

TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes – February 5, 2019 at 4:00 pm
Courtyard Conference Room

Committee Members:

Barbara Hochberg (Chair)
Wynniss Grow (Vice Chair)
Terry Hopkins
Colene Martin - Absent
Robert Hamlyn - Late
Tamara Bushnell
Doug Bradley - Absent
Sara Bristol
Damion Trovato – Late

City/Staff/Council Liaisons:

Roy Lindsay- Mayor
Aaron Cubic – City Manager
Valerie Lovelace - City Council
Susan Seereiter - City Business Advocate
Jason Canady – Director of Public Works
Lora Glover - Director of PCD
Guests: Ward Warren
Holly Lidey – Securing our Safety
Gabby Stewart – Securing our Safety
Arden McConnell – Member of HBSC
Germaine Cartmell
Caleb LaPlante - Rotary

1. **Roll Call** – Chair Hochberg called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.
2. **Items from Public** (opportunity for citizens to share information with the Committee regarding items that are not on the agenda).
 - Ward Warren – He was at the Merchant Meeting. He noted that the Historical Building and Sites Commission (HBSC) is planning a Bridge and Redwood Empire Sign Celebration. Tentative date is Friday, May 10.
 - Holly Lidey spoke about Securing our Safety. Their goal is to seek sustainable funding for County criminal justice. They recently hired a firm out of Portland that specializes in gathering stats related to law enforcement from state and local agencies and compares data to other cities of our size. They are fund raising and their next event is the 6th annual Run for the Law on March 2 at 9 am. It starts at Club NW. They have had 300 – 400 participants in the past. It is a precursor to the Pear Blossom in April.
 - Arden McConnell is recruiting for information and recommendations for the public on what they might like to see landmarked. Suggestions can be made to the Historic Buildings and Sites Commission. There is a process those suggestions will go through. There are maps available with current landmarks as a historical tour and the historic district.
 - Jon Bowen spoke with Archie Lidey about the Run for the Law. He would like to have this added to a future agenda.
3. **Approval of Minutes** –
 - Member Bristol stated she had suggested a priority of encouraging the Council to conduct a study that, on the minutes, morphed into a study for the convention center, and was not what she had proposed. What she was proposing was a SWOT analysis of what their needs are and how to augment tourism, looking at things they may need during different seasons. It was an open-ended look at what Grants Pass could do, what they are doing well and what they can do for opportunities. She doesn't have a recollection of how that became convention center because she feels doing a feasibility study on a convention center is too soon. She is aware they recommended to the Council they do a feasibility study on the convention center, but she is not sure how the

minutes got from point A to point B. She added that she doesn't feel they recommended a feasibility study on the convention center specifically.

- Susan added that the minutes stated "Member Bristol suggested taking a needs analysis on what it is going to take our tourism to the next level."
- Member Bristol added that it was in there but what got proposed to the City Council, as far as their goals, was specifically the feasibility study for the convention center which was not her intent and felt that was not what the committee agreed to either.
- Member Bristol agreed that the convention center is one possibility but her idea wasn't that limited. She wonders if she should make a different proposal in the future for us to hammer out the details of what we are looking for.
- Lora Glover clarified that they were pulling lists together from different areas and the "convention center feasibility" was in the Urban Renewal Plan also so she feels it took on the highlight of [the Urban Renewal Plan]. We really do need to focus more on what our needs are. It might be a convention center, or it might be something that has a large meeting space and not necessarily a full-blown, Vegas-style, convention center on a small scale and more appropriate for this community. That is on the list and as we go to develop what we want in that RFP.
- Jon Bowen stated there has been a lot of discussion about this over the years and his office gets a lot of calls for recommendations of meeting space. He doesn't like the words convention center because it entails a big thing. Medford did a study on the scale of Portland and it didn't pencil out. But, it would be size appropriate for this area but meeting a need that is very strong. In initial talks with hoteliers their interested in our marketplace to expand here and they see the need, but do you have a feasibility study to support what we think is there. It wouldn't take much to suggest some other needs. Maybe sports hosting since the City is making great efforts on soccer fields and other things that would entice sports hosting.
- Member Bristol said she will recommend approval of the minutes and she will bring this up at a future point to make a more specific recommendation. She noted that she did bring it up at the October and November meetings, so she is trying to get it beyond just her repeatedly bringing it up.

