

Support St. Charles Tourism Talking Points

The following are sample talking points regarding the proposed restructuring plans as put forth by city administrators, including feedback on their plan and commentary:

1. They said “nothing will change” over and over again at the council work session while standing by a flowchart of changes.

- Some changes on paper may seem unimportant, but they will inevitably create drastic changes.
- Many seasoned cast, crew, and staff members have indicated that they will not return if the proposed restructure proceeds as stated that places the current city special events and communication leader over the tourism department. This is because it is known that the individual proposed by city administration to fill this position lacks understanding of the nuances that it takes to run events of this size and does not have the years of expertise, vision, and boots on the ground knowledge that cannot be taught.

2. A desire to expand the Farmers Market is a reason cited for the push towards restructuring.

- Not once but twice at the city council working session, city administrators stated that the Farmers Market takes place at the Foundry Art Centre parking lot when in fact it has not taken place there at all this year. If they do not have the knowledge of the location of these markets that they claim to shift years of leadership for, how do they have the right knowledge to make informed decisions of the magnitude that the tourism department demands.
- The city administrators have self-admitted to have never attended Legends & Lanterns and only going to Christmas Traditions once, and yet they work less than a block away (one of them living mere yards away.)
- It is mind boggling that these events put on by the tourism bureau are so nationally and internationally known, and the city administration has no desire to visit or participate.
- This begs the question, how can city administration be trusted to be a leader, cheerleader, and trusted protector of something that they do not care for, and in other spaces, they have admitted a desire to see diminished.

3. Mayor Borgmeyer is a “business man” making “business” decisions, therefore, he can be trusted.

- How long are leaders and politicians going to be given allowance to make decisions without any logic or reasons other than “trust me; I’m a business man.”
- St. Charles is not a business; it is a community with people who fill it. This is a community who encourages kids to be engaged and invested (such as Councilman Fous bringing his teenager to the council meeting), and they are raised to care for and support their neighbors.
- Businesses are not always success (farewell Blockbuster, Radio Shack, etc.) We don’t want the Tourism Department, and the events put on by this department to follow suit.

- This administration has a handful of projects and efforts that have not been thought thru and have cost the city thousands of dollars without success. An example of this is Riverpoint, while well intentioned, was not planned and well executed, resulting in a mismanagement of city funds.
- There are smart business people on City Council who know that planning, strategy, and well placed leaders lead to good results.

4. The contentious exchange at the working session is proof that the city administrators are not being transparent with the city council.

- At the council working session, Councilwoman Mitchell asked a direct question to city administration asking why a tourism director position was not posted. Rather than answering her question, she was met with the patronizing "I'm confused why you're confused."
- This comment was not only disrespectful to her, but it is important to acknowledge it for what it was also, a sexist response that can be all too familiar to women in leadership asking for more information.
- We encourage the administration to say the quiet part out loud. They are not posting this position, because they intend for the position of head of the tourism department to be filled by Beth Norviel, current city special events and communications director.
- This lack of transparency has been a pattern with city administration (for example, a pattern that many witnessed city council have to bear the consequences of at the open meeting in regard to the data center.)
- A lack of transparency by the city administration encourages a distrust and a disbelief that they have the best interests of not only the tourism staff (including festival staff), but also the interests of the community of St. Charles in mind.

5. Beth Norviel is ill-equipped to lead the tourism department and is who city administrators would put in charge of the Tourism Department which would include Christmas Traditions and Legends & Lanterns.

- Beth Norviel, the city administration's intended director of the tourism department, while a good and hard-working person, does not have the skills, knowledge, or experience to run events the size of the events put on by the Tourism Department (indicated by her history of special events.)
- A few examples that come to mind include the Riverfest parade (that was cancelled last minute due to bad weather that never came after the community spent time and money preparing for this event. They had no plan for possible bad weather.), the last-minute cancellation of the Veterans Day parade, the multiple issues with communications including the department that she leads failing when it came to notifying the community of the public health emergency (boil order) and putting out incorrect AI generated maps and photos of Lewis & Clark with three arms.
- The most prominent examples as it relates to events include both Tacofest events. For the past eight years, Legends & Lanterns has occurred on the last three weekends in October, dates that are also communicated at the end of

every festival season to encourage patrons to return the following year. Beth Norviel and her department chose to host a competing event in the Historic District during the busiest weekend of Legends & Lanterns. Not only did this take up parking for the Historic District, but it drew hungry patrons away from the businesses on Main Street and Frenchtown, filling the air with competing music that cancelled the environment carefully crafted by festival performers, staff, and business owners, making their jobs challenging. Additionally, the Historic District was flooded with hot pink "St. Louis Tacofest" signs that took away from the St. Charles charm of the CVB event.

- The "breakdown" in communication cited by the city administration is one sided, and it is unfair to charge the CVB with a lack of communication.
- Because the CVB events take place where businesses are run, it takes an individual who works in partnership to cause these events to excel. After the first Tacofest fiasco, this event was moved to compete with a merchant created and run event (Main Street in Bloom.) This was seen as an act of bad faith to take away from a community run event without communication and partnership with these businesses.
- The person who runs the tourism department needs to be a detail-oriented individual who is a good faith partner and cheerleading collaborator with the merchants and other stakeholders. The person who has disregard for these parties and what they provide to the community is who the city administration would like to put in charge of the events that impact the community including the businesses in the area.
- You only get one chance to make a bad impression. If inexperienced people take over tourism and the result is a diminishing of quality, visitors (and by extension their money) will notice and will choose not to come back which is a luxury that cannot be afforded. That is putting an estimated 10 Million Dollars at risk that the city brings in as a result of Legends & Lanterns and Christmas Traditions.
- One of the main reasons of restructuring that was given at the working session was that the restructuring of other departments worked. However, it must be noted that these two departments cannot be a comparison to the Tourism Department and Special Events/Communications due to the demands and specific skills needed to excel in Tourism.
- The solution to correcting an underperforming department should not be rewarding the person in charge by handing over the keys to one of the cities highest performing and most successful department (who supports bringing 10 Million Dollars to the city yearly thru their events.)