



Visit Bend Board of Directors Meeting Minutes November 18, 2014

Location: Bend Visitor Center

Present: Doug LaPlaca, Valerie Warren, Kevney Dugan, Nate Wyeth, Tawna Fenske, Noelle Fredland, Jodie Barram, Matt Williams, Alan Dietrich, Dave Nissen, Ben Perle, Carolyn Eagan, Amy Draheim for Brent McLean, Scott Greenstone, Hank Therien, Lisa Sidor.

Guests: Wendy Puller, Joelle Brown, Andy Goggins, Rocky Adrinson, Joe Ditzler, Tom Hinrichs, Olivia Imnan, Wendy Kelley, Gretchen Palmer, Bette Fraser, Dave Rathbun.

Call to Order

Doug LaPlaca called the meeting to order at 8:05am. Introduction of guests followed.

The minutes from the September Board Meeting were approved with no changes. Ben Perle moved to approve the minutes. Dave Nissen seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Scott Greenstone presented the financial overview for the first four months of the fiscal year. As of the end of October, TRT revenue continues to exceed budget - approximately 17% over budget. All of revenue combined is over budget by 16.4%.

Expenses are tracking close to budget. Variances are due to timing differences.

Net income is 11% ahead of budget. Since the operational policy is to run close to a breakeven point, any surplus will be deployed on additional programs.

Doug added that the revenue surplus of approximately \$150,000 will be expended on sales and marketing. Approximately \$75,000 will be used during the next two months on additional advertising.

Doug also stated that the cash position is high but the excess will be spent down. Part of the large amount is due to retaining funds for the Bend Cultural Tourism Fund which will remain in the account until the fourth quarter.

Scott said that the annual review conducted by CPA firm Harrigan Price Fronk & Co is underway.

Tourism Metrics

Doug presented a summary of primary tourism metrics included in the Board Packet.

Year-to-date TRT collections are up 34%; the first quarter of the fiscal year was a record quarter; and first quarter website traffic is up 30% year-over-year.

The audience engaged through social media and the Visit Bend website is up significantly. The website traffic is expected to exceed 1.7 million visits by the end of the fiscal year.

The social media around Bend Ale Trail Month is indicating that it is a success.

New Contract and Bylaws

A new contract was recently signed by the City of Bend and Visit Bend.

Highlights include:

- The new contract is a three-year contract vs. a one-year contract.
- The City has committed 100% of the tourism fund to Visit Bend's operating budget.
- The BEDAB board will review the Visit Bend budget.
- Visit Bend will no longer be subject to public meeting laws.
- City council will no longer need to approve board member appointments.
- There is no longer a mandate to have a City of Bend employee or City councilor on the Visit Bend board of directors.

Visit Bend is now seen as a contractor of the City of Bend.

The Bylaws are also under review by the board.

Both the contract and the bylaws are available on the Visit Bend website.

2014/2015 Winter Marketing Update

Nate Wyeth said that the winter media buy has almost been completed. Over the course of the winter over 10,000 commercials will be aired from Seattle all the way down the I-5 corridor to Medford. There will also be some statewide coverage throughout Oregon and Washington. Over 8,000 radio commercials will be aired. The new addition of OPB has shown to produce a better click-through rate than any of the other media partners.

On the print side, the mini-winter guide will be inserted into several magazines including *Mountain* magazine, *1859*, *Portland Monthly* (will be poly bagged into December issue), and *Seattle Met*. Different cover art will be used in different publications.

Nate stated that Mt. Bachelor is also doing advertising in many of the publications and that he has been working closely with Drew Jackson, Mt. Bachelor Marketing Director.

Nate said that the winter collateral is also being distributed in corporate lunch rooms in Seattle and Portland through a brochure distribution company.

Digital advertising is also providing click-throughs to the Visit Bend website.

The website has been performing well. The most visited pages continue to be the Event Calendar, Homepage, Bend Ale Trail page, What to Do, Hiking, Where to Stay, Hot Deals, Hotels & Motels, Breweries and Pubs, and the Photo Gallery.

November is Bend Ale Trail Month. During this month, everyone who completes the Bend Ale Trail receives a trophy in addition to the regular prizing.

This is the first year that Visit Bend is directing advertising dollars to promote the Bend Ale Trail.

The new Bend Ale Trail Month specific page on the website has been receiving a large amount of traffic.

Instagram is performing well. There are over 4,000 followers and it is becoming a large part of the digital presence.

Group Sales Updates

Kevney Dugan stated that the recent USA Cycling Promoters Summit visit was a success.

Kevney and Hank Therien were at the Seattle Ski Show last weekend and felt that the Visit Bend presence at the show was worthwhile.

Kevney highlighted three large bids:

USA Cycling Cyclocross Nationals
USA Track & Field Cross Country Nationals
USA Triathlon Dualathlon Nationals

Kevney has been working with Ann Cook at Mt. Bachelor on transportation for ski groups.

USA Cycling Fat Bike Nationals may be an upcoming winter events.

Other leads and confirmed business are listed in the Group Sales Updates report included in the Board Packet.

Public Relations Updates

Tawna Fenske presented highlights of recent media coverage including *Alaska Airlines* in-flight magazine, *USA Today*, *Seattle Times*, *Northwest Travel*, a piece that *The Bulletin* produced that was picked up by other publications, *Outside* magazine.

Tawna said that several journalists came to Bend during the month of September.

The Visit Bend blog audience continues to grow. There has been 57% growth year-over-year in unique visits.

Facebook continues to be successful. Currently Visit Bend has over 107,000 likes. Tawna showed examples of popular posts.

Board Roundtable

Doug recognized and thanked Noelle Fredland, Carolyn Eagan, and Jodie Barram who are leaving their board positions.

Noelle Fredland said that winter season in the Old Mill District is going well and they are looking at retail partners for their few vacant spaces.
Next season's summer concert season is in the planning process.

Ben Perle said The Oxford Hotel has a jazz concert coming up with weekend.

Matt Williams said that October and November have been good months for The Pine Ridge Inn.

Alan Dietrich said that things are going well at Bendistillery.

Amy Draheim stated that Brasada Ranch has had a lot of group business and they are gearing up for Thanksgiving. They have Christmas activities and several winter weddings coming up.

Dave Nissen said the transition from summer to winter was very rapid this year. He stated that the upcoming "Drinkable Detours" program will be a great addition and that their Local Pour Tour is proving to be very popular.

Jodie Barram said the City of Bend is working on infrastructure projects. She stated that the community spirit in Bend remains strong as she has been receiving a lot of feedback about how nice and helpful people in Bend are.

Carolyn Eagan said thank you for all the new things she learned while serving on the board.

Doug stated that Visit Bend will be attending the City of Bend meetings regarding vacation home rentals.

Visit Bend has been hosting winter marketing campaign presentations every other Wednesday for tourism and business stakeholders. These presentations will be continued throughout winter.

New board member applications will be compiled and sent to the board members for consideration.

Public Comment

Dave Rathbun responded to a question that the opening date for Mt. Bachelor is not certain.

Olivia Inman inquired about airport advertising. Doug responded that most of the visitors are not flying to Bend but that this type of marketing may be considered in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23am.

