



Visit Bend Board of Directors Meeting Minutes September 15, 2020

Location: Visit Bend via Zoom

Present: Kevney Dugan, Nate Wyeth, Valerie Warren, Tawna Fenske, Kelli Carrow, Laurel Hunter

Via Zoom: Noelle Fredland Matt Williams, Erick Trachsel, Michelle Mercer, Diana Spring, John McLeod, Scott Greenstone

Via Zoom Guests: Dave Nissen, Courtney Braun, Barbara Simms, Samuel Johnson, Stephanie McNeil, Carrie Ramoz, Suzanne Roig, Carol Domme

Call to Order

Chair Noelle Fredland called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Matt Williams moved to approve the May Board Meeting Minutes; Erick Trachsel seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Scott Greenstone presented the YTD financial highlights. Transient Room Tax was forecasted to be significantly down from the prior year due to the pandemic. So far for July and August, TRT revenue is tracking almost 53% ahead of budgeted projections.

Expenses are tracking either close to budget or under budget. Sales and marketing expenses are deliberately low due to lack of promotion in accordance with the City of Bend's lodging restriction advisory.

Scott also reported on the cash position and cash reserve fund balances. Scott pointed out that the BCTF money market fund account was recently established and funds are being transferred into the account each month.

Scott also stated that Price Fronk & Co. has initiated the annual financial review.

Tourism Industry Briefing

Kevney Dugan discussed recent tourism industry data. Transient room tax rebounded quickly for Deschutes County, meanwhile, the City of Bend hovers around 30% lower than 2019.

The property type breakdown shows that vacation rentals/Airbnb continue to gain a larger share.

STR data through August shows occupancy rates are recovering although still lower than last year. ADR is also lower than in 2019. STR weekly data shows Labor Day weekend occupancy rates in the 90 percent level.

AirDNA data shows that the vacation rental market is growing.

More information is available in the meeting slide deck.

BCTF Update

Kevney stated that the BCTF grant program is still on hiatus due to the pandemic and travel/event restrictions.

New Web Pages

While traditional tourism marketing is on hold, the Visit Bend team has been working on programs and webpages that encompass topics such as DEL, Visit Bend FAQ pages, and, with the current situation, wildfire resources.

Marketing Update & Strategy

Nate Wyeth discussed the work that has gone into planning for upcoming marketing campaigns and programs. The team has been working on a website audit, website development, and rebuilding the online event calendar.

One of the campaigns in development for the future is the “This is Bend” campaign. The goal is to portray that Bend offers an experience for both new and repeat visitors that allows them to see the world like a kid again. The imagery and assets that will be used in this campaign will invoke a sense of curiosity and wonder. The customer journey, copy, and audience/cohort targeting are in development as well. The digital strategy and use of new platforms will be a large component of this campaign.

Nate discussed the current communication strategy focusing on putting out responsible messaging when it is appropriate, using the Visit Bend voice to keep the community safe and to share essential information and updates.

The Bend Ale Trail will be updated in the future to be broken up into “territories” to step up the “gamification” of the program. The prizing will be revamped - possibly involving a territory-specific taster glass. A new app will be developed. Outdoor adventures will be paired with the territories, linking the breweries and outdoor experience.

Bend Ale Trail Month and 10th Month will not be actively promoted this year.

Board Roundtable, Questions & Comments

John McLeod said that Mt. Bachelor is currently blanketed in smoke and the summer operations are closed. They are shifting focus to the upcoming winter season and planning for modified operations and more limited programs.

Matt Williams said that Westside properties were doing well; however, the fires have significantly affected business during the past week.

Diana Spring said they are also seeing cancellations on both short and longer-term vacation rentals. A majority of reservations for October and November are monthly rentals. They have some guests who have evacuated their homes because of the wildfires.

Erich Trachsel said that while their properties in Portland are seeing evacuees, the DoubleTree in Bend is not seeing that same level.

Public Comment

Carol Domme from Super 8 stated via chat that they have about 20 rooms filled with evacuees and that the MyPlace Hotel is headquartering the Red Cross and also has several rooms of evacuees.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Notes by: Valerie Warren, September 15, 2020