



Visit Bend Board of Directors Meeting Minutes September 15, 2015

Location: Bend Visitor Center

Present: Doug La Placa, Valerie Warren, Kevney Dugan, Nate Wyeth, Tawna Fenske, Scott Greenstone, Matt Williams, Alan Dietrich, Dave Nissen, Ben Perle, Michelle Mercer, Brent McLean, Erick Trachsel, Hank Therien, Lisa Sidor

Guests: Jessica Earls, Wendy Kelley, Noelle Fredland, Jack Newkirk, James Wood, Ashley Mitchell, Ann Cook, Stephen Hamway, Leslie Martin, Joey Hamilton

Call to Order

Doug La Placa called the meeting to order at 8:10am. Introduction of guests followed.

The minutes from the June board meeting were approved with no changes. Matt Williams moved to approve the minutes. Michelle Mercer seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

Financial Report

Scott Greenstone presented a summary of the first two months of the fiscal year. Revenue is over budget by 27% due to TRT exceeding budget - despite the budget being set at an aggressive level of growth. This will provide additional funding for tourism promotion. Most expenses are tracking close to budget. Sales and marketing expenses are slightly over due to timing variances.

Due to the additional revenue, the cash position is high. These funds will be spent on programs as the year progresses.

Doug La Placa addressed the agenda item discussing the creation of a “rainy day” fund. Visit Bend does maintain a reserve fund for a potential wind-down - representing about 3 months of operating expenses.

Scott stated that in order to maintain a steady stream of funding for marketing expenses, a significant level of reserves - well into six figures - would be required.

There was unanimous agreement among board members to pursue establishing a rainy day fund.

Doug said that Visit Bend would propose some options for this fund that will be presented to the board, and a decision will be made at the next board meeting.

The annual year-end financial review will begin soon.

Tourism Industry Briefing

Doug referred to several items included in the board packet.

Room tax collections ended at a record level of over \$6.3 million. This represented a 37% year-over-year increase (23% normalized). Deschutes County also experienced growth.

Over \$1.1 million in TRT was collected during July - the first month of the current fiscal year.

Website performance is doing well. Unique visits were up 27% over the past 12 months, and the blog is continuing to grow.

Marketing Update

Nate Wyeth presented highlights from the summer advertising campaign detailed in the board packet.

The website traffic is up year-over-year. Visits to the blog represent about 10% of visits to the website.

The most visited pages continue to be the Events Calendar, Where to Stay, What to Do.

Nearly 20,000 people have completed the Bend Ale Trail. The Drinkable Detours program is off to a successful start.

The Facebook fan base is up to almost 150,000. Weekly engagement rivals organizations with budgets several times the size of Visit Bend's.

The Instagram audience continues to grow.

The new Visitor Guide became available during the first week of August. It is being distributed throughout Oregon, the Seattle area, and Northern California.

A new Bend Ale Trail TV spot is almost complete, and winter radio is in production.

A new Roundabout Art Route brochure will be distributed later this year.

Shoulder season and winter campaign marketing will begin at the end of September.

Over 750,000 copies of the winter mini-guide will be distributed as part of a print advertising campaign in *Sunset*, *Mountain*, and *OnTrak* magazines.

Public Relations Updates

Tawna Fenske said that summer interest in media FAM trips to Bend was very busy, and she has been encouraging fall visits.

Tawna presented several examples of media coverage including Alaska Airlines' in-flight magazine, *Men's Health*, *Mountain*, and *USA Today*.

Kendall Jones who writes for *USA Today* and Dina Mishev of *The Washington Post* were here recently. Several other journalists have fall trips planned.

Tawna showed some recent popular Facebook posts.

Group Sales Updates

Kevney Dugan covered key updates in the group sales area. Halloween Cross Crusades is coming up at the end of October, USATF XC is coming to Bend in February, the Deschutes Brewery Cup will happen in December, and there are several other groups during the next few months.

Key groups Visit Bend is actively pursuing are listed in the board packet.

Oregon Senior Games will be moved up a week in 2016.

Advertising sales have been continuing to grow.

Board Roundtable

Doug welcomed Erick Trachsel and Jodie Barram to the board.

Matt Williams asked if Visit Bend would announce that the Colorado Bridge closure will be on the website. Nate responded that there will be links on the website as well as a Facebook announcement.

Dave Nissen stated that Bend has an amazing buzz going. During a trip to California he spoke with several people who recognized Bend.

Ben Perle said they have been hosting several high-end bike groups this summer. They have been experiencing some public misinformation about parking issues and are working to clear this up.

Erick Trachsel said that they have been working on some upgrades as well as a pool remodel at The Riverhouse. The remodel will continue through the winter.

Michelle Mercer stated that they had a busy season and thanked Visit Bend for the website traffic.

Brent McLean said they are working on several improvements, and the hundredth home at Brasada Ranch was just started.

Brent asked about Visit Bend position on cannabis. Doug stated that cannabis will not be officially incorporated into any of Visit Bend's marketing but businesses will be supported in an auxiliary manner.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12a.m.

Notes By: Valerie Warren
September 15, 2015