MOTION/VOTE

**Member Bristol moved and member Hopkins seconded the motion to approve both the minutes from November 27, 2018 and the Joint HBSC and Tourism meeting of December 13, 2018. The vote resulted as follows: "AYES": Chair Hochberg, Vice Chair Grow, Members Hopkins, Bushnell, Bristol. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Members Martin, Bushnell, Bradley and Trovato.
The motion passed.**

4. Work Session Items:

a. Water Treatment Plant – Jason Canady

- Jason talked about situational awareness which is a campaign by the City to figure out what the public knows, what they need to know, what their partners are going to be and who the stakeholders are for this important project for the community. They are reaching out to a lot of our community groups and committees. They are also looking for folks to serve on their upcoming efforts. The water treatment plant is really

having issues. It is 87 years old. That is the oldest, continuously operating treatment plant in Oregon. It produces plenty of great water day in and day out. However, it is vulnerable to failure at any given time. Construction techniques back in 1931 were not what they are today. There are multiple failures in multiple parts of the building. This treatment plant needs to be replaced. Even in a minor earthquake there will be massive damage to this building and it is the only source of water for Grants Pass. After much discussion, it was decided to build a new treatment plant at a new location. Back on November 7, 2018 the City Council passed a major rate increase to ensure that we can pay for this project. They have already set aside 10 million for this project which kept the rate increase smaller than it could have been. At this time, they added the water treatment plant replacement fee and it can roll off the bill when the debt is paid. That will top out at about \$13.50 per residential customer per month. It all goes exclusively to the treatment plant debt service. The water rate will increase by .28% plus CPI for the next 5 years. Sewer rate will go up one more year at 7.5% and stormwater fee will increase over a 4-year schedule to pay for new DEQ requirements for the stormwater system. Jason wants to find out who their potential partners are for the situational assessment. Who are the champions within the community? Who does the water plant effect and how does it affect the community. They want to reach the people that have a regulatory or political context. What do people want to know and what do they know about the project. Who are the advocates and detractors? Are there people that feel we don't need a new water treatment plant? We need to find out who those people are and why they feel that way and what information can we get to them. We also need to think about elements they haven't thought about. They are looking for a march date. They are meeting with CEDC committee to participate in that. Jason handed out some cards and asked members if they want to participate in the assessment as an individual to please fill the card out.

- Member Hopkins asked if the treatment plant would have to be moved to a new location? Jason answered, correct. The advisory committee evaluated whether the new plant could be rebuilt in place. The decision was made that it could not because sections would have to be removed in order to rebuild and capacity of the plant would reduce by 1/3 for potentially 2 years at a phase. That is risky for a community. Does the City own property that would allow the alternate location? Jason stated yes, but they are also looking at other properties that would work more advantageously.
- A member asked what would happen to the old plant? Jason answered that he would hate to see it torn down. It is an amazing landmark. We are an American Water Works Association National Water Landmark, one of two in the state. The other is Lithia Springs.
- Member Trovato asked about the infrastructure of the place and fixing it up and then be able to use it? Jason mentioned that structurally there are issues but it more related to what they are doing with the structure. You could put a restaurant in there and in the event of an earthquake pieces will fall down but you're not going to take your water supply out. The building could be hardened to allow people to get out during an earthquake but its still going to fail but it's the water that is the issue.

There are some structural areas at the plant that because they are holding back water and the weight of water is so great that structure can fail just because of the water behind it. If you take the water away, the building could last another 50-80 years.

b. Santa Run Event – Caleb LaPlante talked about the Santa Run.

- He showed the committee the graphics/logo. He also passed along event packets. He showed a video for the same event in Virginia Beach from 2016. He also sent an email to Jon Bowen describing what the event would entail. There will be three routes.

A 1-mile fun run/walk, a 5K race for fun and then a 5-mile race for more serious runners. His idea is to close a portion of 6th Street for the race. The race costs \$30 but gets you a Santa suit. The race is really a spectator event. The hope is this will become a tradition with a lot of spectators as years go on. The route will continue down to the river, promoting landmarks and businesses along the way. The finish line is on G in front of Never a Bum Steer. Racers will see the core of downtown Grants Pass. The 5-mile race will continue up to the north end of town and back down 6th Street. It will be the second weekend in December, the weekend after the parade. In the video he showed, they had a convention center. Before and after the race, it was used for people to convene. He talked to Tom Blanchard and Christy Hill at Oregon Futbol Academy (OFA) and they really like the concept. Even though Dutch Bros isn't the owner of OFA, Travis [Boersma] is a major sponsor. There is a lot going on in that block to promote. There is also the Great San Francisco Santa Run that is also a very large run. He discussed further logistics about the run. If there is interest in this event, he suggests they hire the We Run Oregon group to help us since this is a fundraiser for Rotary. It can be part of a set of races around Oregon.

