

MASON COUNTY LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners' Chambers

411 North 5TH Street, Shelton, WA 98584

Thursday February 5, 2015 10:00 a.m.

Members in Attendance: Chair Terri Jeffreys, Bonnie Knight, Duane Wilson, Stephanie Rowland, Angela Rabelos, Kelly Bergh, Shaun Tucker, Darin Barry, Shaun Tucker Absent: Julie Gray. Mason County Staff: Diane Zoren

1. Chair Jeffreys called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.
2. Approval of Minutes: Approval of the October 30, 2014, minutes
Bergh/Wilson moved and seconded to approve the October 30, 2014 minutes. Motion carried.

Budget Update: Frank Pinter provided an update on the budget. Mr. Pinter said as of December 31, 2014 almost \$300,000.00 was receipted for lodging tax. He anticipates the same for 2015. Frank said in moving forward for 2015, they are looking to do a direct charge for cost of County department supporting LTAC. He reiterated that they budgeted \$52,000.00 but they anticipate the cost to be approximately \$18,000.00.

Chair Jeffreys asked for the 2014 numbers because it didn't come out as anticipated.

Darin asked about analysis on compliance.

Frank said they have not come up with a plan but are trying. He said the Department of Revenue (DOR) has a report. The DOR report is confidential due to sources of revenue. Frank can analyze who should be on the list and he can compare to the payers on the list. Then he can report back to the LTAC committee.

Darin said look to see who is on the Explore Hood Canal now and validate to see if they are paying. If they don't pay LTAC dollars, they should be left out. If they want to be on the Explore Hood Canal website, they can fill out a request form.

Angela confirmed that lodging tax rate is 4%.

Frank reiterated in the next couple weeks, he will go over the list of people on Explore Hood Canal and compare to those who pay.

Shaun Tucker joined the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

3. Tourism Marketing Proposal – Blue Collar Agency

John from Blue Collar Agency introduced Tom, April and Brian. He said he feels last night went well. He stated they are a full service agency. Tom will be doing the campaign platform, April

does social media, Brian is a project manager for websites and makes sure components are there as well as analytics.

Meeting purpose: John said he wants to be open, transparent and solicits feedback. He stressed partnership.

Long Term Goal: Driving revenue

Objectives: "Hood Canal is an adventurous and affordable getaway"

Duane said he thinks it focuses too much on Hood Canal.

John said they promote the whole area.

Shaun commented it's like Lake Chelan. When you refer to Lake Chelan, it's actually the surrounding areas too but people relate to the demographic of "Lake Chelan".

Tom said too much information dilutes and complicates the message. "Hood Canal" simplifies the message.

Darin said it's good because right now they are unbranded so they can create a brand.

Cmmr. Jeffreys said this will capitalize on the familiarity of Hood Canal. She said landmarks can be used as references.

Bonnie suggests the campaign be something like "Hood Canal and more".

Discovery Tour:

Blue Collar Agency representatives visited Mason County on December 8 through 10 and January 14.

Duane said he is upset because a meeting with LTAC never happened during the Discovery phase. He said he's annoyed that the committee wasn't included and didn't know Blue Collar was coming to town.

John said this is a continual process and there are many others to speak with. He said the strategy is sound.

Angela said she too didn't know Blue Collar was coming to town.

Stephanie reminded everyone that it was in the hands of the Commissioners and the Commissioners wanted it broken down into two components. It's not that they just went off and did something else, but they were asked to do something additional. Stephanie reminded Duane that he voted to hire them and they are still in the discovery phase.

Duane is still upset that the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee was excluded and said Blue Collar didn't ask the Lodging Tax committee who they should speak to and so he feels they had no input.

John said the discovery phase is ongoing. He commented that he has so much more knowledge than he did before. John added that he is also trying to be sensitive to the budget.

Bonnie said it's not about changing strategy.

John said they also have to analyze who they should gather information from. John understands Duane would like more communication. John said he also expects this train to travel fast and if it has to slow down or change they will not be arriving to their destination. He added when there are too many masters to serve it slows down progress.

Cmmr. Jeffreys interjected lesson learned and she would like Blue Collar to be able to complete their presentation.

John said they looked at things from an outsider's point of view and asked what is it that tourists want and don't know about Mason County.

Findings: Tourism is a great revenue potential for Mason County. They hope to build packages/sweepstakes etc.

Blue Collar's goal is to hand this campaign off by the close of 2016.

2015 will be a foundation-building year.

2016 will continue to grow and refine successful approaches.

Darin asked about landing pages.

