



**Tourism Development Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 12th, 2025 2:03 – 4:15pm**

**Minutes approved 5/14/25**

In person and virtual via Zoom - [Recording Link](#)

**Members Present:** Luke Spencer, Tessa Koch, Brian Crow, Holly Pfortmiller, Katen Patel, Patrick Dawsey, Amy Barton

**Staff Present:** Lizzie Keenan, Annie Bailey Austen, Danae Burke Jones, Jim Austin, Aaron Liersemann, Janice Nilson

**Others Present:** Thelma Haggemiller

**2:03 – 2:07pm Welcome/Call to Order/Introductions & Declaration of Conflicts** - Luke Spencer, Chair

New members in attendance Amy Barton and Patrick Dawsey were introduced.

**2:07 – 2:09pm Approval of Minutes for February 2025** - Danae Burke Jones, Administrative Specialist

Holly motioned to approve minutes from February, seconded by Katen and approved with four yes and three abstentions.

**2:09 – 3:02pm Legislative Update** - Jim Austin, Development and Communications Lead

Jim provided overview and context of the connection between TDC and tracking legislation for the region along with providing upcoming legislature deadlines. Jim reviewed the many TLT related bills with a summary of what the bill does and actions taken so far along with highlighting specific bills that it is recommended that TDC continue to track and engage which include

HB 2977 – Increases state TLT to support species conservation. ODA and DMO partners testified in opposition to the bill. TDC submitted written testimony after hearing. Recommend TDC continues to track and engage.

HB 3556 - Relating to the use of local transient tax revenue; prescribing an effective date. Extends the permissible uses of net revenue from a new or increased local transient lodging tax to include public safety services and certain costs related to "community infrastructure". No hearing scheduled, but ODA/ORLA suggest readying testimony. Recommend TDC track and engage.

SB 358 & SB 434 – Establishes the Oregon Beach Fund. Identical bills that Jim flagged for consideration.

HB 2574 - Relating to the Willamette Falls Locks Authority. Modifies provisions related to finances, public contracting authority and composition of Willamette Falls Locks Authority. Support for this bill is suggested as it is a County Legislative Priority this session and Clackamas County Tourism has made past investments in this project.

HB2171 - Brian opposes HB 2171 and has submitted written testimony in opposition to the legislature. Jim clarified that the positions marked on the internal bill tracking spreadsheet are not official TDC positions, but instead suggestions and it is up to TDC to decide any position on a bill.

HB 3140 - Relating to recreation. Provides that an operator may require a person who engages in a sport, fitness or recreational activity in various ways to release the operator from claims for ordinary negligence. There was lots of testimony in support during 2/19/25 hearing. No current call to action but recommend TDC track & engage. SB 614 was also flagged as it is similar to HB 3140.

HB 2304 & HB 2145 Relating to fairs. Removes the requirement that the amount of net proceeds from the Oregon State Lottery allocated to the County Fair Account not exceed \$1.53 million. These two bills are nearly similar with HB 2304 being referred to Ways and Means committee. Brian and the Clackamas County Fair strongly support HB 2304.



Jim highlighted some lodging and STR bills and a question was asked for clarification on SB 470 in response Jim will send out the full bill to TDC members.

Agritourism-related bills were reviewed, and these also were shared with agricultural partners at the agritourism summit yesterday by Aaron. Jim also went over a couple study bills that will be worth keeping an eye on and he suggests we track for later.

Lizzie and Jim encouraged feedback on bills from TDC members and welcomed members to email the rest of the board if they feel strongly on a specific bill and would like the TDC to take a position on it. Staff can help draft a position, but any suggestions need to come from TDC members. Jim will email out the bills to all for discussion. Luke encouraged the TDC to look at the areas that they have expertise in and get caught up to speed on where they do not excel.

