



Saturday - Sunday - Monday, June 13, 14, 15, 2009

Chamber asks for help with 'Ironman' event

By Mindy Honey
Society Editor

Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Ironman representatives are looking to the city for help to bring a triathlon to Branson next fall.

Last week, Ross Summers, president and CEO of the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, and Ryan Robinson, of Ironman, visited with Branson aldermen about the possibility of an Ironman event in Branson. Summers told the board he needs \$75,000 from the Tourism Tax Contingency Fund to help bring the race to town.

"It would help us cover the rights fee to Ironman," Summers said.

Ironman is a world-known brand name and for the past 30 years, and worked with the companies of Timex, Janus, Foster Grant and Ford Motor Company.

The event would be a half-Ironman, or 70.3-mile race, consisting of a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile bike and a 13.1-mile run. The first race would be in September 2010.

"That money would not be due until next year's budget," Summers said.

He said he would like to see the Ironman competition kind of replace the Tour of Missouri, which will not be returning to Branson this year. For the past two years, Branson was one of the stops on for Tour of Missouri in September.

Robinson projects that about 1,800 athletes from throughout the United States, and all over the world, would be represented during the local race. The athletes could bring in about 4,000 family members and the event itself would attract another 8,000 spectators. Robinson estimated the event could have an economic impact of \$3-\$5 million.

"People are quickly recognizing that an Ironman event is unlike any other sporting event they have ever competed in," information provided by Ironman stated. "Ironman races are the pinnacle of sporting events worldwide and are unmatched in name recognition."

There are 40 other areas worldwide that host Ironman competitions, which includes triathlons in China,

Australia, Hawaii, Canada, Mexico and Chili.

The Ironman event would require a three-year commitment from the chamber of commerce.

“What we are asking for help with is the first year,” Summers told the aldermen.

Mayor Raeanne Presley said that last week was the first time the board heard information about Ironman and would be looking into it more.

On June 23, the board of aldermen is scheduled for the first reading of a bill that would approve the chamber using money from the Tourism Tax Contingency Fund to help bring the race to Branson. Kathleen Bullock, the chamber’s director of tourism development, said at that time, Robinson will return to visit with the aldermen and answer questions.

A second reading would be July 14.

Bullock said the chamber is waiting for final approval before moving forward with finalizing contracts with Ironman.

The chamber’s goal after the first year is that the event could be self-sustaining and officials hope they won’t have to ask for more financial assistance from the city.