



## Tourism Development Council Meeting Wednesday May 8th, 2024 2:01 – 3:55pm

Minutes Approved 6/12/24

In person and virtual via Zoom.

[Recording Link](#)

**Members Present:** David Penilton, Luke Spencer, Holly Pfortmiller, Catherine Nyland, Katen Patel, Gail Yazzolino, Tessa Koch **Staff Present:** Samara Phelps, Janice Nilson, Danae Burke Jones, Jim Austin, Annie Bailey Austin, Casey Knopik, Amber Johnson **Others Present:** Thelma Haggemiller

**2:01-2:03 pm Welcome/Call to Order/Introductions & Declaration of Conflicts** – David Penilton, Chair

**2:03-2:15pm Welcome from Monarch Hotel & Conference Center** – Willy So, General Manager  
The Monarch Hotel & Conference Center will be re-branded as a full-service Hilton Garden Inn over the next year. They will maintain their large convention and meeting space and 193 renovated guest rooms. Renovations, including a revamped lobby and exterior to match Hilton branding, will begin at the end of summer. The hotel will remain open during renovations, with updates made section by section. The restaurant and The Underground Speak Easy will remain and starting June 1st the doors at The Underground will open to the patio so that guests can hear live music and enjoy daylight and fresh air at the same time. They remain the only hotel in Clackamas County that's offering Airport transportation.

### Action

**2:15-2:17pm Approve April 10 Minutes** - Danae Burke Jones, Administrative Specialist  
Luke motioned to approve minutes, seconded by Catherine, and approved by unanimous vote.

### Discussion

**2:17-2:46pm Funding Priorities for FY24/25 Strategic Investment Program** – recommendations  
Jim Austin, Tourism Development Lead

Looking to set funding priorities for the next Strategic Investment Program cycle. After reviewing the priorities that were used for the FY23/24 Strategic Investment Program awards, Staff believe that everything we would like to get done, along with the organizational goals and objectives still fit under the funding priorities used for the current cycle.

A question was asked about how often updates would be received on the status of the projects being funded. Jim responded that the recipients of the funds have been asked to provide quarterly progress updates and provide an accounting.

Questions were asked about how many funding cycles are planned for the next fiscal year & have more than one cycle per year been done in the past? Jim responded that the goal is one cycle, however if the program is undersubscribed there would be time to potentially complete a second round if needed, but not anticipated.

A question was raised about how the program was being marketed. Staff responded that the program is marketed through the Mt Hood Territory newsletters, staff directly reaching out to partners, community leads, partner organizations, and anyone that has applied for grants before. There have been some media mentions including an article in Pamplin Media on this year's funding awards which triggered a new partner to reach out for more information on the program.

\$84,324.00 went unused from the funding pool of this last award cycle and staff recommendation would be for the TDC to roll that money into the pool for the 24/25 Strategic Investment award cycles.

A question was asked about other potential priorities to fund using the carryover if the board chooses not to roll it into the next cycle. Samara responded that that is none at this time. There is still a bubble funding that allows room if an opportunity does come up that the board would like to fund. If the board chooses not to dedicate the carryover into the funding pool for next cycle, then the unspent from this cycle goes into the general carryover for the year and is no longer programmed. This decision would only change the amount for 24/25 cycle and won't affect the normal \$500,000 amount allotted to this program.

A question was asked if a cap should be put on the amount that can be requested by applicants so that one project isn't asking for the full fund amount? Samara responded that caps had been utilized in previous grant programs but found an issue to be that sometimes projects will submit for the full cap amount even if the project costs slightly more than the cap and they will need to source additional funds elsewhere. Leaving it without a cap ultimately empowers the TDC to fund to the extent that seems appropriate.

Question about if grant applicants are required to contribute a certain percentage to the project? Staff responded that our grant applications have no match require but do list a preference for matching funding which is reflected in the scoring rubric.

### **Action**

#### **2:46-2:48pm Approve Funding Priorities for FY24/25 | Approve Carryover from FY23/24 Strategic Investment Program for FY24/25**

- Supports Asset Recovery & Resiliency
- Enhances Assets & Experiences
- Improves Accessibility
- Promotes Alternative Modes of Travel
- Expands Visitation to New & Underserved Audiences

Luke motioned to approve funding priorities for 24/25 and approve the carryover from 23/24 Strategic Investment Program for 24/25. Seconded by Holly and approved by unanimous vote.

### **Discussion**

#### **2:48-3:18pm. Marketing Updates** – Priority message placements & new destination videos Annie Austin, Marketing & Communications Lead

Annie shared a power point of specific tactics that marketing has used to bring to life messages that align with current strategic outcomes.

