

TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes – May 7, 2019 at 4:00 pm
Courtyard Conference Room

Committee Members:

Barbara Hochberg (Chair)
Wynniss Grow (Vice Chair)
Terry Hopkins-Absent
Robert Hamlyn-Absent
Tamara Bushnell
Doug Bradley
Sara Bristol - Late
Damion Trovato
Lany Sullivan
Mandi DelVaglio

City/Staff/Council Liaisons:

Susan Seereiter - City Business Advocate
Jon Bowen – Experience Grants Pass
DJ Faszer – City Councilor

Guests:

Germaine Cartmell

1. Roll Call and introductions –

- Chair Hochberg called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- New members Lany Sullivan and Mandi DelVaglio were introduced.

2. Items from Public (opportunity for citizens to share information with the Committee regarding items that are not on the agenda).

- None

3. Approval of Minutes –

MOTION/VOTE

Member Bushnell moved and member Bradley seconded the motion to approve the minutes from April 2, 2019 as presented. The vote resulted as follows: “AYES”: Chair Hochberg, Vice Chair Grow, Members, Bradley, Bushnell, and Trovato “NAYS”: None. Abstain: DelVaglio and Sullivan. Absent: Member Bristol, Hamlyn and Hopkins. The motion passed.

Member Bristol arrived.

4. Work Session Items:

a. Airbnb and VRBO Lodging Tax update -

- Susan mentioned there has been good progress. The City will still collect funds quarterly but will revise the form to show monthly starting in June 30. City Code indicates they need to be reported quarterly. Susan referenced HB 2018 for Airbnb and VRBO and noted there has been some changes regarding collecting to Airbnb to that Bill. Ashland and Medford are not collecting for Airbnb. Jay Meredith (City finance director) is working on the ability to collect for Airbnb. Airbnb also does not have permits but it hasn't been enforced. This permit fee will be in lieu of the Business Tax fee from the City. Parks & Community Development will send them a letter that will state the requirements to register with the cities lodging tax program. Member Bradley asked what the requirements are? Susan didn't have all those details. Jon Bowen mentioned that

Uber is online for Grants Pass now. They talked about potential for taxi drivers to crossover to Uber and Lyft.

b. County membership -

- Susan asked if the members would like to advocate for a County member. Jon Bowen talked about how his office markets County destinations and assets, etc. The Rogue River is primarily in the County and tourists engage in the County a great deal. He would like to keep a close partnership with the County even though they aren't engaging currently but will be involved at some point. He has been advocating their partnership with Experience Grants Pass and Travel Southern Oregon to promote the region. There are pros and cons to this. Susan mentioned the Tourism Improvement District. If the County gets involved they can have that discussion and cross that divide. They discussed if bringing on a County representative would be a member or just a liaison. They were also under the impression they needed special qualifications for each member. Susan clarified those special qualifications are: Interest or experience in tourism promotion, two members representing lodging properties in within the city, others representing river guides, area attractions, realtors, restaurant, media, marketing and citizens at larger. They talked about a Chamber of Commerce having a member for this committee. Colene Martin was a member but Josie Malloy sat in for her. Josie will be coming to the meetings as a liaison. They would like to have a County liaison and would like City Council to consider it.

MOTION/VOTE

**Member Bradley moved and member Sullivan seconded the motion to recommend a County liaison to the Tourism Advisory Committee: "AYES": Chair Hochberg, Vice Chair Grow, Members, Bradley, Bristol, Bushnell, DeVaglio, Sullivan and Trovato "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Member Hopkins.
The motion passed.**

c. Art Along the Rogue Theme -

- Jon Bowen stated AATR will be the first weekend in October. He is looking for theme ideas. Last year's theme was "Wild and Scenic". Chair Hochberg's "Let's Face It" theme from the past was very successful. Animals on parade or Countries (international culture), outdoor inspiration, historic district, fire drill, air travel, circus, above the current.

d. Jon Bowen Report –

- Jon reported that they started online registration for Back to the 50s. Back in April he got a call that the Easter Egg Hunt wasn't going to take place. He was asked to take it on and with a few other organizations they were able to make it happen.
- He met with some business people and had good discussion with some County folks, along with Darin Fowler, out in Merlin. They are hoping to have more of a voice and it was an encouraging meeting.
- There was a Merchant Meeting on April 30. They are trying to get more merchants to attend. They are working on the downtown plan that has a 20-year vision for the city. It is a big process with many elements. He talked about the downtown and the way it was historically, the rediscovery

of historic downtown and where it is headed. They talked about how they don't want the downtown to have no identity. The districts need to be considered as well. There is the Historic District, the Redwood District, the Fruitdale District, etc. Districts work very well in other communities. It's a big project but a very exciting one.

- Jon described the Downtown Alley Activation project, how it started and where it is now. Blue Zones has been working with the project but have lost some employees so the project has lost some momentum.
- The Great Race – Jon believes this will be a big turnout based on the inquiries he has received thus far. It will be on June 26 at 5 pm on G and 5th streets at the Owl lot. His office will host the 450 racers and provide dinner for them. Cars will be lined up on G Street.
- 4th of July – They are working on it currently and finalizing the entertainment.
- Back to the 50s and Art Along the Rogue is in the beginning stages. Rally on the Rogue was canceled.
- New Visitor Guides are done. There is one for special circumstances. The other is smaller and will be cut down to 12 pages so they can quadruple their distribution.
- PAVE (Performance Audit Visioning & Enhancement) review of the Tourism program is in process. Jon outlined the process for the members.
- Jon met with Warren Hensman, City Police Chief. Jon mentioned some of the new programs Chief Hensman wants to bring to the downtown including new cadets.
- Downtown newsletter, he brought some copies for members.
- Welcome Center is changing. His office will now be there but will keep his other office for the creative parts of his job.

5. **Information Sharing:**

a. **Items from Staff**

- Susan talked about hosting a Makers Meet-up group. It is a group for all the creatives and makers. They will have it at the Haul. Wednesday, May 15. She mentioned the Innovation Hub and the hiring of a new director. The City wants to encourage the Maker Community and see people be creative.
- Balloon event. Susan is a volunteer for the balloon event as well as the launch.
- Downtown Master Plan is coming up on June 18 from 4-6 pm.

b. **Items from Committee Members**

- Member Trovato is inviting one of the rafting companies for First Friday in June. In July they will have Hula dancers. He also noted he will not be attending the next meeting.
- Member Bushnell mentioned the Taprock State of the Lodging event (exact name unknown).
- Chair Hochberg talked about Dancing with the Grants Pass Stars is this Saturday. She will be a judge.
- Sara Bristol asked about what will happen with the influx of people with the extra horse racing. Vice-Chair Grow said they had a board meeting and TNB Racing (Travis Boersma company) will be taking over but it has

not been finalized with SORA (Southern Oregon Racing Association). They talked about having members of SORA come to the next meeting. Member Bristol said she won't be at the next two meetings but can call in for the July meeting.

c. Items from City Council Liaison

- Councilor Faszler (DJ) stated he is happy to know there is progress being made with the lodging tax with Airbnb. He will pursue the request for the county liaison for this committee.

6. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 5:09 pm.

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

Minutes prepared by Donna Anderson, City Administration