



Visit Bend Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 21, 2020

Location: The Oxford Hotel

Present: Kevney Dugan, Valerie Warren, Nate Wyeth, Tawna Fenske, Kelli Carrow, Laurel Hunter, Noelle Fredland, Matt Williams, John McLeod, Michelle Mercer, Alan Dietrich, Diana Spring, Todd Montgomery

Guests: Olivia Evers, Barabara Timms, Courtney Braun, Carolyn Eagan

Call to Order

Chair Noelle Fredland called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Introductions followed.

New Board Members

Noelle introduced new board members Diana Spring of A Stone's Throw Bungalow and Todd Montgomery of OSU – Cascades.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

John McLeod then moved that the November meeting minutes be approved. Matt Williams seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Report

In Scott Greenstone's absence, Kevney Dugan presented the financial report. TRT revenue is ahead of budget. Retail sales has been down a bit due to lower foot traffic in the Visitor Center. Personnel expenses are under budget; sales and marketing expenses are slightly over budget due to timing differences.

Kevney also discussed the normalize city funding document – meant to align TRT revenue to the month of actual activity, not collection month – as some revenue comes in each month from past periods. December 2019 performed well against prior Decembers.

The cash reserve "Rainy Day" fund continues to grow. This fund represents 5% of TRT collections. The "Wind Down" cash reserve fund, representing three months of operating expenses is just above \$100,000.

The Bend Cultural Tourism Fund is under budget due to timing differences – i.e. more administrator activity happens during the January – June period.

Tourism Industry Briefing

Kevney stated that room tax collections for November were strong. Kevney also presented a document showing the City's breakdown of room tax by property type. This document is available in the Board Packet.

December hotel occupancy was down, according to STR reporting. ADR was up slightly; demand was down slightly. John McLeod stated that Mt. Bachelor visitation was down in December due to low snowfall.

Marketing Update

Nate Wyeth said that Marketing Strategy Sessions are available to schedule for any business. They are free and generally take one hour. This is the best way to make sure your business is optimized on VisitBend.com.

Nate stated that in upcoming Board Meetings a takeaway tip will be presented a part of the meeting.

The winter marketing campaign kicked off in November. It will run through January and then, based on weather, will continue and then transition into spring marketing. More and more of the media budget has been shifted into digital platforms.

More analytical tools are now available to show where web traffic originates. Nate presented specific data – which can be found in the Board Packet. Tracked keywords are tracking very well.

Blog posts are ranking in the top 10 most visited pages, reflecting that consumer demand is high for new content.

The email marketing was just scrubbed to ensure high open and click-through rates.

Social media continues to show decreased engagement in Facebook, but Instagram and other third-party platforms are performing well.

Laurel Hunter presented numbers on winter campaign performance. Outbound links were up 27% in December. There was also a recent successful visit including staff from Kings in Seattle for their lifestyle segment.

Kelli Carrow covered social media and third-party platform updates. Facebook users are down, but engagement is up. Instagram is growing and Visit Bend is capturing a difference audience through this platform. Pinterest is performing well and reaches people in the planning stages. Social trends include Instagram and Facebook stories; user-created content; and micro-influencers. Personalized ad experiences are also a focus.

TripAdvisor switched their platform format to be more of a social platform and is not showing the same results.

People continue to search out “top lists.”

The Google DMO program continues to show high engagement.

Tawna Fenske discussed recent media visit and PR highlights. Wellness, sustainability, eco-travel, and distilleries are trending topics.

More information is available in the Board Packet.

BCTF

Valerie Warren said the 2020 – 2021 BCTF grant period is open as of January 20, 2020. The application deadline is April 24, 2020; the grant review meeting will be May 22, 2020. The Q&A meeting with the board will be scheduled sometime during the period of June 1 – 5.

The Commission has recently made some changes to the structure, reducing size from 13 to 10 as terms end as well as opening up the positions to “At-Large” instead of needing to represent a specific area or organization of the arts and culture community. The exception to this is the Visit Bend Board or Staff ex-officio position.

Group Sales Updates

Kevney reported that Bouldering Nationals is coming up at the end of the month. Winter PrideFest is also happening at the end of the month and has showed incredible growth over the past few years. This project has been funded by the Bend Cultural Tourism Fund.

A new effort is in place to create a regional group sales task force. Visit Bend has been working with Visit Central Oregon and other organizations to create a pilot project. This will be closely monitored over the upcoming year.

Board Roundtable

Alan Dietrich said that traffic in the tasting room has been slow. Black Butte Whisky was recently named best whisky in America by *Sunset* magazine.

John McLeod stated that the past weekend really kicked off ski season – due to the new snow. MLK Jr. weekend was very successful. Some big events are coming up in the spring – RendezVan and Peace Park Championships are among the planned events.

Michelle Mercer said that Sun Country has a new operations manager.

Matt Williams said that November was flat but December was strong.

Todd Montgomery said that they are piloting a commercial to attract students to the hospitality industry.

Diana Spring said she is seeing a shift where self-managed vacation rental owners are looking to contract with a property management company.

Noelle Fredland said that Luke Bryant is coming to the Les Schwab Amphitheater. Tickets sold on platforms other than bendconcerts.com are scalped. The Ticket Mill is not occupying the former Grafletics store. They are expecting 17-20 shows this year. A remodel is planned for the fall for the Les Schwab Amphitheater. The ADA access will be improved.

Noelle will be leaving the Old Mill District and Amphitheater at the end of February.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 a.m.

Notes by: Valerie Warren
January 21, 2020