- Chair Hochberg asked if there would be enough time to get it all going with the volunteers and Santa suits? He said yes, and they only need 20-25 volunteers and the suits could be here in 6 weeks.
- Member Hamlyn asked if Caleb had considered making it a week earlier than the second Saturday to combine it with First Friday and maybe even move the parade to the same Saturday. Caleb answered that the parade is actually the weekend before the proposed race and the "We Run Oregon" people may already be doing a run on that weekend.
- Jon Bowen asked if they gave a projection on the interest for this race in Grants Pass. The organizer felt we have a strong interest already with the running community alone.
- Caleb said this can be the kind of race that brings over 1,000 people easily because there is already a strong running community here. He would like to propose, if the committee wants it, they can advertise more and get a lot of people, or do we want to start smaller, learn and grow.
- There was a question of who organized the Pub Crawl last year. It is a young lady that works at the Post Office. There was discussion if it should be held the same day as the Pup Crawl. The members gave a thumbs up from this committee for the Santa Run. Caleb said he doesn't need funding from the City at this point but will approach the City Council if his other funding doesn't pan out.

c. Recap of City Council Strategic Planning –

- Chair Hochberg spoke about the flag promotion, feasibility study for the convention center that could possibly be extended, downtown services cleanliness and restrooms, alley activation through the Blue Zones project, and the warming/cooling center.
- Valarie Lovelace recapped the Strategic Plan goals. She mentioned Dollar Mountain as being one of the highest priorities from a Firewise standpoint as well as tourism. The second priority was organizational focus and collaborate with community partners to reduce transient vagrancy impacts including the downtown. Third highest was the Welcome Center public restrooms and public safety substation. Lower priority items were the Beacon Hill trail development, determine the highest and best use for River Road Reserve, develop Riverside Park community building [Isaac Walton Building], include school resource officers in other schools, comprehensive needs assessment for GIS, alley activation and beautification, encourage environment encouraging the growth of affordable housing opportunities. Those were the top 10. Lower on the list were to explore partnership opportunities to enhance the airport, encourage and increase community cleanup efforts/litter enforcement, promote workforce development, upgrade and repurpose Westholm Park, allocate a percentage of revenue from lodging tax for public art, tree canopy study, develop an innovative pavement repair program to test new repair products, leverage and collaborate with other service agencies to address the prevention of homeless and poverty issues, emergency alert notification system, refurbish Hillcrest Public Safety Station. She stated she values the input of this committee and stated it is important to them [City Council].
- Jon Bowen added that Dollar Mountain wasn't on their agenda, but it will offer a lot for different competitions and events. The Welcome Center really needs attention and is a reflection on our city.

d. Tourism Report and 3-year plan –

- Jon gave his tourism report. January is a slower month. They met with Securing our Safety about the race to see if it will meet their goals for tourism. On the Alley Activation project, it has to have easy event execution. Its not just the beauty of the alley. The event execution is just as important as the aesthetics. Josephine County is considering a lodging tax. Travel Southern Oregon wants a TID (Tourism Improvement District) that would be an assessment amount on every lodging stay. These are just concepts currently and the hoteliers, the County and City all need to be involved. Jon is already working on some of the events for the year. Fireworks show is already underway for a bigger show this year. One of the bands has been booked too. Art Along the Rogue is coming together nicely as well. They are putting together a new website that he is excited about, but it will be a big process. There was a Merchant Meeting this morning. Jon wishes there was more participation, but it was a good meeting. He presented the Goal Setting to the CEDC on February 4. They also had the first First Friday Live of the year. It wasn't well attended but March really kicks off the season. He also has

ongoing meetings with the City every week with Lora Glover. There was a discussion brought up about Merchants being open on Sunday and the Welcome Center is not open on Sunday either. Under his contract they are to be open 40 hours in the off-season and 48 hours in peak season which is Saturday. He is budgeted for those hours but would like to discuss it with this group.

- Member Bristol suggested maybe just for the merchants stay open a little later in the evening. She was disappointed at Christmas that at 5:15 everything was closed. Maybe until 6:30 so people can shop local and not do it on Saturday.
- Jon added that it is a common complaint and he understands the merchant side of it too. Locals work 9-5 and they have time at 6 pm to shop. Tourists are out doing things 18 hours a day and come into town at night. We need to work on it.
- Member Hopkins noted that the comments he heard were people were concerned that the Welcome Center closes at 2 pm on Saturday. There are people that have restaurants that are open for breakfast so maybe there could be a list of places that are open but the Saturday 2 pm was of concern more than Sunday.
- Jon hadn't heard that comment but noted that activity does taper down in there [Welcome Center] depending on what is going on.
- Member Hochberg quoted an editorial titled "Appreciating a Downtown that's the Envy of Others" and somebody from Ashland who said that Klamath Falls, Roseburg, Coos Bay and many others can't boast the vitality scene in our Historic District and its epicenter at 6th and G. That is fabulous.
- Member Grow asked Jon what are his months for low and high season for downtown? Jon answered January, February is the low season and it starts loosening up in March. Peak season is an interesting one to report. We don't have statistics because we don't have a sales tax to get the reporting from. Summertime, June through August is the strongest and even all the way to October are doing well.

