

**Tourism Walla Walla
Minutes
February 19, 2009
Chamber of Commerce Board Room**

Call to Order

Mark called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Board of Directors

Present: Mark Hess, Dave Warkentin, Michael Davidson, Michele Rennie, Leroy Cunningham, Elizabeth Martin Calder, Jeffrey Townsend, Nancy Mitchell, James Payne, Skip Cundiff, Jay Brodt, Ron Anderson, Rick Standard, Cory Hewitt

Absent: Shane Laib, Kay Wessel, Tim McCarty

Staff: Chris Erickson

I. Approval of Minutes

Mark opened discussion on approval of the December 2008 minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was moved, seconded and passed unanimously by a voice vote. There were no meeting minutes for January 2008, because TWW held its Annual Meeting in place of the regular board meeting.

II. Introductions

A welcome was given and introductions made by three new board members: Leroy Cunningham representing restaurants, Elizabeth Martin Calder representing the wine industry, and Jeffrey Townsend representing the arts community.

III. Tourism Indicators

Michael went over the year end totals for 2008. The room sales were up by 3.5%; Room Revenue was up 8.5% while occupancy was down 6.8%, which is somewhat explained by a 13/2 % increase in room supply.

IV. Treasurers Report

Michele went over the financial statements for January and submitted them for approval of the board. There was some discussion about the current state of the economy and how we will need to watch expenses closely in this budget year. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was seconded and passed unanimously by a voice vote.

V. Events and Promotions Committee

Chris reported that the Events and Promotions Committee met and discussed several matching fund applications. Please see attached report. An email vote to confirm the recommendations of the Events and Promotions Committee Decisions was passed with a quorum majority of 8 "yea" votes, with 6 abstaining.

VI. Funding & Sustainability

Dave went over the events of the F&S committee. The group talked much about ways to generate revenue; Membership is still not a popular pursuit, but there was discussion of the TPA as well as other ways to find revenue through a rental car, or taxi tax. A large part of the conversations revolved around the reason why we are trying to raise revenue. The city has made clear that it is likely they will have to use funds usually dedicated to our budget to fund other projects they are responsible for. It was discussed that we don't want our ability to generate further revenue as a reason for the city to negate it by further lessening our share of the lodging tax monies. The first plan of action will be to assist the executive board in securing a contract with the city that will guarantee a certain budget amount regardless of the additional revenues we generate. In the meantime we will look harder at the TPA with the help of Ron, as well as look at some possible grant opportunities with Kate Bray Morrison who has also joined our committee.

VII. Local Transportation

Michael submitted to the board a letter from Tony Horner of Black Tie Limousines. The letter discussed his opposition to a proposed transportation fee meeting by Michael in which service providers from outside the area were invited. Tony made the argument that there are enough services in Walla Walla, but if there is not that Walla Walla businesses should have the first shot at expanding their operations to accommodate the business. The board felt that this was a valid point and have decided to address this issue two fold. A transportation committee will be assembled and include Cory, Elizabeth, Leroy, Nancy, and staffed by Michael to research and assess the transportation needs of the valley. Once the group has done its research a meeting with the local service providers will be held to see their interest in expanding services, if need be, to meet our transportation needs.

President's Report

a. Public Relations/Marketing Reports

Michael submitted the Maxwell PR and Gibson Media reports to the board.

b. US Cycling

Walla Walla was not chosen to host the USA Cycling Nationals for 2009, as the bid was awarded to Bend, OR. They were able to rise above us, because they could offer police for the event at no charge, and Walla Walla had a charge of \$22/hr for the service. This was a good attempt but also a good learning tool as we look at these types of special projects in the future. We are encouraged by the planners of USA cycling who really like Walla Walla and have expressed their high interest in holding an event here.

c. Visitor Center

The visitor center will be open daily from 10 am – 2 pm. Beginning May 1st we will be open daily from 9 am – 5:00 pm.

NEXT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – Thursday March 18, 2009

3:30 p.m. – Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce Board Room