



Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
January 19, 2022
Minutes

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN (VIRTUAL) ATTENDANCE:

Satpal Sidhu, *County Executive (Chair*)*
Mollie Reta, *Snowater Association (TC)*
MegAnne Offredi, *Holiday Inn (TC)*
Vacant, *(TC)*

Drew Schmidt, *San Juan Cruises (TR)*
Guy Occhiogrosso, *Whatcom Chamber (TR)*
Sandy Ward, *BWCT (TR)*

STAFF PRESENT:

Tyler Schroeder, *Deputy Executive*
Tawni Helms, *WC Administration*

GUEST(s):

Welcome:

Deputy Executive Schroeder welcomed the group and thanked them for attending the meeting on such short notice. The meeting was scheduled specifically to consider the COVID recovery and Tourism proposal submitted by Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism. It was also acknowledged that the Committee had expressed support of Tourism's request for additional funding during the 2022 allocation meeting. The budget allocation however, could not be approved without a formal request or proposal.

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism Proposal:

Deputy Executive Schroeder gave the floor to Sandy Ward, President of Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism. Ms. Ward reviewed the proposal and provided an overview for each component.

Datafy Dashboard and Insights: Ms. Ward explained that this is the acquisition of a localized app designed to provide monthly geolocation data provided from mobile devices. Data is observed within Clusters and Points of Interest (POI) along with strategic planning services and customizations. This app includes special international data module to track Canadian visitation. Datafy will work with the BWCT team to find and analyze actionable insights, so BWCT can make the most strategic, data-driven marketing decisions for our region.

TREAD Map Real-time Trail Information App: TREAD Map is a comprehensive interactive APP map portal that provides real time trail information. Users are land and recreation managers, user groups, business communities, and outdoor enthusiasts. This opportunity is highly subsidized and supported by the Washington Tourism Alliance. Currently there are 5 Washington State Counties that are participating. Whatcom County is the next in line to become part of a statewide network of trails. BWCT will work with Whatcom County Parks and Recreation and TREAD Map on development of the APP tailored for Whatcom County. Not sure of ongoing costs.

Strategic Tourism Master Plan: BWCT will work with a consultant to review and consolidate key points of all previous plans and studies around strategic destination management and economic development. The goal is to develop one strategic plan to include best use of hotel/motel taxes into the future.

BrandUSA Outreach Partnership: Co-op opportunity made possible through Washington Tourism Alliance to communicate readiness, storytelling, and actionable digital interactions across targeted placements to an international audience, focused primarily on Canada for this specific campaign.

Snowledge Video Partnership: BWCT will partner with a film crew to capture local and national ski athletes on Mt. Baker, storytelling around the sport and the community highlighting the unique and wonderful places to eat, drink and stay while celebrating the beautiful region. Instagram posts, blogs, and video filming production and distribution will be done through the film crew network as well as major sport sponsors.

Grant Writing Support: This component requests support to hire a grant writer to assist in writing tourism related grants for Economic Development Association grants. Ms. Ward shared that the timeliness and need for this funding request may be too late.

The Executive expressed support for the proposal and highlighted the opportunity to invest more funding in digital signage. The Wayfinding project has been in the works for some time and at the same time more and more digital applications are becoming available. He encouraged the committee to consider developing digital opportunities in the strategic plan.

A motion was made by Mr. Occhiogrosso to approve for recommendation the entire Tourism Recovery Proposal with the exception of the Grant Writing component. The motion was seconded by the Executive. After a vote the motion passed unanimously.

The Executive also provided that, when available, the County will share more information on the County's grant writing resource.

Other: n/a

Meeting adjourned at 2:40

TC=Tax Collector

TR=Tax Recipient