



Meeting of Tourism Development Council (TDC) &
Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

Final

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

2051 Kaen Rd Oregon City Public Services Building Room 369

Watch Meeting on Zoom

<https://clackamascounty.zoom.us/j/84470697758>

Members Present: David Penilton, Hans Wipper, Betsy LaBarge, Gail Yazzolino, Barb Iverson, Tammy Thompson, Luke Spencer

Commissioners Present: Tootie Smith, Chair, Mark Shull, Paul Savas, Martha Schrader, Paul Savas, Sonya Fischer

Staff Present: Samara Phelps, Jim Austin, Anne Austin, Janice Nilson, Jarrod Lyman

Others Present: County Administrator, Gary Schmidt, Clerk to the Board, Tony Mayernik, Tom Riggs, Clackamas County Parks & Forestry, Christina Richartz, Executive Director Estacada Chamber of Commerce and Heather Ibsen, Public Affairs Officer Mt. Hood National Forest

Welcome/Call to order / Introductions – David Penilton, TDC Chair and Tootie Smith, Clackamas County Chair

Tourism Recovery in Estacada:

- **Visit Estacada Update** – Tourism business recovery efforts & collaborations
Christina Richartz, Executive Director Estacada Chamber of Commerce
 - Christina gave a short introduction to Estacada sharing what their community has experienced over the last couple of years and the advances they are making. They have created a new guide to the community and the small businesses they have.
 - Tootie _ All little towns should have guides like this. How did you fund this?
 - It was done with Mt. Hood Gorge region funds and staff provided technical support and we as Mt. Hood Territory have provided promotion for it. The inspiration for the Field Guide started with a piece Travel Oregon City created and we adjusted it to meet Estacada's needs. You can find them in Estacada and roam.

- Commissioner Savas – I imagine the opening of Hwy 224 all the way to Promontory Park is a big deal.
 - May 1st the tube to toothpaste was squeezed and I can't explain to you how excited the recreation industry is. The challenge as a tourism bureau is stop, come see what Estacada has. If you have the opportunity to visit, please do. Yes, we are excited, but there is more to life than the water.
- **HWY 224 Reopening** – What to expect in the Clackamas River Corridor this summer and beyond – Heather Ibsen, Public Affairs Officer, Mt. Hood National Forest.
 - The Mt. Hood National Forest is 1,000,000 acres and just over half of it is in Clackamas County. We suffered 3 major wildfires in 2020 which heavily damaged about a dozen campgrounds. The Riverside Fire made the largest impact on the area. Two hundred miles of roads need attention which we are working with ODOT on. ODOT opened HWY 224 on May 1 using FEMA money to assist with that. It is a day trip. There are a lot of new vistas and waterfalls to see. There are 4 day use sites available for use right now. Hwy 224 goes about 25-30 miles prior to becoming Forest Road 46 continuing to Detroit. That road has multiple areas damaged by the Lions Head and multiple areas damaged due to the Beachie Creek fire and so that segment will not be open this year. However there is an area that goes to Bagby and it is the first priority. There has been an awarded contract for that area and work will start on Monday and hopefully will have more access mid-summer. For the rest of the forest work, in the fall of 2021 congress authorized disaster relief money and after all was said and one Mt. Hood was awarded over 76 million. Our damages are about 130 million. It won't take care of it all but will help. Right now we are doing an environmental analysis and there is public comments for a couple of more weeks. Hopefully, we can start the bulk of the work by summers end. We are super please to have the support and partnering with Mt. Hood Territory.
 - David – Estacada is an area I have traveled for a long time and have seen a lot of growth. Climate change response is so critical. What do you see that will change in the future?
 - For the forest service, there is more emphasis on fire wise programs and those living near them. There will be more interface with the fires. In 2020 when this happened Clackamas County wasn't prepared for fires in their backyards.
 - Barb – You mentioned 12 of 16 campgrounds were affected. What's the plan for those?
 - All of the campgrounds in the Riverside Fire won't reopen this year and probably not next year either. We may be able to open Kingfisher and Robb. Campgrounds are operated by concessioners, contractors who work on our behalf. They will have to be able to get up there and get logistics going. All the campgrounds along 224 are pretty much not there.
 - Betsy – Do you think in that burned out area there is an opportunity for Morels?
 - I've been told the Morel opportunity will be a couple of seasons. Currently, there is a closure on that area. The national

forest has opportunity for citizens where the national parks do not.

Tourism Program Updates:

Tourism Recovery – Trends, staff additions, program developments

FY21/22 Highlights – Work addressing critical issues - Samara Phelps, Director of Tourism

Wanted to provide a background on our program work. When thinking of tourism, visitors are the first audience people think our work focuses on. But to do our work we have developed 4 lenses.

- We look at Tourism through 4 lenses to create well rounded decisions
 - Visitors – what are needs and impacts of decisions
 - Residents – how are they included / impacted by our work
 - Partners – Partners are operators, land managers, and others doing work – how are they impacted
 - Place – how is the identity and unique experience of each place impacted
- The Critical issues we have come up with for the year are
 - Organizational Resiliency
 - Overuse/Underuse
 - Perceptions of Safety
 - Wildfire/COVID Recovery
- We use the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
 - Data on visitor spending and length of stay – Dean Runyon
 - Smith Travel Research on room rates and occupancy
 - Partner surveys
 - Resident sentiment surveys every 5 years
 - Acquiring new data tools for FY22-23
- Organizational Resiliency: Revenue
 - Shared a graph showing how tourism has been impacted over the past couple of years including revenue, staff, and budgeting
 - Looking at the Critical Issues: Reviewed Underused and overused areas as well as Perceptions of Safety, and COVID Recovery

Discussion

- Commissioner Savas – Are there any opportunities that are educational for reforestation to bring people out to learn and so forth
 - In 2022 not sure but longer out definitely. The closure area and risk assessments needed to even bring our own people out we wouldn't be able to do. A large grant allowed planting 177K of trees along rivers. Definitely getting more inquiries.
 - We have been through fire recovery that happened on the gorge, so we have been partnering with Trailkeepers of Oregon and the forest service to help identify opportunities for stewardship, not quite to the educational piece, but beginning steps
 - We've also partnered with We Love Clean Rivers for the Clackamas River Ambassador program which gets volunteers and education out to users on the middle portion of the Clackamas.
 - Hans - For us it would be stabilized employment. It has been a struggle to find quality

employees and keep them.

- David – Its amazing Tourism staff came back. It tells a lot about Clackamas County and the work being done. As far as workforce issues, we are all facing that.
- Luke –I would be interested in knowing if there are ways people can work with the Forest Service, how we work with you and recovery programs. Are there thoughts on the table long term to create better avenues to benefit these communities and businesses back to where it needs to be as quickly as possible?
 - We are just now being able to use the money we have received because of the numerous requirements on actions. Once we have our final analysis completed, a big milestone. There will be volunteer opportunities. Everyone has been working beyond capacity and will continue to go so.
- David – Thank you for taking the time out of your day. These meetings are critical to moving the work forward. I travel the state to hear the thoughts of people throughout the state. The work we are doing in the Tourism industry is supporting education, job opportunities and help tourism across the state of Oregon. I just want to say thank you for what you do and thank you to the BCC for your support.

Adjourned 2:55 pm