

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

April 28, 2009

3:00 P.M.

Whatcom County Museum of History & Art

Members Present: Todd Elsworth, Steve Brenk, Dena Eastman, Loni Rahm, Brant Baron, Edward Crasper, Brad Burdick, Taimi Dunn Gorman, Ed Bennett, Susan Tive and Carolyn Casey

Ex-officio Members Present: Patricia Leach

Members Absent: Gene Knutson

Staff Present: Nicole Oliver and Heather Aven

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES. SECONDED. VOTE: ALL AYES.
Todd would like to NOT BE absent as he had not received letter. VOTE: ALL AYES.

2. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Nicole reported that March had a month-end balance reflects an updated projection of \$113,000.00. She pointed out that this is 13% down from the budget projection. The group had a discussion about the possibility of mid-year adjustments.

3. CTED REPORT AND CITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION:

Ed made the presentation to City Council on April 13, 2009. He discussed tourism throughout the State of Washington, referenced the CTED report, and discussed Bellingham as a destination community. Ed informed the group of some of the new programs that were discussed: Light-catcher Building will be opening in November, 2009; the \$60,000.00 joint Downtown Marketing Program; and the story board that was displayed to show a mock-up of a new tourism program that will be started in the fall. He pointed out that Council received a list of the 16 grants that were awarded last year and stated that Nicole presented the CTED report.

4. WATERFRONT UPDATE:

Carolyn stated that the Port has agreed to seven different projects and gave an update on the status of the Federal grant. She stated that the 2005 inter-local agreement has been renewed between the Port and the City and talked about the group of people that are donating their time to talk to the key players at both the Port and City; as well as, those interested at the college. She reported on the Draft Framework Plan and distributed the approved Proposed Planning Framework Assumptions. She emphasized that the assumptions are not a master plan, and announced that the assumptions are being given to the public on Wednesday. She briefly explained how the public forum will work and stated that on May 13 WAG will consider and comment on the assumptions. There was some discussion on the map that was attached to the handout.

5. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES:

There was discussion about how involved the group can become in legislative issues. Nicole stated that Goal 7 in the Strategic Plan notates the support of the Tourism Commission staying involved with legislative issues. There was a suggestion made about starting relationships with other tourism commissions throughout the State of Washington.

Loni stated that the tourism industry was greatly affected by the state budget cuts. She stated that the industry will be asking the governor to veto a section of the budget plan that relates to tourism funding. Loni will send out the information to the group for individual consideration from members to support the Governor's veto of this legislation.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

Patricia stated that a tour of the new Museum should be possible in June.

Taimi suggested that we have a meeting in Fairhaven for a tour of the area. The group decided that May 26th would be a good date.

Susan reported that the Pickford will be open by the end of the year but did not have any further specifics. The group expressed interest in a tour.

Nicole reported that the employment land supply report has been made available, and she also mentioned that the City is currently working on some urban village planning and the urban infill toolkit.

Brad reported that the Mt. Baker Theater received approval of the grant they were expecting and he stated that this money will pay off the loans managed by the PFD.

Carolyn Casey suggested having an agenda item regarding the passport requirements and the negative impact it may have on tourism.

Loni reported that media in both the Seattle and Canada have advertised the fact that the border crossings will become more difficult to cross.

ADJOURN – 4:00pm