

**Tourism Walla Walla
Minutes
April 16, 2009
Chamber of Commerce Board Room**

Call to Order

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

Board of Directors

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

Absent: Kay Wessel, Skip Cundiff, Shane Laib, Leroy Cunningham

Guest: Duane Wollmuth – *Washington State Tourism Commission*

Staff: Chris Erickson

I. Approval of Minutes

Board minutes for February 2009 were reviewed. With the correction that Nancy Mitchell be added to the list of new board members, a motion to accept the minutes for February was made, seconded, and passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Board Minutes for the board meeting held March 19, 2009. Dave made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Nancy and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

II. Tourism Indicators

Michael went over the totals which looked much better than last month. Room tax revenue is still up 9% over the previous year, but it was pointed out that some properties paid twice in January which could be bumping that number up a bit. A question was asked about whether there is a plan to keep monies if there is a shortfall. The executive board has initially put aside \$50K which is not authorized to spend (\$20K for research and \$30K for special projects).

III. Treasurers Report

Michele went over the financial statements for March and submitted them for approval of the board. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Jay seconded by Jeffrey and passed unanimously by a voice vote.

IV. Events and Promotions Committee

The events and promotions committee did not meet as the time for the meeting needs to be moved, and there were no new applications for matching funds. A new date will be found and the committee will meet before the May board meeting.

V. Funding & Sustainability

Ron reported on the Funding & Sustainability committee meeting. The committee has decided to focus primarily on two main initiatives, and will take a look at one other revenue source. The two main foci are grants and the TPA. Kate will identify grants for promotion that Tourism Walla Walla can either apply for the promotional dollars, or facilitate the application for other organizations and then contract to run the promotion.

Ron also led a discussion about the TPA laying out all aspects. One discussion that came up in regard to the TPA was that it the monies raised by it could help in securing special high volume events such as the US Cycling championships (five days long) which we lost due to lack of funding in our proposal, and an event at the fairgrounds (nine days long) that Cory was not able to get because the winning bid went to a city that could buy saddles for the winners, which the Fairgrounds could not fund in their proposal. Cory's event was also interesting to this topic because Tourism Walla Walla funding would not qualify to be used for such expenditure, but would be a perfect fit for TPA monies.

The other revenue source to be looked at is the rental car tax. Currently the monies for this program are held by the Port. Chris will research this topic for the next committee meeting.

VI. Olympia Update

Duane reported on the work of the tourism commission as well as a legislative update. Highlights included hiring of staff to fill holes, a new marketing program (print & radio), \$150K in grants awarded for 2008, and \$250K which will be awarded in 2009. March 9, 2009 was tourism day at the capital and it was well attended. The big issue currently is maintaining the current amount of funding in the budget. The house budget looks good, but the Senate budget has a bill that would take money away that is being received from the WA St. Convention Center.

VII. Local Transportation

The committee is currently looking at a few models that would either add a route to the Valley Transit or provide a van service route during high volume weekends so visitors can get from place to place. It is hoped that this initiative might be ready to be tested for the Walla Walla Fair and Frontier Days.

IX. President's Report

a. Public Relations/Marketing Reports

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

b. Walla Walla VIP Card

Response for the VIP card program has been very positive and validating. It is hoped that there will be up to 30 businesses in the promotion. The program is set to start the second week of May after spring release.

c. Partnership Walla Walla

The partnership met with the city Economic Development Committee and has received there approval.

d. National Travel & Tourism Week

May 9 – 17 is NTTW. Tourism Walla Walla is planning several promotions that week which will hopefully run with some UB stories. There will be an ad run that will focus on the fundraising and donation contributions that Tourism businesses give back to the community. There will also be a launch of the initial Certified SuperHost® Businesses where presentations of certificates will be awarded May 11. Also, there will be a tour of attractions familiarization tour available for attendance by Hotel/Motel staff on May 12.

NEXT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – Thursday May 21, 2009

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