

8-12-20 Lodging Tax Advisory Committee Minutes

August 12, 2020

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Alternate Meeting Format: On March 6, 2020 the Mayor declared a civil emergency due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 24, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-28 prohibiting open public meetings from occurring in person. The proclamation has been extended to Sept. 1, 2020. Due to these factors, the meeting was held using a remote meeting platform.

Committee:

Stacy Goodman, *Councilmember (Chair)*
 Will Parkinson, *Hilton Garden Inn*
 Patricia Hagar, *Visit Issaquah*
 James Calebrese, *Springhill Suites by Marriott*
 Kathy McCorry, *Greater Issaquah Chamber of Commerce*

Administration/Staff:

Wally Bobkiewicz, *City Administrator*
 Jen Davis Hayes, *Economic Development Manager*
 Benton Coblentz, *Economic Development Coordinator*

Guests:

Beth Javens, *Visit Issaquah*
 Trish Bloor

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Councilmember Stacy Goodman at 12:32 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) Approval of July 7, 2020 Minutes

IT WAS MOVED BY MCCORRY, SECONDED BY HAGAR; MOTION CARRIED (5-0), TO APPROVE THE JULY 7, 2020 MINUTES AS PRESENTED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one who wished to provide a public comment at the meeting, nor had anyone submitted public comments in advance.

AGENDA ITEMS

- a) **Overview of LTAC Ordinance and Regional Examples (I)**

Presented by:
Councilmember Goodman

Councilmember Goodman introduced the report on the regulations and practices related to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee that was attached to the agenda packet. She expressed her hope that it was useful to the new members of the committee and asked if any members had questions for staff. There being none, Councilmember Goodman moved on to introduce the second topic.

- b) **Membership & Financial Policy Discussion & Direction (D, A)**

Presented by:
Councilmember Goodman

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Councilmember Goodman introduced the topic of the membership of the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee and her concern about the crossover between the membership of the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee and the Board of Visit Issaquah. She emphasized that this presented no functional or legal issue for the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, but, in her view, was not an entirely ideal situation.

Councilmember Goodman asked for feedback, and both Will Parkinson and Patty Hagar expressed their agreement that the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee could be expanded to the benefit of the existing members and community.

Discussion of financial policies and the relevant letter from the Mayor's Office was postponed to the end of the meeting.

c) **Visit Issaquah Update (I)**

Presented by:

Beth Javens, Visit Issaquah

Councilmember Goodman asked Beth Javens of Visit Issaquah to give an update on Visit Issaquah's current status and plans for the future. Beth Javens spoke about the challenges that Visit Issaquah faces as a result of the COVID Crisis, but the unique role that that organization can play in the recovery.

Councilmember Goodman asked what Visit Issaquah is doing to focus on and attract day visitors to Issaquah. She then asked for any other questions or comments from the Committee. Kathy McCorry stated that the loss from Salmon Days was considerable to the Greater Issaquah Chamber of Commerce, but even greater to the community, and that regional visitors are a critical factor in the local economy.

d) **Funding Policy Discussion & Direction (D, A)**

Presented by:

Councilmember Goodman

Councilmember Goodman introduced the topic of funding policy and future direction of LTAC funding. She then asked City Administrator Wally Bobkiewicz to talk about the letter from the Mayor's Office and the included proposal for future direction.

City Administrator Bobkiewicz spoke to the context and reasoning behind the proposal included in the Mayor's Office's letter. He explained that the proposal would be as follows:

- \$100,000 in direct support to be allocated in FY 2020 and FY 2021 (orchestrated in concert with Visit Issaquah's sponsorship plan)
- \$125,000 to be allocated to tourism promotion and visitor attraction services in FY 2021
- The issuance of an open RFP for the above tourism promotion and visitor attraction services
- A planned \$135,000 ending fund balance for FY 2021 to be available for use FY 2022

There were several questions about the specifics of the proposal and the definitions that the Mayor's Office was utilizing in developing it. Of specific concern was whether the \$100,000 could be utilized to aid businesses in the community, what City Administrator Bobkiewicz meant by a planned FY 2020 ending fund balance, and whether the amount outlined in the Mayor's Office's proposal was enough.

IT WAS MOVED BY PARKINSON, SECONDED BY CALABRESE; MOTION CARRIED (5-0) TO PLAN TO DISTRIBUTE \$100,000 IN DIRECT SUPPORT IN FY 2020 AND FY 2021.

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IT WAS MOVED BY MCCORRY, SECONDED BY HAGAR; MOTION CARRIED (5-0) TO DIRECT STAFF TO ISSUE AN RFP FOR \$125,000 IN TOURISM PROMOTION AND VISITOR ATTRACTION SERVICES FOR FY 2021, RESPONSES TO WHICH WOULD BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT THEIR NEXT MEETING.

Councilmember Goodman then asked if the committee was comfortable with the FY 2021 ending fund balance or if there was a desire to pursue the formulation of a future ending fund balance policy. Will Parkinson stated his view that the motions that were already adopted would suffice as they amounted to a plan for an ending fund balance as described in the Mayor's Office's proposal. The rest of the committee did not express a desire to discuss a longer term policy.

Councilmember Goodman then asked if the process for the \$100,000 in direct support could be expedited and the committee expressed a desire that the process be completed as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Goodman adjourned the meeting at 2:13 PM.