

Travel Information Council
Quarterly Meeting
Phoenix Grand Hotel - Salem, Oregon
Friday, September 5, 2008

Council Participating:

David Porter, Public Member

George Forbes, Lodging Industry

Ed Fischer, ODOT

John Brenne, Public Member

Sandra Flicker, Public Member

Drew Roslund, Hospitality Industry

Maria Ponzi, Public Member

Mike Drennan, Public Member

Rod Miles, Outdoor Advertising Industry

Tom Loun, Electrical Sign Industry

TIC Staff Participating:

Cheryl Gribskov, Executive Director

Mary Pat Parker, Chief of Staff

Jim Renner, Sign Operation Officer

Craig Tutor, Dev. & Marketing Manager

Annie VonDomitz, Events & Program Manager

Sharyl Parker, Industry Dev. Manager

Morgan Virdi, Administrative Assistant

Angie Picha, Business Manager

Guest:

Doug Grafe, Heritage Tree Program Chair

Greg Mindt, Oregon Lodging Assoc

Julia Adam, Washington Co. VA

Geoff Guilfooy, AKT Accounting Firm

Jennifer Johnson, Wilsonville Clackamas Co. Tourism VC

David Porter convened the meeting at 9:00 AM

INTRODUCTIONS

Council and Staff members did a round table introduction.

MINUTES - FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Approval of June 13, 2008 minutes

George Forbes recommended two corrections. John Brenne moved the minutes be approved. George Forbes seconded the motion. The motion passed with no dissenting votes.

B. Financial Report

Angie reported that TIC is showing continued financial health and stability. Cash projections show adequate income to cover upcoming budgeted expenses. Sign program income is currently above budget due to summer months being a higher income season for the program; income will decrease during fall and winter months. Expenses are all below budget with the exception of administration, Heritage Programs and New Tech programs.

C. Executive Director Report

Cheryl acknowledged the council retreat from the previous day and thanked all for their participation and input. The culmination of ideas from the retreat will set the framework and direction we want to head as an agency.

Mary Pat and Maria have been working in a partnership with TravelOregon and ODOT on development of the Trails concept.

Craig and Cheryl have been working together on the development of the rest area structure and its direction.

Jim has been working with Luc on development of a database for the Heritage Tree program that will house the history and photos of the program trees.

Cheryl recognized Morgan Virdi, staff at TIC. She was hired to assist Craig with clerical work and when the rest area town halls started, she stepped in and helped set up the meetings. She has also put together a report and graphs from data collected on the vending machine program in the rest areas and the survey material collected from travelers stopping at the Albany Visitors Associations Historic House located at the southbound Santiam rest area. She has been wonderful; if there is a need, she is more than willing to step in and help.

D. Financial Risk Assessment

Cheryl introduced Geoff Guilfooy with AKT accounting firm; their firm has been selected to perform an internal controls risk assessment of TIC. The goal is to have the assessment completed and a report ready for the December Council meeting.

Geoff gave an overview of what is expected with the performance of the risk assessment. He anticipates that it will take about a week of interviewing and reviewing of the agency's processes. They will look at the current control system in place and environment, review financial reports and ensure compliance with current laws and rules. They will outline areas of concern and give recommendations to rectify any issues.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Change to Wood Post Standards

Jim presented the Council with potential sign standards changes. ODOT has revised its Standard Drawings for Wood Post Sign Supports. The effective date of this change is October 15, 2008. The new standards will decrease the number of signs or square footage TIC is currently able to install on a single wood post by half. At present the cost for a wood post installation is \$500. The new installation requirements with steel would be \$3500. This increase will have a significant impact on our ability to provide cost-effective signing. This could also directly affect the customer through increased fees to off-set material cost or denials due to the increased space necessary for steel installations and limited space available on the right of way. Existing signs are grandfathered in, but if a post is damaged or broken, it will need to be replaced under the new specifications.

Ed shared with Council that he requested the deadline be extended by six months while the new standards are reviewed and all the options are considered.

B. Trails Concept

Maria gave a brief recap on the Trails concept that was presented at the June Council meeting. At a Scenic Byways meeting earlier this spring a proposal was presented by she and Allison of Sokol Blosser for a Scenic Byway that would encompass six Willamette Valley AVA's, with entry points into the Byway from several locations.

Mary Pat shared that she visited Danuta Pfeiffer who developed the Oregon Country Trails program. She was very impressed with the accomplishment of the program. The facilities along the route have worked together and developed a wonderful system where they support and promote each others business. This is an excellent template for what is being proposed for the AVA's.

Mary Pat is currently working on a business plan and cost analysis for the Trails concept. She has talked with TravelOregon about promotion and possible grant funding for the project.

C. InfoCenter Design

Craig reported to Council that he meet with Eric Gazley with Gazley Plowman Architects to work on development of new InfoCenter designs. Drafts of several concepts were passed around. The goal is to have four InfoCenters with the new design constructed by August 2009.

D. Ethics Policy Changes

Angie informed the Council that earlier this year the Oregon Ethics Commission revised several guidelines for public officials. In doing due diligence for the agency, we meet with them to review the changes and get clarifications on questions we had.

The main impact to TIC from the revisions is the consideration of "gift". The value of gift being received in a one year period from a single source with legislative or administrative interest has been decreased to \$50. Food is now included as part of that gift consideration; any food consumed with an individual(s) with legislative or administrative interest has a limit of \$50 from a single source in a one year period. Receiving a gift, such as a free nights lodging stay for personal use while on business is not appropriate. In a situation such as this the gift needs be refused, or used by the agency for future business.

