Center. The Chamber would rent the center for \$150 per performance (Friday night and Sunday afternoon) with the same admission charge. We might want to consider having our own concessions unless the folks who currently serve during the 2nd Saturday concerts would like to provide the concessions.

Ken Fariss said that someone from the VFW Auxiliary would like to put on a breakfast at the new memorial building during the Spring Fling Festival. Dorothy Hare said that Boy Scout Troop 150 and the IOOF would both like to do something for Spring Fling to raise money for their respective organizations. Merrily stated that those wishing to be part of the Spring Fling should contact her to coordinate times and places and to ensure they were included in any publicity the Chamber does.

Ben Henley said that the St. Joe Depot should be ready for an opening the first of May. The Chamber would like to have a hospitality booth outside the Depot on both Friday and Saturday of Spring Fling, providing coffee and donuts and information about the festival and the county. The Chamber will confirm this with St. Joe officials when the festival gets closer. Ben also told us that there will be two fish fries in St. Joe - one this Friday, March 11, to benefit the Help Center. Bingo will follow. This will be at the American Legion from 4 - 6. The other fish fry will be to benefit the Depot fund and will be Saturday, March 19 at 5:30 in the St. Joe Community Center, 555 Highway 374 West. Following this fish fry will be entertainment provided by Jack Young and Alice Ellison.

Charles Baker reiterated the need for some industry in Searcy County and that it is something that the Chamber needs to look at.

Lee Walsh brought up the fact that he can go out and take lovely pictures of Searcy County, but that there is a real need for the Searcy County towns along the 65 corridor to get cleaned up. Several will go to the next meeting of the Marshall City Council to see if they could start enforcing some ordinances already in effect to make our area look nicer.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Merrily Hartwig, Secretary