

# Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting

## April 3, 2023

Oregon Convention Center  
777 Northeast Martin Luther King Junior  
Portland, OR 97232

Broadcasted via YouTube Live

**Tourism Commissioners present included:** Vice-Chair DiNovo, and Commissioners David Penilton, Maria Ponzi, Greg Willitts, and Scott Youngblood.

### Welcome and Introductions

Vice-Chair DiNovo opens the meeting at 1:30 p.m. and welcomes everyone to the April 3, 2023, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Vice-Chair DiNovo thanks everyone that has joined us here today in Portland, and those joining through Travel Oregon's Industry YouTube channel. Today's meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental material can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website if you'd like to follow along.

Vice-Chair DiNovo acknowledges that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements were met.

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

Commissioner Penilton acknowledges the passing of Chris Chester and John Erickson and that they will be missed. He also acknowledges this morning's Women in Tourism breakfast and that we need to be doing more to bring Oregon's workforce along. David also acknowledges the work of the Oregon Convention Center and Shane, the GM of the Hyatt Regency Convention Center.

Vice Chair DiNovo wishes Chair Boyles and Commissioners Gremmels, Sheppard and Stephenson well as their schedules required them to be in other places today. We can also confirm that they received today's materials ahead of time and will receive any additional materials provided today.

### Chair Remarks

Vice Chair DiNovo takes a moment to acknowledge how wonderful it is to be back in The City of Roses for this year's conference! She congratulates Travel Portland for securing the National Education Association Conference in 2025 and the NCAA Division Women's Basketball Final 4 in 2030.

Vice Chair DiNovo also acknowledges the passing of Darcell 15. Walter Cole was a trailblazer and champion of gay rights, and his establishment was and is an institution in Portland for over 50 years. Our hearts go out to his family and the entire Portland community. Darcell's legacy will live on through the countless lives she touched.

Vice Chair DiNovo acknowledges the work of Travel Oregon's staff for putting together this year's Governor's Conference and how the 10-year strategic vision's the three lenses of racial equity, regenerative tourism and economic prosperity will be brought to life.

Commissioner Ponzi acknowledges that a true leader in Oregon's wine industry passed this past week, Dick Erath.

### Local Welcome

Vice-Chair DiNovo states that Commissioners, in holding in-person meetings throughout the state, one important opportunity we have is to hear from our local partners welcoming us into their communities.

Jeff Miller, Exec Director of Travel Portland provides the Commission with a Local Welcome. Jeff states that it's a pleasure welcome everyone to Portland for the first Governor's Conference on Tourism in Portland since 2012. Jeff states what wonderful it has been to have the Travel Portland team work alongside the Travel Oregon team to collaborate on providing all that attendees will have the opportunity to engage with over the next couple of days.

Jeff acknowledges that while Portland has been through a lot over the last several years, there is still much to be proud of and that his team is working hard every day in partnership with elected leaders, local stakeholders and community organizations to support Portland's regeneration as the welcoming, safe and vibrant destination we know it will become once again.

There are some green shoots are emerging for our industry:

- Last year, tourism spending reached \$5.2 billion. While this is still short of the \$5.6 billion we saw in 2019, it is higher than the two previous years, showing a slow but steady increase since the lowest level of the pandemic.
- Tourism employment also rebounded somewhat last year to 32,700 jobs, a 20% increase from 2021.
- Downtown and Lloyd District hotels booked 50% more rooms last year than in 2021 and the number of convention room nights increased by 10% to 119,000.

Perception and reputation are key to a destination's ability to attract visitors and we are seeing improvements on those fronts as well:

- Our ongoing visitor sentiment surveys show that the percentage of visitors intending to return to Portland again is rebounding and holding steady around 70%, up from the pandemic low of 57%.
- A recent survey of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington county residents finds that people who have recently visited downtown are increasingly more inclined to recommend Portland as a place to visit.
- The exceptional work of Travel Portland's PR team continues to generate prime national media coverage with recent placements in Cosmopolitan, Sunset Magazine and Forbes.

