

Tourism Development Council Meeting

Minutes
Wednesday
June 10, 2020
2:00-4:30 pm
Zoom Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jody Carson, Luke Spencer, Barb Iverson, David Penilton, Betsy LaBarge, Holly Pfortmiller, Tammy Thompson, Hans Wipper

STAFF PRESENT: Samara Phelps, Lizzie Keenan

OTHERS PRESENT: Clackamas County Commissioner Ken Humberston, Kimberly DeSantis, Clackamas County Commission Staff, Thelma Haggemiller, Slow Poke Tours

Action Items:

- **Welcome/Call to Order/Declaration of Conflicts**— Chair Jody Carson
- **Approve May 11, 2020**—Samara Phelps, Executive Director
Jody Carson made grammatical and spelling corrections. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Luke Spencer and 2nd by Barb Iverson. Voting was unanimous.

Discussions:

Racial Injustice & Destination Work – Samara Phelps

- The TDC identified Diversity Equity & Inclusion work as a priority in the master plan and the strategic priorities. The current TDC identified this work as a priority for FY20/21.
- Conversations happening in our community and globally make actions and discussion around this work timely. The action for today is to discuss if the TDC is prepared to commit to taking anti-racism actions and hold ourselves accountable to that commitment.
- Discussion of the issues and a draft statement followed. The draft statement was shared with executive committee, Public & Government Affairs and County Administrator prior to the TDC.
- TDC recognized the importance of the work, relevancy to the tourism industry and demonstrated support for a statement but asked for edits to the statement before sharing with our partners. Agreed to review updated statement by email.

Industry Forecasts & Guidelines – Samara Phelps; Lizzie Keenan, Regional Tourism Coordinator

- Forecasts from mid-May based on social distancing but lifting in phased approach. By the end of 2021 there may be viable medical treatment however the recession will take time to recover.
 - Highlights from Oregon State Economist Forecasts
 - Current recession has a more sharp/severe drop than in the past. Recovery slightly faster than previous recessions. Recovery happens in the second quarter of 2024, going back to where we were in first quarter of 2020.

- Seven years from now, the hospitality industry in Oregon is expected to have contracted less than 1%. The long term impact of the recession on hospitality is far less severe than other sectors. Retail, which intersects with tourism, deeply impacted in 7 year forecast. While hospitality and travel are feeling immediate and significant impact, the forecast shows long term resiliency of the sector.
- Highlights from Tourism Economics presentation from same time period.
 - GDP relatively quickly returns to normal growth curve but at a depressed level compared to growth prior to the pandemic.
 - Stimulus money is entering our economy much faster than previous recessions.
 - Projections are for unemployment to improve quickly as communities reopen.
 - Unemployment high in hospitality nationally. Clackamas County numbers for April show more than 5,100 jobs lost in hospitality. For 2019 Dean Runyon reports tourism supported 6500 jobs.
 - Recovery comes from domestic, drive, leisure and independent travel markets.
 - People are still making changes to existing travel plans moving from trips with flights to drive trips and away from international travel.
 - Anatomy of a recovery - leisure and drive. (Samara: our destination is well positioned for these ready markets.)
 - Normal levels of travel demand will not occur until 2023.
 - Demand recovery is expected to be 14 quarters after trough for hotel stays.
 - Key messages for DMO's to share with stakeholders: the value of tourism, the challenges the industry faces, promote tourism's role as an economic driver, demonstrate critical role of a destination organization.
 - Promoters of the destination brand, trusted source of information for travelers, advocate for the industry, stewards of the visitor economy and experience.
- Good advocacy and leadership work from US Travel as Roger Dow President & CEO of US Travel says hospitality is in a depression and the way to lead the nation out of the recession is to pull hospitality out of the depression. The US Travel work shows what a cornerstone hospitality is to our economies
- With this context, what are our organizational priorities? Consider if we had \$50,000 to spend between now and October what would you spend it on?
 - Hans: Website current, up to date, social channels relevant.
 - Betsy: Fresh & new content for google to index. Keep our destination front of mind. Let people see what can be done.
 - Jody: Marketing what can be done close to home with social distancing. Focus on what people can do.
 - David: Spend \$20,000 on marketing and save \$30,000 for a better opportunity later. Show what you can do, what is open,
 - Question: Is \$50,000 a forecast?
 - Answer: \$50,000 is selected as a number to play with not a forecast. April revenue is 20% of previous year not 10% forecasted. Cash flow is better than anticipated in March and April so being able to create a bucket to invest is potentially possible by October.
 - Question: Since the Clackamas County Fair is canceled, what happens with those funds?
 - Answer: Fair Board will determine how to use those funds.
 - Summary: staying relevant and top of mind important with a financially conservative mindset.

- David: Travel Portland is taking a very conservative approach. Advises being very conservative because we don't know even what the next few months look like.
- Betsy: Thinks we will be pleasantly surprised with revenue. Be conservative but not so conservative that we are not found. 85% of her business is Oregon.
- David: Bookings are for new customized stuff. Leverage drive market
- Betsy: ORLA has certificate of safety. Mt. Hood Vacation Rentals is certified. Suggest: Find out who in the destination participated. How to highlight on our website.
- David: Positive response to web content with safety measures outlined.
- Betsy: Markets responding differently. Every customer is asking about what is being done for safety. Content page on website could be good start for us. Confront COVID-19 but say it a positive way. Trust is huge right now.
- Question: What point do we have time to bring staff back?
 - Answer: Must close fiscal year. August before we know how the year ended. Marketing a priority likely done with contractor before revenues can sustain staff. August/September before that conversation can be addressed.