### **3:02 - 3:09pm BCC/TDC Joint Meeting - Luke Spencer**

Funding for tourism is solely managed by the TDC, however because we are still part of the county, the Board of County Commissioners work impacts staff and so the TDC/BCC joint meeting is an opportunity for the TDC to hear the goals of the BCC. Luke shared that this is the annual meeting between TDC & BCC and usually there's a few larger items shared with the BCC so that they know what we're working on. Lizzie asked that the board make any topic suggestions and said that the BCC usually also has topics they would like to discuss, but none have been shared from the commissioners yet. This joint meeting is currently scheduled for May, but Lizzie said timing wise we may try to push back the joint meeting a bit as Chair Roberts and Luke were unable to get a meeting scheduled until early May.

### **3:09 – 3:15pm TDC Recruitment Update/April TDC meeting - Lizzie Keenan, Executive Director**

Three new Tourism Development Commissioners were just approved by the BCC and we now welcome:

Amy Barton – Clackamas River Basin Council, Patrick Dawsey – Residence Inn, Lake Oswego, and Ryan Tigner – iTrip

Lizzie proposed that we postpone Retreat until a later date and instead suggested doing a social event and tour at Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival with the TDC & BCC in April, with the idea that Lizzie would do onboarding for new members afterwards. This would take place on the same day as the regularly scheduled April TDC meeting, but the time is TBD.

### **3:09 – 3:47pm Program Updates – Staff**

Lizzie – shared a general high-level update that Clackamas County is in extended mediation processes with the Employee Union of which all Tourism staff are a part of. The cooling off period ends 3/28. If nothing is decided by then the union may declare a strike. Lizzie is working on prioritizing time, effort and resources if a strike happens.

Lizzie also shared that Ithaca Janzen accepted the offer for the Regional Positions that runs the Experience Mt. Hood and The Gorge region that Clackamas County Tourism manages the contract for. It was a very competitive selection process with 98 applications. This means nothing has changed for the team as far as team capacity, but Lizzie is in the middle of finalizing a contract to bring on a contractor to support organizational structuring. Ideally the plan is to complete work with a contractor and then post new positions hopefully in June. This would be for two positions – one filling a vacancy and one new manager level position.

Lizzie and Janice presented the budget to Gary and Department of Finance yesterday and the budget was approved on the spot. The full budget will be officially finalized in May by the Board of County Commissioners, but it has been approved by TDC so it can be considered complete as the TDC oversees the tourism budget.



Aaron – Attended the LA Travel and Adventure Show with Willamette Valley Visitors Association, Travel Southern Oregon, and Eugene, Cascades & the Coast. It went great with 21,000 in attendance and over 180 new consumer newsletter signups. Had someone from Travel Oregon wearing our bigfoot suit which was the highlight of the show and had people flooding to the booth for photo opportunities. Bigfoot had scheduled times at the booth, additionally he wandered around the event center. Next year is up in the air as far as OMHT attending, Travel Oregon may have a booth next year and we may be able to join with them.

The following weekend Aaron attended the Vancouver, BC Show. This was scheduled months before any geo-political tensions or impact. Attended with Willamette Valley Visitors Association and took a scaled back approach to the booth. Saw a 40-50% decrease of booth visitors, appeared that show visitors were avoiding the USA aisles, while the British Columbia area was packed. Lots of word and windfall of Canadians canceling trips to the USA. Planning to attend again next year and have a similar “we are here when you’re ready to come back” messaging. May consider joining Travel Oregon’s booth instead of having our own.

A question was asked if we have data on how many visitors come to the area from Canada. Discussion mentioned that there is already an impact on hotels in the Portland area. Annie shared that Datafy can now track numbers from Canada so that can be tracked and looked into. Lizzie will make sure TDC gets access to data and TO’s numbers on Canada travel impacts. Aaron suggested we track and look at the numbers again towards the end of the year.

The Agritourism Summit was hosted at Tumwater. This is the 9th year for the summit and 22 partners attended. The event was shortened this year to adjourn at 1:30pm. Attendees seemed to appreciate that, and everyone was able to stay the whole time. Clackamas County Planning Director, Jennifer Hughes gave a presentation titled “Agritourism, do I need a permit for that?” and was available to answer questions. The group finished the day with a walking tour of Tumwater. Brian gave kudos to Aaron on a great event, he sent a staff member to the summit, and they came back energized.

