



**Tourism Development Council**  
**Meeting Minutes – Approved 2/14/24**

**Wednesday, November 8th, 2023 2:13 – 3:43 p.m.**

Virtual + In Person: County DSB 150 Beaver Creek, Oregon City RM 401

[Recording Link](#)

**Members Present:** Tessa Koch, Katen Patel, David Penilton, Catherine Nyland and Gail Yazzolino

**Staff Present:** Samara Phelps, Ithaca Janzen, Lizzie Keenan, Amber Johnson, Aaron Liersemann, Casey Knopik, Danae Burke Jones, Janice Nilson. **Others Present:** Thelma Haggenmiller – Slow Poke Tours

**2:13 – 2:15pm Welcome/Call to Order/Introductions & Declaration of Conflicts** - David Penilton, Chair

**Action**

**2:15 – 2:16pm Approve October 11 Minutes** - Danae Burke Jones, Administrative Specialist

- Minutes from the October TDC meeting reviewed. Catherine motioned to approve the minutes, Gail seconded, and voting was unanimous.

**Discussion**

**2:16 – 3:05pm Quarterly Reports** – Q1 Report and Format Feedback - Samara Phelps, Executive Director

- Samara presented the new quarterly report format along with background context on how the reports are used and an overview of plans for future reporting. Staff provides The Board with quarterly reports with the goal of supporting the TDC by providing regular timely updates and provides meaningful context to industry data along with highlighting significant work achieved each quarter. Along with the quarterly reports and annual report will still be presented each year.
- The new style of reporting gives us the opportunity to highlight context for what is shown in the data which will provide a timely record of things happening in the region and how it affects the industry. Examples of past notable events include natural disasters and the eclipse.
- The TDC is the primary audience for the quarterly report, however finalized reports will be posted for public view on the website. Last year's partner survey showed having data is important to partners. Reports will be presented to the board the month following each quarter's end which will allow for the full data to be compiled and accurately reflect the quarter.
- Ithaca and Lizzie presented the current Q1 report in the new format while setting the stage for what to expect from the report each quarter. The front page of the report will typically start with a message from the Executive Director, highlights anything unusual that happened within the quarter to impact data and numbers and will show seasonal occupancy for all regions along with the seasonal flow from the whole year. Q1 report shows our TRT earnings and uses 2019 as a comparison. Regional occupancy data shows there's less of a seasonal swing in Clackamas County than there is in the rest of the state.
- Lizzie gave an overview of Datafy which provides tracking data of what types of activities visitors participated in and gives some seasonal context to visitor traffic.
- Ithaca shared the Project Highlights section of the report that presents a sampling of current priorities, programs or projects being worked on by staff. Each highlighted project will be tied back to our strategic outcomes and show how the project is working to support those goals. Programs for Q1 included the Alternative River Floats, Hospitality Thank You Project, Crowdriff Strategy, and the Molalla Outdoor Recreation Map.
- The final page of the report shows metrics related directly to our work including marketing impressions, takeaways and captures how staff is engaging with partners.

The numbers in the partner engagement data reflect proactive, and direct one on one relationship building with partners. Optimizations and learnings for this quarter were around our Tap & Wine Trails. We learned that google ads are not the best option for wine trail and shared that takeaway with quite a few wineries the attended our Google Ads Training

- Samara asked for a discussion about this methodology of doing quarterly reports and feedback from the board on if this format is relevant and presented in a way that is helpful to the TDC. Staff is looking into platforms for reporting so the visual of this report may change slightly prior to Q2.
- A question was raised if there would be a call for feedback from partners and stakeholders after the report is published and the timeframe for feedback? Samara responded that an open opportunity for feedback direct to staff could be included and that the report will also be shared proactively with stakeholders each quarter through our business-to-business newsletter, and she envisions most direct feedback will come from that forum.
- Suggestion made to include contact info along with names of current TDC board members.
- A question was asked about if there is data to track the region's reputation or public relations and if that is a metric that could be fit into the reporting? Samara responded that is not a metric we specifically track, however staff actively works with County PR throughout the year so we do get a lot of feedback on how we are being perceived as well as getting a lot of response and feedback from social media which staff tracks closely. Reporting on reputation would require new data. Follow up question about how a metric like that would integrate into the reporting; Samara responded it could look like having a baseline and then tracking if we're trending more positively or negatively in a graph format.