Jeff acknowledges some of the exciting things happening in Portland this summer including:

- The Ritz-Carlton hotel will open with some of Portland's most famous food cart vendors anchoring a brand-new food hall.
- A new Visitor's Center will open in the downtown's West End, a block and a half from Powell's Bookstore.
- Concerts will return to Pioneer Courthouse Square and Portland's signature summer festivals will return to the waterfront, including Rose Festival, the Blues Festival and Pride.

Jeff states that Travel Portland's ongoing partnership and friendship with the Commission and the entire Travel Oregon staff are incredibly important and we look forward to all the great things we can do together in the months and years ahead.

Lisa Itel, Director of Global Strategic Partnerships, welcomes all to Portland and provides the Commission and attendees with a preview of what they can expect during the Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism. Lisa states that there are almost 550 people registered for this conference – bringing us back to 2017 levels of attendees. Over 50 scholarships were awarded for industry partners to attend free of cost. Lisa discusses the Women in Tourism breakfast and that it wasn't just a one-time event – but will be a continued effort and more information will come.

Commissioner Penilton thanks Lisa, Matthew and many others for all they do to make this conference happen.

Vice Chair DiNovo states that Lisa and Matthew make all that goes into hosting a conference look easy, which she knows it isn't, and states her appreciation. She states that it was inspiring to attend the Women in Tourism breakfast event and how important it is to develop future women in Oregon's tourism industry.

Commissioner Ponzi states her appreciation for the Women in Tourism breakfast as well and expresses just how inspiring it was.

## **Stakeholder, Partner and Public Statements**

Vice-Chair DiNovo states that on Friday, March 17 the commission meeting notice was posted to the Commission Meeting webpage. Notice was sent through our industry communications and the meeting materials including the agenda and the link to the livestream were posted. This opportunity for comment is an invitation to our partners to provide us with information and constructive thoughts. She reminds everyone that a comment form lives continually on our industry webpage.

There were no comments received ahead of this meeting. Today, with this meeting in person, there is the opportunity for in-person comments and three attendees have signed up to provide comment.

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if there are any other comment sign-ups. There are none.

## **Commission Business**

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if everyone has received their Commission packets including Travel Oregon financials; Commissioners confirm they have. She thanks Commissioner Willitts for reviewing the financials with Kathleen Stewart, Comptroller of Travel Oregon, Todd, and herself and asks Commissioner Willitts to provide an update to the rest of the Commission.

Commissioner Willitts states that the financials FYTD (FY23) were included in our Commission materials and have been posted to the Industry Site.

Looking at current FYTD – through the end of Q3 we have received \$33.1M in TLT, or 87% of the current budget (\$38M), amended December 2022. Normally we would be about 80% of budget at this time; we are on pace with the amended budget. If we continue at this pace – we will end FY at \$40.5M – what Tourism Economic predicted in Feb. 2023.

YOY increase TLT is up 16% compared to same time frame FY22.

Compared to FY19, TLT is up 22% after adjusting for the change in the tax rate.

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if there are questions on Commissioner Willitts' report.

There are no other comments or questions regarding the financials.

## **Commission Action**

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if the Commission has reviewed the February 22, 2023, Commission meeting minutes and if there are any questions or comments.

Commissioner Youngblood moves to approve the February 22, 2023, Commission meeting minutes and Commissioner Penilton seconds the motion.

The motion to approve the February 22, 2023, Commission meeting minutes is unanimously approved, and the minutes will be posted to the Commission section of the Travel Oregon Industry website.

### **Nominating Committee Appointment**

Vice-Chair DiNovo states that a Nominating Committee is appointed annually to deliberate and propose a slate of officers to serve as the next Chair and Vice-Chair.

Given that Chair Boyles' term on the Commission will be ending, he's appointed himself and immediate Past Chair, Commissioner Youngblood, to serve as the Nominating Committee to propose the slate for this coming year's leadership team. Chair Boyles and Commissioner Youngblood will engage with current members to understand their interest in serving now or in the future and will provide us with their report at the June Commission meeting.