The color blind glasses program went so well at the Dahlia Festival last fall that additional pairs of glasses have been purchased, and Aaron is working with the Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival to have them available for visitors to check out. Glasses-borrowers can enter to win a free pair of color blind glasses by filling out a survey on their experience.

Annie gave a shout out to Aaron on leading the color blind glasses project. The team has put together a press release on the program and Casey has been working with Lawrence PR to get the story out to the media. So far it has been easy to place, the story went out a week ago and getting it is picked up 2-3x per day by the media.

Marketing is working with partners and KOIN 6 on an “Eye On NW Taps” show, they’ve done a popular Eye On NW Wine show that airs in the fall and decided to do a beer one this spring. They are featuring Time Travelers Brewing in Estacada, Boring Brewing in Sandy and Then Oregon City Brewing where KOIN 6 will highlight their original Oregon City location along with their new Canby Beer Library. The Mt. Hood Territory piece is 7 minutes of a 30-minute program and will be airing at 9:30pm Thursday March 20th on Koin. This segment will also air on some of their partners and with this package we have 30 second ads included that we can target to any market we want are targeting the beer ads to beer friendly markets such as Tri-Cities, Boise, Eugene and Medford. Shout out to those featured partners, the show came together well.



#### 3:47 – 4:15pm TDC Updates - TDC Members

**Luke** – Ramping up for Spring and Summer. Trying to suss-out the retail market and where things are going for their retail and outfitting side - already seeing some price increases. Deep in the planning for White Water Festival which will be May 17 & 18. Building great partnerships with other local partners. The festival is a free weekend event and Luke encouraged TDC members to attend and visit the corridor.

**Thelma** – Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival has classes on how to carve wooden shoes. Has a visitor that is coming to Oregon just to carve shoes at the festival. Is seeing a lot of tourism coming back but feels like it's just beginning to come back. Planning a conference with a few others in Hood River for 2027. Jennifer Morkert is joining Thelma to help with the Slow Poke Tours business.

**Katen** – Business has been slow this quarter, but summer is looking okay. Staying busy with hotel conferences. Asian American Hotel Conference will be in New Orleans and is expecting to have a record turnout. Feeling positive moving forward.

**Amy** – is with the Clackamas River Basin Council - a Nonprofit watershed council that serves the Clackamas Basin. Their mission is to bring people together with the purpose of restoring the watershed.

They will help anyone that lives on a waterway to remove invasive plants and replant with native trees and shrubs. Strategically trying to resort fish habitat in several areas with large wood projects. They will table at the Upper Clackamas White Water Festival as they historically do. They complete a large river clean up from Milo McIver Park to Clackamette park with 100-400 volunteers who bring their watercrafts and float the river and clean it together. Stash The Trash bag program that is available at all the river put-ins. The 'Upper Clackamas Clean-up' was introduced last year where volunteers cleaned dispersed campsites. They are newly partnered with Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and they have commissioned an artist for three art projects that will be installed at Barton, Riverside and Milo McIver Parks. Will have a ribbon cutting ceremony this summer. The river is getting better year after year and people are using the trash bags more and more. Looking for biodegradable mesh bags to use for cleanup.

**Patrick** – is with Residence Inn Lake Oswego. Excited to be here and part of the process to help communities more. The hotel has been there since the 1980's but has a fairly newer staff (3-4 years) which is helping with a fresh set of eyes. Things have been a bit slower than expected so taking the opportunity to work on the hotel and get it looking good.

**Brian** – Doing best at the event center to support the area hotels – have a full slate of events this summer that will kick off with the Spring Garden Fair. Then Canby Brew Fest in May, this event has been so popular that they added an extra day this year. All of June weekends are the Oregon Renaissance Festival, expecting 75-80,000 attendees. Next is Harefest and then Clackamas County Fair. Partnered with FOB Taproom to host their FOBtober Fest.

**Tessa** – No update.

**Holly** – Still remodeling, first quarter was slow, spring isn't looking great. Completed an interview with the Oregon City Commissioners to be on the board of the their Oregon City Destination Management organization.

#### 4:15 pm Adjourn Public Meeting