



**Tourism Walla Walla Board Meeting
Whitman College
April 16, 2015**

Present:

Ron Peck, Dick Morgan, Zachary Fraser, Jennifer Northam, Ron Williams, Mindy Nelson, Terra Luthi, Ann Hooper, James Payne, Duane Wollmuth, Melissa Berghan, David Woolson, Tim McCarty

Absent:

Kyle Mussman, Jay Brodt, Scott Peters, Chris Garratt, Andrae Bopp

Guest: Mary Angelo from DVA Advertising

Note: This is Melissa Berghan's first board meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm by Zachary Fraser, Chair. A quorum was present.

A request to add an agenda item was made by Ron Peck. Under item #5 – item C - City contract amendment (Ron Peck and Tim McCarty)

A motion to accept the consent agenda was made by Ann Hooper and the motion was seconded by Ron Williams. The motion passed unanimously.

Ron reported that airport statistics remain strong. The number of engagements at the visitor center is flat. The city sales & lodging numbers are up 14K over last year.

James Payne asked the question, "At what point would Alaska Airlines consider adding an additional flight?"

A discussion ensued.

Marketing Report – Ron Peck, Mary Angelo

Ron gave highlights from the monthly marketing report, he stated that the online digital campaign in conjunction with the Port is providing a large amount of impressions from the Los Angeles and the Bay Areas. Ron is



scheduled to give a report to the Port Commissioners in June about the results of the campaign.

The Woodinville cross promotion ended this week. This was a collaborative effort with the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance to get visitors in the Woodinville tasting rooms to come to Walla Walla. It included two live radio remotes.

We continue to receive a substantial amount of great PR. Ron reported he recently worked with the Port of Seattle on a FAM trip that brought 5 travel writers from France for a two day visit.

We stepped up our presence at Taste WA this year and teamed up again with the Wine Alliance and purchased a larger booth that included food from Andrae's Kitchen and also Walla Walla wineries pouring tastes. We were able to use our new banners and also the entry forms for the Woodinville promotion to attract visitors to our booth.

Mary Angelo reported on our digital web banner buys. She stated they are optimized based on conversions which improves the effectiveness of the campaign. She reported that WA/OR visitors to the site behave differently than visitors from CA and gave examples of which pages each spends time. Our organic search traffic is expanding, which means more people are aware of Walla Walla and are looking for it specifically. She also stated that the Walla Walla geo market number does not necessarily mean the people are from Walla Walla, it means that they were here when they visited the website.

We are in the process of updating the design of the website and making it mobile responsive. This should help with our current bounce rate for mobile devices as it will make the site more easily accessible.

A discussion ensued.

Ron gave a brief follow up to last month's discussion about February is for Foodies. He stated that we sent out a survey to cooking class participants as well as merchants. Staff will provide the results of the survey to the board as soon as it is available.

Executive Directors Report – Ron Peck



Ron gave an update on the Group Sales Position search. The committee has interviewed two of the three final candidates. The final interview will be the first week of May.

A discussion ensued.

Ron is working on creating metrics as to how the sales person will be compensated in addition to base salary.

Ron reported that the VRBO workgroup is still pending. Tim McCarty provided the group with a list of compliance steps.

Ron gave an update on the op-ed piece he was writing for the UB concerning the statewide tourism marketing efforts. The bill has been modified and there are concerns it will not make it out of either The House or The Senate committees. The WTA has asked participants to halt efforts for the remainder of this legislative session. Therefore, the op-ed piece is off the table for this year.

Other Business

Ron gave an update on the name change discussion from last month. He stated that he is not suggesting we change the official name of the organization, and nothing would change with our contract with the city. He is suggesting we start using Visit Walla Walla as a dba of Tourism Walla Walla. He would like the signs at the Visitor Center, on letterhead and business cards to be "Visit Walla Walla" as it better represents what we are currently doing. He reported that we have already acquired Visitwallawalla.com as directed at last month's meeting and we are working to acquire Visitwallawalla.org from its current owner.

Ron Williams made a motion to start using Tourism Walla Walla dba Visit Walla Walla. The motion was seconded by Ann Hooper.

Vote: 7 yes, 3 no. The motion passed.

Ron and Mary discussed having a marketing planning retreat in late summer or early fall. A draft agenda for this proposed meeting was handed out. They reported they would like to discuss where we are as a brand and proposed a full day retreat as opposed to a half day. Ron will send out the draft agenda to entire board in a follow up email.



Staff will also send out an email, in the next 24 to 48 hours, with a selection of possible dates for the meeting.

Additional agenda item: Addendum to the contract with the City of Walla Walla. Tim McCarty discussed the upcoming Mumford & Sons concert and the efforts and costs associated with coordinating logistics for the event. An additional staff member was hired by the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation to specifically help with this event.

A discussion ensued.

James Payne made a motion that Tourism Walla Walla write a letter informing the City of our support for a possible decision to assist in the compensation for the additional, temporary, Downtown Walla Walla Foundation staff member. The motion was seconded by Duane. The vote passed unanimously.

The board went into executive session at 4:35.

The board ended the executive session at 5:07.

Next board meeting is on May 21. Location to be determined.

At 5:08 pm the meeting adjourned.