

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

March 24, 2009

3:00 P.M.

Mt. Baker Theater – Encore Room

Members Present: Drew Schmidt, Steve Brenk, Dena Eastman, Loni Rahm, Brant Baron, Edward Crasper, Brad Burdick, Taimi Dunn Gorman, Ed Bennett, and Gene Knutson

Members Absent: Carolyn Casey, Todd Elsworth, and Susan Tive

Staff Present: Caroline Flickinger (for Nicole Oliver), and Heather Aven

1. Comments from the Chair

Drew introduced the new board members to the group.

2. Approval of Minutes from February 24, 2009

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM February 24, 2009. SECONDED. VOTE: ALL AYES.

3. Financial Reports

Caroline explained the February reports and clarified that they reflect the December revenues. She noted that the fund has increased by \$25,000.00, although year to date revenue is \$43,000.00 (4% below budget). She pointed out that the re-appropriations are included in the balance.

The group discussed why it was necessary for the \$200,000.00 starting balance and if it is required. Caroline explained that without that starting balance the monthly ebb and flow would cause the balance to become negative during the months that have lower revenues.

The group requested that the financials be e-mailed to them at least a day before the meeting so they can review it prior to discussion.

4. Old / New Business:

Loni updated the group on some of the tourism activities. She stated that some of the hotel room blocks are beginning to open up for reservations because some companies are no longer in a position to purchase the number of rooms they once felt they could. She pointed out that 10,000 – 15,000 rooms have become available in Vancouver; however, not many leisure ticket holders are making reservations. She also stated that cruise ships have docked in the marina and have rooms still available.

Loni mentioned that March 9, 2009 was tourism day in Olympia. She stated that although the Peace Arch Park had been slated for closure, it has been removed from that list; however, Larabee State Park still remains in danger. She pointed out that if Larabee closed, a large amount of bed tax revenue would be lost.

Gene reported that the City is still struggling with budget issues and all non-employee cuts have been exhausted. He stated that if the economy does not turn around, it is uncertain what steps will have to be taken next.

There was discussion about the status of the Children's Museum. Brad stated that the plan was to have it open to the public in November. Gene mentioned that funding for the museum could be an issue, due the budget decrease of 4%.

Brad announced that the Mt. Baker Theater was ranked #2 in line for a \$1,000,000.00 grant.

Drew explained how the Lodging and Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) runs to the new members of the group. He stated that this group consists of equal portions of grantees and recipients. He mentioned that historically LTAC has consisted of 6 people: Dena, Steve, and Brant as grantees and Drew (plus 2 vacancies) as the recipients. Brad, Taimi, and Loni all expressed interest in filling the 2 vacant LTAC positions, and there was a group discussion about members of the LTAC group also being members for the VCB. There was concern expressed that decisions could be swayed if representatives were members of both boards. After much discussion, Loni withdrew her request to be appointed, and Brad and Taimi were appointed to LTAC.

MOTION: TO ACCEPT BRAD AND TAIMI AS NEW MEMBERS OF THE LODGING AND TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE. SECONDED. VOTE: ALL AYES.

5. Tour of Mt. Baker Theater:

Brad took the group on a tour of the newly remodeled theater.

6. Adjourn – 4:00 P.M.

Next meeting date:

Next Tourism Commission meeting is Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at 3:00 p.m.,
Rotunda Room, Whatcom Museum of History and Art.