



## **Tourism Walla Walla Board Meeting**

**April 17, 2013**

Present: Scott Peters, Chair; Cindy Purcell, Treasurer; Kay Wessel, Duane Wollmuth, Ron Peck, Jay Brodt, Zachary Fraser, Chris Garratt, Jennifer Northam, Kyle Mussman, Michele Rennie, Dave Woolson

Absent: Shane Laib, Leahna Laboca, Justin Wylie, Andrae Bopp, Tim McCarty, Mindy Nelson

Meeting called to order at 3:34

### **March 21<sup>st</sup> Minutes**

Scott requested one correction to the minutes regarding accurately reflecting Jim Harold's name. Duane moved to accept the March 21<sup>st</sup> minutes as corrected, Zach seconded the motion. The March minutes were accepted unanimously, as corrected.

### **Financial Information**

Ron reviewed the March financials.

Zach moved to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Jay. The report was accepted unanimously.

### **Marketing Report**

Ron reviewed marketing actions accomplished from March 18 through April 11. He stated that it was his intention to present the board with a monthly recap similar to what is in this meeting's board packet.

### **Executive Director's Report**

(A) Tourism Indicators

-Google Analytics: Ron mentioned it was his intention to include wallawalla.org website metrics, as part of the tourism indicator report. He stated his plan is to begin by reviewing Google analytics as a starting point.

-STR Report: No STR report was included in the indicators because the most current information had not yet been forwarded to TWW.

-City Tourism Indicators: Ron referenced the city numbers and noted that Hotel/Motel lodging tax appeared to be up slightly year over year, while TPA revenue is down slightly, which indicates a possible improvement in yield or ADR. Some discussion by board members ensued. Michele and Kyle noted that the lodging figures should be doubled to accurately reflect the tax revenue collected.

- Port of Walla Walla EDAC Meeting: Ron stated that at the March 21<sup>st</sup> Port of Walla Walla meeting reference was made to the fact that Alaska/Horizon Air boarding numbers for January & February were up one to two percent over 2012.

(B) Recap of Marketing Activities

-2013/14 Inner Sea Discovery: Ron reported that Inner Sea Discovery Line is planning to bring a larger (88 pax) vessel on their Columbia-Snake river itinerary in the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014. He mentioned that meetings with the Wine Alliance, Downtown Foundation, TWW and Walla Walla Museum had been held to identify how the community can best assist Inner Sea Discovery to ensure their guest have a good experience in Walla Walla. Inner Sea stated their appreciation of the assistance already given.

-Local Thunder: Ron stated that a teleconference had been held with this firm to review their ability to deliver specific enhancement to the wallawalla.org website. No decision has been made. Additional information regarding pricing & actual capabilities will need to be assessed in conjunction with the marketing committee, before any recommendations will be brought forward to the board.

-Go West Tour Operation FAM: Ron mentioned that the Go West Tour Operator summit will be held in Tacoma at the end of February 2014 and there is an opportunity to work with Spokane, Yakima and the Snake River Visitor Bureau on hosting a familiarization tour promoting Eastern Washington. Ron recommended that TWW participate and cooperate. The board gave consensus and directed Ron to move forward and work on activities to be held in Walla Walla.

(C) Feast Walla Walla: Ron mentioned he participated in Feast Walla Walla and volunteered in assisting in cleanup activities.

(D) Community Outreach: Ron stated that as part of his effort to work with stakeholders, similar organizations, and the Walla Walla community in general. He has met with a number of people in his first month. He has scheduled appointments with others including James Payne, Nabel Shawa and the Walla Walla BNB Association.

(E) New Hire Position Tourism Services Manager: Ron stated he has reviewed the existing job description and has developed ideas for what the position should be involved in. Ron thanked those board members who have given thoughts and comments. Ron outlined the major component of the position:

- 1) Assisting in communication efforts with respect to:
  - a. Website changes/ Calendar information
  - b. Identifying and maintaining social media information (blogging, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, etc.).
  - c. Communicating in an effective manner to businesses and stakeholders in the Walla Walla Valley area.
- 2) Assisting and directing groups and possible tour operators with potential travel to Walla Walla.
- 3) Being proactive with the hoteliers for group business.

- 4) Assisting with visitor inquiries for information.

Ron stated that one change or difference in the job description will be that the Visitor Information Specialist will report directly to the Executive Director position rather than the Tourism Sales Manager position. Ron believes this is a better structure for a number of reasons including better communication and understanding between the visitor center staff and the E.D. Ron wants to understand how the visitor booth fits in and works with TWW efforts, and desires a stronger sense of inclusion by the Visitor Booth staff. Additionally, because the organization is quite "flat" there is no reason that this position cannot report directly to the E.D.

### **Event / Activity Sales**

Ron detailed previous discussions with Downtown Foundation, other organizations and staff regarding event ticket sales. He identified the following:

1. Understands the need to work cooperatively with fellow Walla Walla organizations.
2. Contends that events & activities such as Feast are fairly easy to sell and not time consuming.
3. Strongly recommends that if TWW gets back into the event/activity sales, it should do so with its own sales cash drawer.

Events that require seat assignments demand substantially more work, time, effort and resources by TWW Visitor Booth staff and a comprehensive automated ticketing system is needed to effectively accomplish this task.

Once the relocation issue has been resolved, it would be Ron's recommendation to move forward in this manner:

1. Develop TWW's own sales cash acceptance system
2. Initiate acceptance and sales of "simpler" non-assigned seating events
3. Review alternative means of assisting residents and visitors with purchasing event tickets that require assigned seating (such as a computer available to the public that links directly to specific organizations).

Discussion ensued by members of the board. The board agreed with the described approach as developed and presented.

### **Office Relocation**

Ron referenced materials in the Board packet regarding potential relocation sites and options. He also referenced additional information and pictures included in the packets from Board members. Substantial discussion ensued regarding the various locations, the impact of the locations on the visitors who walk or drive by the site, how visitors know or find the actual location, visitor patterns and the value of parking. Discussion also ensued regarding the actual cost of relocating, renovating and all the various costs that would occur annually.

A motion was made by Cindy to have Ron develop an accurate "all in" cost estimate for the 210 2nd Avenue location and the Pantorium building for the board's consideration. Motion was seconded by Jay. A friendly amendment was made by Kyle to have all board members visit both locations prior to final relocation decision. The board agreed to the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Other Business**

Discussion occurred regarding the status of TWW's Facebook. Acknowledgement was made that the new page is lacking participation. Ron was directed to remind all board members via email to request that their contacts "like" our Facebook page.

Motion was made by Jennifer to adjourn, seconded by Chris. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 5:29pm.