E. Next Meeting

The next meeting is Friday, December 12th in Yachats at the Overleaf Lodge.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Strategic Rest Area Plan

Cheryl told the Council that there are four lobby groups definitely interested in the basics of what we are asking for with the Strategic Rest Area Plan, which is four service plazas and two new welcome centers. \$6.2 million is being sought from the Lottery fund to cover the construction of the new facilities. A package is also being presented to the legislature that would give state police the authority to cite and fine individuals living and soliciting in the rest areas.

The goal of the rest area plan is to present the public with rest areas the state can be proud of that are safe and have great visitor centers that serve the traveling public.

B. Oasis Program

Sharyl gave a brief overview of the Oasis program which was initiated by the FHWA in October 2006. The Oasis program utilizes private land and primary focus is to provide a stopping area for trucks, but will also serve as a wayside for the general traveler, providing restrooms, fuel and food. ODOT has asked TIC to oversee the program in Oregon. To get input from the industry there has been one meeting with the trucking and oil industry. A second is planned for October 18th to meet with truck stop and gas station owners.

C. Update on Branding

Mary Pat shared with Council the new logo designs and program brochure that encompasses all of TIC's programs. She is currently working on an additional piece to use for the upcoming legislative session.

D. Siskiyou Rest Area

Mary Pat attended the Siskiyou hearing on August 28. The planning committee did not open the floor back up to additional testimony. The next meeting is September 25 and the anticipation is at that time the process will move to the next stage which is with Jackson County Commissioners.

Jim told Council that he has received the initial submission of construction plans for the Siskiyou rest area. ODOT has taken the stance that the project is going to proceed and is moving forward with the construction planning process.

E. Heritage Tree Network

Jim acknowledged Morgan for coordinating the Camperdown Elm event. At the event Jean Harkin was honored with the 2007 Citizen Volunteer Award from Oregon Community Trees and Oregon Department of Forestry for her effort in saving the 95-year old Camperdown Elm in Hillsboro. The tree was in the footprint of a new development and because of her effort the company owning the property took responsibility for moving the tree to a new protected location.

F. Regional Commemorative Historical Markers

Annie told Council that there had been a change in focus of the markers for the 7 regions; they will be more focused on the local regions identity. Currently we have sponsorship for two markers. One is in Southern Oregon and the other on the Southern Oregon Coast. There are two other groups potentially interested in sponsorship.

Sharyl Parker acknowledged three council members that supplied fruitful sponsorship leads. Sandy Flicker initiated contact with the Ford Foundation that lead to sponsorship and grant money for the Southern Oregon Marker in the Roseburg area. Rod Miles helped make the connection at Three Rivers Casino in Florence, which is sponsoring the Southern Coast marker. Drew Roslund facilitated contact with the Yachats City Council. They are discussing potential sponsorship of a marker.

Mary Pat and Annie are giving a presentation next week to the Albany Visitors Association meeting.

PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

A. Heritage Tree Program

Jim shared with Council the itinerary for the upcoming Heritage Tree Committee trip September 18-20 to Eastern Oregon. Along with visiting Heritage Trees in the area they will also stop and visit the Multnomah Falls InfoCenter and the Umatilla Welcome Center along their route.

Jim introduced Doug Grafe, the new Heritage Tree Program Chair. Doug shared that the Heritage Tree Committee is a highly energized group and the group recognizes what TIC provides for the Heritage Tree Program and is very appreciative of that support. Doug thanked Cheryl for her participation and commitment to the Heritage Tree dedications and Jim for his support and hard work with the program.

B. Historical Marker Program

Annie reported three markers currently in the works; Westport, Vanport and Camp Adair. The Westport marker process is near completion, just paperwork needs to be finalized and the installation done. A fall or spring dedication is planned for the Vanport marker. Camp Adair is anticipated for a spring or late summer dedication next year, with a stand-down of the old marker in conjunction with the dedication of the new marker.

C. MISA

Annie presented a copy of the agenda for the upcoming MISA conference that is in Seattle at the Red Lion Fifth Avenue, September 29th through October 1st. The conference is being held in conjunction with the Safety Rest Area group. The Transportation Tourism Task Force is doing a panel presentation at the Conference. Conference participants are encouraged to take the opportunity to attend the Safety Rest Area conference that continues after the finish of the MISA conference. The location for the conference next year is planned for Mississippi.

D. Sales & Marketing Committee

Craig reported high interest in the Portland Airport brochure distribution.

He has worked with State Parks to place panels in all the InfoCenter locations, each location will have either a single or double panel display. The Oak Grove and Gettings Creek InfoCenters have been remodeled and we are looking at upgrading the Manzanita and Boardman locations.

ODOT has been paid the 25% of gross sales from current Tripcheck revenues. An annual bill has been sent out to TripCheck customers and the returns so far have been very strong.

Full wifi coverage at Stub Stewart State Park is finally complete. We are seeing increases in revenue and usage. The program is breaking even with program expenses to income.

E. Transportation Tourism Task Force

Sharyl Parker reported that the next Task Force meeting will be held on October 20 in Salem from Noon to 4:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

David Porter adjourned the meeting at 11:45 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Roslund
Council Secretary – Travel Information Council
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