5. **Information Sharing:**

a. Items from Staff

- Lora Glover talked about the City finance director being the lead on our PAVE audits. It's time again to bring up to Council which department or division. One is property management but during the discussion the thought of doing Tourism came up too.
- Member Bristol mentioned they have not formally been told what the PAVE Committee is.
- Lora said the members would be selected at the City Council meeting tomorrow night (February 6) then the committee will decide what they want to propose and what areas they want to look at. They will work with this committee on that and get their ideas. There will be more information coming.
- Jon asked what are the qualifications for the members of this committee? His concern is they have an understanding of tourism and what it takes and not just members of the community that think they are spending too much money.

- Lora stated there are 3 or 4 qualifications to meet on the property management side and do we have properties that we aren't utilizing well in rentals or do we need to retain those. On the Tourism part we want someone that is involved with marketing, tourism interest; there were several categories. We are really looking forward to getting it started. Once an RFP is drafted then we'll bring it back to this committee to be sure we haven't missed anything.
- Jon wonders what its going to cost to have a consultant like that.
- Lora responded that this is a value that the City Council feels worthwhile. We've done almost all the departments and divisions with these audits.
- Jon asked if the funds come out of tourism?
- Lora stated, no. Money has been set aside already for this.
- Valerie stated, as a Councilor and a person that has gone through the process, she feels that through this process, why not put it on the table and have a third party look at it which is exactly what a PAVE Audit can do. Then you can choose what's best for you. That lets you see it through a different set of eyes.
- Member Hopkins asked if this committee could have input into the selection for PAVE.
- Councilor Lovelace stated it is the City Council that makes the selection.
- Member Bristol feels we are a committee without a purpose in some ways. In her two years on this committee the Council has not asked anything of us and then its shocking when all of a sudden, a different committee is being formed for what could be the same purpose as this committee. I am looking forward to the PAVE process and I think it will be good and we'll find out more what the mission and purpose is of this committee.
- Councilor Lovelace pointed out that like Lora said it will come back here. We have to tell that third party what we are looking for and what we want them to do.
- Member Bristol said that nothing has ever been told to this committee of what we are looking for. It will work itself out eventually.
- Councilor Lovelace stated she has seen that starting to happen. But it is up to you. Roy and I get the prize for being on the most committees but going through the process and being with the committees you realize how much committees need guidance. You get together about an hour a month and how much can be done in an hour? And you're giving up your time and some of the strengths I have seen is when you have sub-committees, or you have things that people on the committee bring as well. Part of the problem is, and this isn't necessarily Jon, it's just how its evolved, is that it ends up being the Jon show. I would think that Jon doesn't want it to be that way but that's kind of how it's been. I would like to see more of you to put that input in. That will come as you evolve into an advisory council to do that and that is what I'm hoping comes about through this process.
- Member Bushnell said this is the way it has always been before Jon ever arrived.
- The Mayor said that one of things the PAVE committee has done in the past is they have brought ideas into focus is that 'we didn't think of that'.

It has made an impact in several departments to improve customer relations or whatever it happens to be.

- Jon mentioned that a delicate thing is the public/private partnership and under contract he has a list of parameters and a set amount of money and I'm obligated to execute that to the best of my ability. He makes decisions that he believes achieve that goal. His name is on the line as well as the obligation to wisely use that money. At the end of the day, did I meet the goals of the City. They gave me two parameters as benchmarks; tax revenue/occupancy rates/room revenues are the only measurables we have and then website statistics. Both of those have gone through the roof under my tenure and no way do I want to take credit for that individually because it's a collective work. It's going to be really easy in this process for this thing to go sideways and you may find that this private/public partnership doesn't work. I am hoping we come up with a balance between my fulfilling the needs of the contract based on my profession and years of experience, your input constructively presented, and the PAVE audit, third party expert, saying this is what we would expect of a city and budget of this size and this is what we expect of a town of this size and these are the types of things that a contractor should do in a city like this. That would be a healthy discussion.
- The Mayor said one of the things to realize also is when the PAVE committee makes a recommendation the City is not obligated to follow that recommendation and there have been many that we have not followed.
- Member Hamlyn left the meeting.
- Councilor Lovelace mentioned she is no longer the liaison for this committee. DJ Faszer will be taking over. He is excited to be here, and I think you will really like him.

b. Items from Committee Members

- None

c. Items from City Council Liaison

- None

6. Future Agenda Building for Next Meeting

7. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm

NEXT MEETING: March 5, 2019 at 4:00 pm in the Courtyard Conference Room

Minutes prepared by Donna Anderson, City Administration