John said there will be landing pages. How it will work and what it will look like still needs to be defined.

Tom said today they are laying out their general strategy. He said they are trying not to get bogged down with smaller details at this point because they will never get anywhere.

Cmmr. Jeffreys commented that they need to move on with this presentation at this point.

John reminded everyone that he can send this presentation out to the LTAC committee via email.

**5 minute break

Blue Collar Agency explained their plans.

Website:

They will advertise and offer packages and excursions and work with others to put the packages together. Business spotlights and events will be featured.

The site should be launched by June.

Budget:

John explained budget plans:

\$40,000 website refresh. They will try to limit costs.

\$10,000 Campaign video

Blogs (expenses are negotiable as locals can contribute)

Newsletter

Sweepstakes

Social Training/Best Practices (pushes social media)

Analytics

Licensing
Server

Darin suggested "join me" consultations for business that may want additional training in order to be more efficient.

Stephanie Rowland will be the Instagram liaison and content and resources point of contact.

\$171,198 less the discovery contract leaves a balance of \$162,533.

John said he is confident they will stay within the budget.

John commented that it's important to partner with the Olympic Peninsula and they need to figure out the best way to do so. They need to make sure they are getting something worthwhile for their money.

Chair Jeffreys said you have to keep working on the relationships to make it work out.

Darin asked what tool will be used for remarketing and how much money is in the budget for this tool.

John said remarketing works well but it also has drawbacks as it can be annoying to people. They need to find a way to work with it. He said Facebook is a good resource and can help identify specific groups of people. The push plan is budgeted at \$750.00 per month and can be shifted to whatever works best.

Darin asked where they would put more money if it were available.

Blue Collar representatives agree that is would be spent on unconventional marketing.

Angela asked who the target market is.

John answered it is targeted for Washington and Oregon at this time and the target age range is 17-35 millennial.

Brian added that they will create pages first and then figure key words and searches. They want to be strategic in their approach. They will create pages with contents to correspond with key words.

Darin brought up the topic of a "network of hotel rooms". He said they should invest in a system to ensure people get hotel rooms even if it means referring people elsewhere.

Bonnie commented on networking and said we need to work on better communication if we want to work as a community.

Duane asked if the committee can send comments and have discussion with each other via email.

Diane Zoren said no and reminded the committee about the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).

Angie said she has interest in linking up with "ExperienceWashington.com".

John said at this point there is a lot of work to do. They need a good foundation and need to cultivate community and cooperation at this time. If these things are done too soon or too quickly someone may land on a bad web page.

Cmmr. Jeffreys commented that her main concern at this point is getting businesses and tourism stakeholders in the community to participate. She said she doesn't really want to get too far ahead at this time. She added that she is fine with a low level plan for 2015.

Stephanie said she sees this as a collaborative effort and they can start small and grow. People are anxious to jump in.

Duane Wilson asked what they will do about the ferries and pamphlets.

The group reiterated that they need print-outs at future meetings because it's hard to see the screen on the television.

Bonnie Knight/Shawn Tucker moved and seconded to accept the contract with Blue Collar Agency including the campaign strategy and proposed budget. Motion carried unanimously.

Angela said the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee need to meet more often.

4. Olympic Tourism Commission Membership - Committee voted to postpone this discussion at this time.
Bonnie Knight/Darin Barry moved and seconded to table this discussion until additional details are clarified. Motion carried. (Stephanie did not vote)

John said they will show results in June. The campaign platform will be in place at that time.

John is unclear on what exactly the Olympic Tourism Commission (OTC) has to offer. He commented that it seems very diluted at this point. His suggestion is that someone should ask OTC what exactly they will offer for the \$6500.

Duane said they can look at presentations online but just not make a motion or vote.

Cmmr. Jeffreys said LTAC cannot conduct business or email, reply or discuss items with each other via email and reiterated that the committee needs to become familiar with the OPMA.

5. Other Business – Discuss everyone's roles and communications at a future meeting.
6. Public Comment – There was no public comment.
7. Next meeting – March 2015 meeting. Diane will schedule a meeting in March. Reminder and agendas will be sent to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee.

Presentation from Union Tourism Association on virtual visitor information centers: It was agreed this presentation can wait a bit longer due to other priorities at this time.

Compliance with the Open Government Trainings Act: Currently there are five LTAC members in compliance and two more need to complete the online training. It was agreed that there is no need for classroom training as each member is doing it on their own.


8. Adjourn

LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

ATTEST:



LTAC Clerk



Cmmr. Terri Jeffreys, Chair