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if there any comments or questions?

Commissioner Ponzi asks about how many Tourism positions will be open in June 2023.

Todd confirms that there will be 2 open positions.

### **Travel Oregon 2023-2025 Strategic Plan & Budget Development**

Vice-Chair DiNovo invites Todd Davidson to share the 2023-2025 Budget Development.

Todd walks the Commissioner through a PowerPoint presentation regarding the 23-25 Strategic Plan and budget development including:

- The Framework for 23-25 Strategic Plan Development
- Prioritized Strategies
- Stakeholder Survey Results
- Economic Impact

Todd discusses prioritized strategies from the 10-Year Strategic Vision and that staff came together this past fall to put actions against those strategies and budget was set aside with the budget modification done in Feb. 2023. Todd discusses that since February, additional "Do It Next" strategies have been identified and VPs have been tasked with creating a high-level budget against those priorities that will help build the 23-25 biennial budget.

Todd discusses that there is an expectation that after the Do It Next strategies have been fully identified this coming summer, that there may be an additional budget modification request in fall of 2023. Todd reviews the upcoming timeline and activities that will go into the development of the 23-25 Strategic Plan – for final approval at June 2023 Commission meeting.

Todd reviews the 5 Prioritized Strategies and the criteria that was reviewed to identify that work.

Todd provides the Commission with the high-level Stakeholder Survey results that recently closed with over 1000 responses. Todd reviews PowerPoint Stakeholder Survey results including:

- Purpose of the survey
- Data collection responses by region
- Data collection by tourism industry sector
- Results of 5 prioritized strategies
- Results of numbers of visitors in summer
- Review of 5 strengths and 5 areas that need focus
- Review of community challenges
- Long-term planning priorities

Todd reviews Oregon's current Economic Impact slides including Oregon's tourism performance (direct employment, employee earnings, visitor spending, state/local taxes) from 2003, in 2020 with COVID impacts and in 2022, and reviewing Travel Oregon's 2021-2023 biennial budget and the 2023-2025 revenue forecast.

All of this information will help inform the development of the 23-25 biennial strategic plan and budget.

Commissioner Ponzi states that in the stakeholder survey results it showed that the DEI strategy ranked lower and asks if that will change the development of the biennial plan.

Todd explains that we believe it ranked lower because it was seen as an internal Travel Oregon priority.

Commissioner Ponzi states that infrastructure and marketing were the higher priorities.

Todd explains that yes, those and grants were the 3 highest priorities – but it also changes depending on the region. Todd states that Oregon overall needs to continue to be a more welcoming destination.

Commissioner Penilton states that with the recent inflation and potential for an upcoming recession, there is still justification for being cautious with our revenue forecast.

Todd states that he and Commissioner Penilton are likeminded in being fiscally cautious and that the baseline revenue forecast was approved for Travel Oregon staff to plan against.

Commissioner Youngblood asks about the likelihood of a budget modification in fall of 2023.

Todd explains that due to the way that the Dept. of Revenue remits our final accrual, there is often a final budget modification needed to be adopted in the fall, which also allows the Travel Oregon staff to review the Do it Now and Do it Next priorities and budget against that work.

Vice Chair DiNovo thanks the Travel Oregon team for all the work that is being done to develop the 23-25 Strategic plan and budget. She states how great it was that 1000 people participated in the Stakeholder Survey and thanks Todd for building in time for the Commission to review the draft biennial plan ahead of it being shared more broadly. She also thanks Todd for having the organizational design almost completed.

Commissioner Penilton states how pleased he is with the progress as well.

### **2022 International Travel & PDX Next**

Todd welcomes Petra Hackworth, Vice-President of Global Sales and Curtis Robinhold, Executive Director of the Port of Portland to join and give an update on all that is happening and what we can expect in the near future at the Portland International Airport (PDX).