1. Tourism Recovery outcome is about helping individual businesses, communities and main streets recover from covid and severe weather impacts. Long form content marketing is being done including:
  - 4 minutes on KIRO7 Seattle's Discover Northwest program where several tap trail partners were highlighted and provided great visual opportunities to bring their stories to life.
  - Dave Jones with Central Oregon Daily's Destination Oregon series highlighted historic places along Highway 26 and the Oregon Trail where each partner was covered in depth for several minutes.



- 1889 Washington Magazine's insert had 56 partners represented through story, visuals and URLs calling out their websites.

- Portland Monthly and Seattle Met has a new section called "best escapes" We have been using this section to do a deep dive into individual communities.

## 2. Desirable, Safe, and Inclusive Destination:

- Working on promoting safety in the destination through the Otter Do's campaign that is being incorporated into all marketing elements from print, digital. Monty Hood the river otter mascot shares safety tips.

- Mt. Hood Territory sponsors a Koin 6 weather & traffic camera at Government Camp which is in a position that displays the Government Camp loop community well and gives news anchors a reason to talk about the area. The camera helps with traffic and safety while being able to see what the weather is like on the mountain.

3. Visitor Flow highlights marketing's work to direct visitors to identified areas as informed by the unique needs of tourism assets to optimize positive impacts and minimize negatives impacts. Marketing works on promoting timing of travel with shoulder season and midweek messaging, along with leveraging major events to encourage visitors to flow from the major event into local communities. Wooden Shoe Tulip fest is an example where work has been done with marketing channels to show activities that can be done in conjunction with a visit to the festival.

- Car free travel options were promoted through 425, an East Seattle magazine, in their sustainability issue this spring. Staff worked with County Cable to produce a multi-season video of Mt Hood Express.

Finally, marketing shared the new destination videos that were recently completed. These videos are practical, nimble, and can be edited as needed which makes them useful for a long time.

A question was asked about how far messaging is expanding out, is the local radius the focus? Annie responded that this presentation covers marketing to Oregon through Seattle markets, but overall marketing is focusing on Oregon, Idaho, California, Washington, and British Columbia with digital marketing pushing out further into Idaho, Arizona, and Texas. Data is also showing that that Seattle visitors have a higher length of stay rate over other visitors and marketing is noticing that they can increase length of stay through advertising.

## **3:18 -3:31 pm Q3 Report Draft** Samara Phelps

New this quarter is a graph of visitation for the entire quarter which is showing that the number of people coming into the destination from 50+ miles away was down this quarter comparatively.. For now, it's just awareness, not a modification at time. This trend is in line with the rest of Oregon and the region's soft quarter is not an anomaly.

A question was asked if the area's reputation has improved? Staff responded that is not a trend we track as it's complicated. Sentiment that staff is seeing on owned social media channels is generally very positive.

Currently have an RFP out to find a research partner who can help us create a dashboard to provide more sophisticated, more data sourced reports in the future.

## **3:31-3:45pm Program Updates** – Tourism Staff

Annie shared that after talking to wineries the decision was made to retire the Mt. Hood Territory Wine Trail. The strategy will be to promote programs from the wineries like the Cascade Foothills Wine



Growers association wine trail

RFP for Social Media Advertising is live and expect to have decisions made in the next month or two. A Search Engine Optimization RFP request is currently in procurement with the County and will be underway soon.

A question was asked if local agencies would be specifically looked at to fill these RFPs? Samara responded that the public RFP process is put out worldwide for responses but also gets posted on Oregon Buys, so applications tend to be more Oregon based and are reviewed with a local lens.

The June TDC Meeting will be a board and staff training with Travel Unity who will be in town completing a destination baseline and assessment along with staff trainings that are specific to travel and tourism DEI standards. This is a 3-hour training, so the TDC meeting will be short June 12<sup>th</sup> with a small amount of business including election of officers. The Travel Unity training will follow.

### **3:45-3:55pm Open Forum - TDC Members**

Tessa –As we go into summer season it's exciting and challenging, sun is coming & people are about to come out in droves.

Luke – Upper Clackamas White Water Festival is two weekends away – it's been a lot of work this year. Prepping for the season, will fully open rentals Memorial Day weekend as they don't get truly busy until school gets out. When it gets busy early like this it's difficult because they're not staffed yet, which creates service struggles. Seeing a lot of consolidation in businesses either making it or closing shop.

Holly – They're in full swing renovation, it's dusty & loud but they're getting through it. Today is her 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Best Western.

Thelma – FAM tour is coming up. Oregon City Heritage Coordinating Committee has received money from Oregon City to put a mini-float into the Rose City Parade with the theme Oregon City Dreams Past Present & Future which is also the theme for the FAM tour.

Gail – Retirement coming up but she is still working on projects so not sure of timing.

Katen – Almost done with a remodel project. Looking forward to summer. Reminder to make sure to show up next week on 5/14 for Travel Portland's State of the Industry luncheon.

### **3:55 pm Meeting Adjourned**