



**Visit Walla Walla Board Meeting
Baker Center Whitman College
August 20, 2015**

Present:

Zachary Fraser, Jennifer Northam, Ron Williams, Terra Luthi, James Payne, Tim McCarty, Mindy Nelson, Duane Wollmuth, Andrae Bopp, Ron Peck, Ann Hooper, Melissa Berghan

Absent:

Kyle Mussman, Dick Morgan, David Woolson, Scott Peters, Chris Garratt,

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 pm by Zachary Fraser, Chair. A quorum was present.

A motion to accept the consent agenda was made by Andrae and the motion was seconded by Ron W. The motion passed unanimously.

Ron gave additional comments on the consent agenda.

Revenue is on track it is just a matter of timing because one of the grant revenue funds have not been received yet and the association has not had to access any of the unallocated non-restricted funds.

Moving forward the board will receive the full P & L with budget vs. actual.

Walla Walla Airport statistics, July, 79.4% compared to 78.4% represents almost 80 more plane loads.

The City Sales & Lodging Tax is ahead by \$33.2K. We are on target to reach the projected \$668K or more. Discussion ensued regarding the reason for the increase in revenue.

Hotel Motel Commission/TPA revenue thru July is up \$3.4K over the previous year.



Visitor Kiosk reported 1734 engagements, which is within two of the previous month. It was noted that for two days the sidewalk in front of the visitor center was closed due to repair and maintenance work.

The Visit Walla Walla website numbers continue to be up substantially, 36% over the previous year for both sessions and unique visits.

For the actual month of July, the STR report showed overall room numbers reflect an increase of 9%, average of 53 rooms per night or 1652 additional rooms booked. Occupancy is down slightly, but that is because of the increased room inventory with the new property. June was really strong was well.

Marketing Report – Ron Peck

Ron gave highlights from the monthly marketing report. The Marketing & PR media clippings report will be distributed to the board tomorrow, August 21. He commented that the print advertising schedule slows down and VWW is off radio during the summer months. We will be gearing back up with radio and print advertising in the fall. He also noted the sponsorship with Trip Advisor has yielded additional exposure and banner placement. Facebook is at 4985 "Likes" as of the end of July and we should exceed 5K in August.

GOTR update. Ron showed the b-roll video created by Tangent Media. The only negative comments at the visitor center were that visitors did not know where to throw their garbage because the receptacles were full. Many people stated they would come back if Walla Walla were to conduct another music festival. Andrae noted that in discussions with the production company, they were extremely impressed with the community and they would definitely consider bringing another large music festival such as GOTR back here because of the manner in which the city made this event work.

Substantial discussion ensued regarding how successful the event was due to the City and Madison House Productions working collaboratively.

The Marketing Retreat will be held on September 23 at Columbia REA conference center, starting at 9am, plan for all day. All board members are encouraged to attend, not just the marketing committee. Topics to be



covered will include; creative campaign, identify brand awareness, target markets, geo and demographic.

Executive Directors Report – Ron Peck

Ron gave an update on the Group Sales position search. There are two finalist candidates, one with strong hotel background; one with visitor and convention background. Ron requested that one more board member participate in the final interviews. Ron W. agreed to join the interviewing group. The two interviews will occur on August 26 and 27.

Ron gave an update on the employee manual review process. He thanked Ann and Ron W. for their work on this project in addition to staff including Barb Commare. The plan is to run the updated manual by an attorney and target to get to the board by the next board meeting.

Other Business

The Nominating committee recommended Carrie Brennan of Without a Hitch Weddings + Events. She has a hospitality, tour and event background and is a Walla Walla native. Carrie has a BA in Business and Restaurant Management and has catering experience. A motion was made by Ron W. to offer a board position to Carrie Brennan, the motion was seconded by Duane. The motion passed unanimously.

A discussion ensued regarding the need for solid attendance by all members of the VWW board.

A discussion ensued regarding the need for the right number of meetings to effectively accomplish the task and mission of VWW. Ron P. submitted that the VWW financial information and other metrics can be distributed monthly to the full board irrespective of the frequency of board meetings. Ron P. recommended the following schedule: January (to include the annual membership meeting), March, May, July, September, November.

Further discussion ensued and it was pointed out that should additional meetings be needed, they can be called by the chair and or members of the board. There was board consensus to set the meetings as recommended by Ron P. to begin immediately with September's marketing



meeting as the next meeting. The 2016 marketing plan will then be prepared and presented at the November board meeting.

A discussion ensued about the continued use of Tourism, Visit and Share Walla Walla. It was agreed that this discussion will be part of the board's marketing retreat in September.

Next board meeting is on 9/23 for the Marketing retreat at the Columbia REA conference center starting at 9am.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50pm.