

OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

Dec. 4, 2024

Alpine Events
73365 E Hwy 26
Rhododendron, OR 97049

Tourism Commissioners present included: Chair DiNovo, Vice Chair Willitts and Commissioners Erin Stephenson, Travis Hill, Harish Patel, David Penilton, Jenifer Roe, David Gremmels and Scott Youngblood.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair DiNovo opens the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and welcomes everyone to the December 4, 2024, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair DiNovo thanks everyone for being in Rhododendron, noting that the meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental materials can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair DiNovo states that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements required by state law were met.

The Oregon Tourism Commissioners and Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, introduce themselves.

Todd acknowledges Thelma Haggemiller of Slow Poke Tours for her recent local chamber of commerce's lifetime achievement award and appreciates her presence at the meeting.

Chair DiNovo states that there will be an opportunity to hear comments from stakeholders and partners. Those who plan to share remarks shall use the sign-in sheet.

Chair Remarks

Chair DiNovo shares remarks about the hospitality received at AntFarm Café in Sandy for hosting the dinner the night prior.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges the Michelin Key designation given to Commissioner Stephenson's Atticus Hotel. She continues to acknowledge Commissioner Stephenson's recent Business Leader of the Year Award from the McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Chair DiNovo shares her appreciation for Jeff Miller, retiring CEO of Travel Portland, Megan Conway has been announced as the new CEO. She continues to acknowledge Lizzie Keenan has been announced as the next Executive Director of Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory.

Local Welcome



Chair DiNovo welcomes Lizzie Keenan, Executive Director of Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory, Luke Spencer, Owner of Clackamas River Outfitters and Chair of the Tourism Development Council for Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory, Steve Kruger, Executive Director of Trail Keepers of Oregon, and John Burton, Director of Marketing & PR at Timberline Lodge to join us today.

Lizzie, Luke, John and Steve walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation (Exhibits A & B)

- Lizzie Keenan: Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory:
 - What's New: Resident Sentiment Survey
 - What's New: Accessibility Investments
 - What's New: Strategic Investment Funds
 - What's New: Mid-Mountain Work
- Luke Spencer: Impacts to Estacada and Clackamas River area
 - 2020 Riverside Fire Impacts
 - Riverside Fire Recovery
- John Burton: Timberline Lodge
 - Tenets and development framework
 - Planning for Hwy 26 rest area, transit hub, park-n-ride
 - Gondola project – Phase 1A
 - Shuttle service through Government Camp
 - Next Steps – Phase 1B
 - Next Proposal – Base Area Development
- Steve Kruger: Trailkeepers of Oregon
 - Who is Trailkeepers of Oregon?
 - Gorge/Hood team
 - Program staff around the state
 - Volunteer events
 - Trail Ambassador Locations
 - OregonHikers.org Trail Accessibility
 - Shift in Forest Service Staffing Levels

Commissioner Penilton shares his excitement for the future of Timberline Lodge and ski resort and his appreciation for Luke Spencer showing up for the tourism industry. He continues to ask Steve if he has any staff or volunteers placed at Mirror Lake Trailhead. Steve answers that there is specific staff for engagement in the Mt. Hood area and Mirror Lake is a priority for staffing during a short summer season.

Commissioner Penilton asks about investments on the Riverside Trail. Luke answers that Mt. Hood Territory invested \$140,000 dollars in the National Forest Foundation so they could access matching funds. Lizzie answers that \$20,000 or \$25,000 from Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge was invested in the Clackamas River Trail through Trailkeepers of Oregon.

Commissioner Hill asks if visitors can be tracked when coming into the region. Lizzie answers that Mt. Hood Territory has invested in Datafy to learn where visitors are coming from and how much money they are spending. Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge uses Placer.AI to track similar data which has provided valuable data about high-use mitigation especially at Multnomah Falls.

Commissioner Stephenson comments on the 15% of visitors that stop mid-mountain while moving between the Portland metro area and Mt. Hood. She encourages a system of best practices so 'pass through' communities can learn from each other to capture business.

Commissioner Patel shares his appreciation for the trail work to restore access.

Commissioner Roe thanks the presenters for their 'grit' to get the work done.

Chair DiNovo recesses the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Chair DiNovo reconvenes the meeting at 10:24 a.m.

Stakeholders, Partners and Public Statements

Chair DiNovo states that on Tuesday, November 19, the Commission meeting notice was posted to the Commission Meetings webpage, notice was sent through Industry Communications and a link to the meeting agendas was posted.

She reminds the group that the public comment period is an invitation to the industry to inform the Commission of updates, information, and constructive thoughts about Oregon's tourism industry. She reminds attendees that a comment form lives continuously on the industry website.

The Commission received no comments in advance.

Chair DiNovo states that we have the opportunity for attendees to sign up in-person to speak with us. She requests that remarks remain respectful and professional and ask that comments be limited to 3 minutes.

David Duncan, General Manager at Gray Line Tours, shares public comment about recovery in Portland's tourism, specifically hop on/hop off trolley service seven days a week, and tour guide pick up and drop off space at Director Park in downtown Portland.

Commission Business

Review of Commission Packet

Chair DiNovo asks if all Commissioners have received and had a chance to review their Commission packet – including the financials. All commissioners answer affirmatively.

Financial Update

Chair DiNovo thanks Vice Chair Willitts, Commissioners Stephenson and Penilton, Todd and Kathleen Stewart for reviewing the financials prior to this meeting.

Vice Chair Willitts discusses the Travel Oregon financials and states that \$22.9M in TLT revenue which 51.8 percent of the \$44.1M budget. The November deposit was the Oregon Department of Revenue was the largest monthly deposit to date at \$13M. The December deposit will be received later in the month.

