

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

May 26, 2009

3:00 P.M.

Skylark's Café in Fairhaven

Members Present: Dena Eastman, Loni Rahm, Brad Burdick, Taimi Dunn Gorman, Ed Bennett, Susan Tive, Steve Brenk, Drew Schmidt, and Gene Knutson

Ex-officio Members Present: Patricia Leach

Members Absent: Edward Crasper, Todd Elsworth, and Carolyn Casey

Staff Present: Nicole Oliver

1. Approval of Minutes from April 28, 2009, motion made and seconded. All ayes, one abstention.
2. Financial Reports - Nicole reviewed financials for the month of April. Revenues were down 16% compared to the budget, and are down 3% compared to the budget year to date. Overall we are predicting to be down 13.8% by the end of the year, resulting in a significantly smaller year-end balance than we typically have. This will impact next year's allocations. Members stated they were noticing an increase in tourism activity, and were cautiously optimistic that things might turn around. Members discussed the method of projecting the yearend balance that is used by the accounting department for enterprise funds.
3. Fiscal Alternatives for Sustainability Task Force (FAST) Report on City Budget – Nicole provided copies of the sections of this report that related to use of lodging tax funds by the City. Brad expressed concern that he was not aware of the recommendation regarding the MBT management monies. Gene, as a member of the task force, described the process, timeline and what is expected next. Nicole will continue to keep members informed of any progress, and reiterated that these are only recommendations made to the Mayor and that he will be deciding which ideas to move forward. Gene stated he was told that the MBT management money was not going to be selected by the Mayor.
4. ***A Fairhaven Frolic*** included a tour with Dirty Dan Harris of the high points of the Historical District including some of the haunted buildings.
5. Legislative Issues – Governor Gregoire vetoed the state tourism spending bill that was urged by various tourism agencies, including Bellingham's.

This will fully fund state tourism including matching funds from the private sector.

6. Old/New Business – Ed distributed an article regarding a new tax being requested by Snohomish County hotel and motel owners. Drew explained what this state-enabled tax is and how Bellingham evaluated and dismissed it for themselves several years ago. The Commission agreed it was something that they may want to bring up again to local hoteliers and see if they were interested, especially because the hoteliers get majority vote regarding how the revenue is spent on tourism promotion.

Next meeting date:

Next Tourism Commission meeting is Tuesday, June 23, 3:00 p.m.,
Whatcom Museum – Conference Room