#### **3:05 – 3:14pm Resident Sentiment Survey – Background and process - Samara Phelps**

- Currently working with the County to facilitate a feedback survey of Clackamas County residents. Resident surveys are designed to ask community residents how they feel about tourism and how it affects our community. We conducted a resident survey in 2019. We chosen to mirror the methodology and questions asked in 2019 so that we can have a baseline and see any changes.
- Goals from the survey are to have a baseline from the 2019 results, to exceed the number of responses (1200) from the 2019 survey, get honest feedback from the community and to achieve a good distribution of responses between the valley, mountain & urban regions to allow data to be broken down even further.

#### **3:14 – 3:16pm December Meeting – In-person with Community Leads - Samara Phelps**

- December's TDC meeting will be in person at a location in the urban area and community tourisms leads will be invited to join. Preliminary results from the resident survey will be shared during the meeting. There will be some additional time scheduled after the meeting (4-5pm) for open networking and breakout groups.

#### **3:16 – 3:29pm Program Updates – Timely updates - Tourism Staff**

- Aaron shared how we are approaching international markets for flights and airlines. Marketing strategies start with direct flight markets and the Port of Portland and Travel Oregon work closely together to market to countries that are currently offering direct flights to PDX with the goal of ensuring flights stay full in both directions. Travel Oregon handles inbound marketing related to direct flights & Port of Portland will handle all outbound flight marketing. This level of marketing is very expensive which is why historically Travel Oregon has taken the lead on it. Staff evaluate options for direct investments, likely this would look like working directly with flights to Canada and/or Mexico.

- Lizzie reported that the Mt Hood-Gorge Region Stakeholder/Partner engagement meeting was held at Alpine Events in Rhododendron and went well with about 50 partners in attendance. An overview of the Hood-Gorge resident feedback survey was presented during the meeting along with a highlight of programs they are working on and goals for the next two years.
- Casey shared that the marketing team is in winter mode and currently working on new destination videos including community videos for the mountain, urban, and valley sub regions.
- Last TDC meeting there was discussion around Oregon City's destination organization work and Samara shared a quick update that Oregon City had a meeting on this topic and staff, along with a few other destination organizations, will be brought into a scheduled follow up conversation.
- The Oregon Tourism Commission's next meeting is being held in Portland on December 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>. This is a great opportunity to connect with the commission and provide input of comments.

### **3:29 – 3:43 TDC Open Forum - TDC Members**

- Appreciation shared for the new format and details included in the Quarterly report. It's useful for biz owners to see the trends so they can schedule around those trends.
- TMK Creamery has experienced a drop in foot traffic since September and wondered if other businesses had noticed the same? Aaron responded that he hadn't heard any significant drops in visitors to the area and Lizzie offered to look into Datafy numbers for correlations.
- Lots of school groups have been visiting the End of The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and seem to be very happy. Feeling better about staffing & staff training. Winter tends to be a slower time, but for the most part visitor numbers are staying steady year-round.
- Shoulder season is slower for Best Western Inn at Agate Beach, but they are staying busy and concentrating on 2024.
- Business is going okay for America's Hub World Tours, anticipated a drop in 23/24 but adapting and planning for future years. Feeling positive and looking forward to the future. David attended a site tour of Willamette Falls with some elected officials and enjoyed seeing the work that was being done. Encouraged other members to attend a future tour. Visited farms in Hood River area with the Oregon Tourism Leadership Academy which was very informative.
- Slow Poke Tours attended Oregon History Club's Happy Hour event at the Museum of Oregon Territories. Many area historical societies and museums had tables and provided a forum for general mingling and networking.

### **3:43 pm Adjourn**