Action Items:

Board Officer Nominations/Elections – Jody Carson, Chair

- Usually the nominations would happen the month prior to the elections. BCC named all expiring TDC members to an additional term.
- Executive Committee met and recommends that the current officers continue. That is Chair Jody Carson, Vice Chair Barb Iverson, and Member at Large Tammy Thompson. If the TDC agrees, we could vote on that today. Also open to other nominations including self-nominations for consideration.
- Recommendation based on the value of having the same team move forward considering all that is going on. Later in the year we will need to work on getting members involved as officers.
- David: Would like to continue with what is in place.
- Luke: Also supports keeping same Executive Committee.
- A motion to re-elect the current officers was made by Hans Wipper and 2nd by Luke Spencer. Voting was unanimous.
- Jody expressed appreciation for everyone's continued contributions. Acknowledged that it feels like we are doing this as a team.

Updates:

Industry and County Grants – Samara Phelps

- Mt. Hood Territory received a Travel Oregon recovery grant of \$5,000. This will be used to move the Tourism Manager role from .75 FTE to 1.0 FTE in the second quarter of the fiscal year. A full list of recipients can be found on Travel Oregon's Industry site.
 - David: HUB World received a Travel Oregon grant. Believe it will not only help them but be utilized to help others. Great that private business could apply.
- Clackamas County will have business operations grants that go live in June. County Economic Development has Engaged Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) to help with grant program as well as business support throughout the coming year. Tourism will push this opportunity out to out to tourism businesses throughout the county. Samara continues to engage in the county processes around the County's recovery efforts and relief funds.

River Ambassadors – Lizzie Keenan, Regional Coordinator

- Trail Ambassador program soft launched the weekend of June 5. State Parks first to open up. Mt. Hood National Forest is still looking at the risk assessment for having volunteers out to determine when and how Trail Ambassadors can start. Trailkeepers of Oregon have taken on the program. It is likely to extend into the fall or throughout the year.
- Clackamas River Ambassadors has green light to run the program starting in July. Recruiting volunteers from Clackamas County to stay as close as possible to the travel guidelines. Received strong support from land managers to open this season. Indicates need and value of the program.
- The River Ambassador program and North Coast Ambassador programs all working closely with Trailkeepers of Oregon to get all the programs the support that they need.

Director Update - Samara Phelps

- Document outlining the temporary changes to the tourism program being finalized. Will be signed by Jody Carson as Chair and Gary Schmidt as County Administrator.
- TRT revenue was at 20% of previous year. Marketing support is the priority for expanding the program capacity.
- Jody: TRT will stay a separate fund from the General Fund and be reported separately.

TDC Member Reports – Roundtable

- David – Business about the same. Response amazing to safety message. Will continue with that. Working to align business with key partners and where they will be active in the future. Very interested in Canada. The only way to do this is together. Anything they can do let them know. Related to Black Lives Matter, keep in mind that whatever we do has to be workable for our community and show the industry that we are true partners.
- Barb – Started digging tulips but farm sales and wine sales are down. A lot of events are canceled. Farms with direct to consumer food are doing well. Hoping Farm Loops will do well.
- Betsy – What difference a month makes, they are super busy. Mountain zip codes have no confirmed cases. It's hard when they are connected to the urban areas and have to follow the same rules for business as urban. The Mountain opened for day use, the only campground that is open is Timothy. Vacation rental demand going crazy for families looking to get away from the city. Guests are bringing all their food. Most restaurants are not fully open. Those that are trying to capitalize on outdoor seating but it is not easy with wet weather. Cancellations have been business related travel or multi-generational family gatherings. Market is single families or two families that have been together anyway. Only a few guests flying in. Ski camps are happening but kids are not staying together so families are coming for ten day stays. Timberline ski is reservation only and food is take out style. Sold out for Memorial and will sell out for July 4th. Feels a responsibility to use TRT to support businesses not doing as well as the vacation rentals because their business contributes significantly to TRT.
- Hans – Wipper Snappers will be among the last kind of business to open completely but started offering camps. Going great and selling out.
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- Holly – Ended May at 40%. Keeping staff on full hours. Plans to bring back staff by July 1. Still figuring out how to open facilities according to guidelines.
- Luke – Saw an uptick in retail based on season and also the pent up demand. Timber and Milo McIver parks have opened. Brought back seasonal staff but with weather have had to hold off. Hoping that rentals start up.
- Tammy – Working part-time with the Columbia Gorge Sternwheeler. Seeing a general uptick in walk in business. People are generally excited about the opportunity to eat in or take a cruise. Nice to see people excited to be out.
- Commissioner Humberston – Thinks getting administrative support for Tourism is a good idea. County has rent assistance available for low income residents through Health, Housing and Human Services as part of the CARES Act. Good to see things moving in the right direction for tourism but sincerely hopes that we don't see this come back in the winter
 - Question: What do we know about moving into Phase II?
 - Answer: To be discussed next week. Still not good on two indicators. Completely dependent on the actions of individuals. Will make the request as soon as meeting the metrics.
- Jody – Willamette Falls and Landings Heritage Area working on new programs for how people can explore the heritage area. Developing videos and working with groups to do presentations and share videos. Willamette Main Street is open for business. Restaurants and farmers market are open. Requesting masks for vendors and customers.
- Thelma working with Oregon City to put together a tourism plan. Still moving forward.
- **Adjourn TDC Meeting** 4:05 pm