Petra welcomes Curtis Robinhold, Executive Director of the Port of Portland. The Port consists of 4 marine terminals, 2 general aviation airports and the Portland International Airport. Curtis is responsible for PDX Next – the transformation of the Portland International airport – a 5-year and \$2 billion effort. Tourism colleagues across the nation of Travel Oregon's relationship with our Port and that airport partnership.

Curtis Robinhold, Executive Director of the Port of Portland provides the Commission with a PowerPoint regarding PDX Next. Curtis acknowledges the great partnership that the Port of Portland has with Travel Oregon and discusses:

- That there are more flights than ever this coming summer to Europe
- Review of PDX Airport renovation timeline – to be completed by the end of 2025
- Review of the new layout of the airport terminal core with keeping the heart and soul of current airport
- The PDX carpet will return
- Review of accessibility updates– creating an airport for everyone
- Forest to Frame roof – 9 acres of sustainably forested wood

Curtis states that he hopes that everyone will be as proud of the new airport as they are.

Commissioner Penilton states that he owns a square of the original carpet. States appreciate for all the work to create an inviting and accessible place for all those who travel.

Todd states that the Port of Portland has always seen themselves as part of Oregon's travel and tourism industry and experience – and not just a transportation provider. Their continued recognition is because of the environment and the culture they have created. Todd discusses the 22 individual concessionaires being brought into the airport and how important that investment is in Oregon's economy. Providing a great welcome and lasting impression when people arrive and leave our state.

Vice Chair DiNovo shares how impressed she is with the vision for the airport.

Curtis states that the roof is being made from Douglas Fir and made from seemed together 90-foot beams.

Commissioner Ponzi thanks Curtis for the innovation and keeping the uniqueness of our airport along with the local concessionaires.

Commissioner Willitts states that Curtis' passion for this is evident and how excited he is to come back to the newly done airport.

### **Oregon Tourism Information System (OTIS) Update**

Todd welcomes Cecilia Suvagian, Database Information Specialist, to join us and discuss what we call "OTIS" – our Oregon Tourism Information System.

Cecilia walks the Commission through a PowerPoint regarding the Oregon Tourism Information System (database) including:

- Where we were
- Where we are at now
- Where we are going

Cecilia reviews the history and how OTIS was developed, how it is powered by information from Oregon's tourism industry partners and how that information then powers partners websites (1 update – powers multiple websites ensuring same information). Over 200 users including 4 RDMOs.

Cecilia discusses how OTIS supports the 10-Year Vision by providing remarkable experiences and what the future of OTIS looks like knowing that change is inevitable and how to stay supportive of our partners.

Todd states that a primary reason that OTIS is so important is that it supports both the consumer and industry users. To be considered a trusted resource - the more the data is accurate – the more our travelers will trust and use the information and listings on these websites. The other way this provides support is to our partners. This repository of data was created to be populated and then be used to pull data for multiple purposes.

Vice Chair DiNovo states that as Chair of the Coos Bay North-Bend Visitors Association, we really appreciate this work as OTIS has been a really effective way for us to do our work.

### **Other Business**

Vice-Chair DiNovo asks if the Commission has any other business to share.

Commissioner Willitts shares his appreciation of Portland and that he and his wife have continued to frequent Portland and he thanks Portland for addressing to make Portland a better and safer town for our visitors.

Commissioner Willitts acknowledged that this was the first time Vice Chair DiNovo's running a meeting and that she did a great job.



Vice Chair DiNovo states how much she appreciated her dinner out last night and how excited she is to see Portland come back.

Commissioner Penilton states that the Oregon Tourism Leadership Academy will be meeting on April 5 and he looks forward to meeting the new participants.

The next Commission Meeting will be held virtually on May 18, 2023, for the Commission to receive Public Comment on the draft 23-25 Strategic Plan & Budget. The next in-person meeting will be June 12-13, 2023, in Lakeview.

Vice-Chair DiNovo thanks the staff and local partners and adjourns the meeting at 3:13 p.m.