Commission Action

Approval of Minutes (September 2024)

Chair DiNovo shares that Commissioners were sent the draft September 2024 Commission meeting minutes via email on November 19 and asks if there are any questions or comments regarding these documents.

Chair DiNovo takes a motion for approval.

- Commissioner Patel moves to approve and Commissioner Gremmels seconds the motion.
- Chair DiNovo asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Youngblood, Stephenson, Roe, Penilton, Gremmels, Patel, Vice Chair Willitts, and Chair DiNovo say 'aye'.
- Chair DiNovo asks for any opposition.
- Hearing none, the motion carries.

The September 2024 Commission meeting minutes are approved and will be posted to the Commission Section of the Travel Oregon Industry website.

CEO Evaluation

Chair DiNovo states that the Commission held a closed Executive Session on December 3 pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2) (d), for the purpose of reviewing and evaluating the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer, specifically the CEO Evaluation, of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing.

The Commission will finalize the details of the CEO Evaluation at the February 2025 meeting.

Portland Recovery Update

Todd states that the first report today is regarding the recovery occurring in Portland and welcomes Scott Bricker, Director of Destination Services, and guests.

Scott walks the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation providing updates Travel Oregon's contributions to the recovery of the city of Portland (Exhibit C) including:

- Travel Oregon Early Investments 2020-2023
- Portland Central City Task Force
- Winter 2023-24 Sponsorships
- Travel Portland Communities in Crisis Grant
- 52-Week Strategy
- Advertising Campaign
- James Beard Marketplace

Scott introduces Megan Conway, Chief Strategy Officer at Travel Portland, and Elyse Taylor Liburd, Portland Office of Events & Film at Prosper Portland. The guest presenters walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation including:

- Travel Oregon grant - \$600,000
- Large Event Sponsorships

- Visitor Experience Enhancement Grants
- Program Support – My People’s Market and Ticket to Dine
- Reputation Recovery
- Strategic Communications – Election Sign-on Letter
- Travel & Leisure 50 Best Places to Travel in 2025
- Portland Visitor Center
- Marketing – campaign and web traffic
- Portland Events & Film Office
- Film in Portland – 2024
- Lodging by the Numbers – 2024
- Marketing, Recruitment and Retention – 2024
- Film Tourism – 2024
- What’s Next for Portland? – urban redevelopment, major league sports, large scale events, investments in public facilities and visitor venues

Todd asks if there are any questions for the presenters.

Commissioner Patel comments on the added life and vibrancy in downtown Portland.

Commissioner Youngblood celebrates the inspiration coming from the collaborations between Travel Portland, Prosper Portland, and Travel Oregon.

Commissioner Gremmels shares his gratitude for the presenters and the Portland Visitor Center especially during the Portland Pride festival this past summer. He continues to share his excitement for the James Beard Public Market and the opportunity it provides for added value products from Oregon agriculture.

Commissioner Penilton appreciates the tourism ties to the film industry and congratulates Megan Conway as the next President & CEO of Travel Portland.

Competitive Grant Success Stories

Todd states that the next update will come from Deb Vaughn, Grants Manager, and guests.

Deb and guests Wela Negalspach, Administrative and Program Manager at Columbia County Tourism, Brandie McNamee, Owner at Antelope Market & RV Park, and Cheri Jamison, Executive Director, Alberta Abbey Foundation, provide the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation sharing highlights and updates of their grant projects (Exhibit D) including:

- Columbia County
 - Columbia Economic Team
 - Destination Management Organization
 - Columbia County Tourism Milestones
 - Defining a Marketing Identity
 - Wander App
- Antelope

- Abandoned properties in March 2023
- June 2023 – Major cleanup and demo work
- Making Connections – Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, Dark Sky initiatives, grant application in 2023
- Grant Investments – Cycle Oregon, Travel Oregon, and Visit Central Oregon
- Challenges Faced – Transporting the Cabins, Building Inspections
- Next Steps – finish cabins, ADA requirements, bathrooms, parking areas, dark sky lighting, telescope viewing pads, signage, bike shop, outdoor seating
- Dark Sky Community Designation Awarded – First community designation in the state of Oregon
- Other Initiatives – TRT Ordinance, FireWise Grant, Ford Family Foundation community visioning, Antelope Museum, Oregon Community Foundation Thriving Entrepreneur Program, Antelope School Community Center restoration
- Travel Oregon investment leveraged other funding
- Alberta Abbey Foundation
 - Mission, Vision and Values
 - Marketing assets
 - Heritage Soulfest 2024
 - Measuring Impact
 - Community Comments
 - Appreciation for Travel Oregon grant

Commissioner Penilton shares his appreciation for the presenters and their work, especially asset development in Columbia County, the impact of grant dollars in small communities, and the rebirth of a music culture in Portland.

Chair DiNovo appreciates how the presenters' work resonates and creates impacts in their communities.

Commissioner Youngblood comments on the power of partnership in terms of economic development and community give back.

Vice Chair Willitts appreciates the work of these leaders and their energy.

Commissioner Patel shares in the positive impressions of the presenters' work.

Todd shares his appreciation for the presenters' tireless work and hopes it provides inspiration to other communities.

Other Business

Chair DiNovo asks if there is any additional business or announcements from Commissioners.

The next Oregon Tourism Commission meeting will be February 24, 2025, on the Oregon Coast in Pacific City and more information will be posted to the industry website as soon as it's available.



Chair DiNovo adjourns the meeting at 11:50 a.m.