

Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting December 6, 2023

Ecotrust Building
Irving Street Studio
721 NW 9th Ave.
Portland, OR 97204

Broadcasted via YouTube Live

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

Welcome and Introductions

Chair DiNovo opens the meeting at 9:07 a.m. and welcomes everyone to the December 6, 2023, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair DiNovo thanks everyone that is 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.

Chair DiNovo acknowledges that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements were met. She acknowledges that there is a sheet to sign up to provide public comment in the room.

Chair DiNovo welcomes two new Commissioners to the Oregon Tourism Commission, Travis Hill and Harish Patel. Travis and Harish introduce themselves and provide a bit of background. The Commissioners and Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, introduce themselves.

Due to technical difficulties, Chair DiNovo recesses the meeting at 9:14 a.m. and reconvenes at 9:20 a.m.

Commissioners continue to introduce themselves.

Chair Remarks

Chair DiNovo acknowledges the Commissioners feelings of being back in Portland and states that the Commissioners convened the day prior to receive an orientation and will continue to do these trainings yearly.

Local Welcome

Chari DiNovo states that in holding these meetings around the state, we have the unique opportunity to hear from local industry members. She introduces Jeff Miller, Executive Director and President of Travel Portland, and Megan Conway, Chief Strategy Officer.

Jeff and Megan share a PowerPoint presentation regarding Portland's travel and tourism issues and opportunities that the city has faced over the last several years including: recent data on visitors coming to Portland; national consumer sentiment research; public relations efforts and media placements; strategic communications; Portland visitor center; marketing efforts and campaign called Yours to Share; convention sales and marketing; Sport Oregon partnership.

Commissioner Stephenson asks about the booking window on convention business. Jeff states that bookings for large events and conventions are usually 3-5 years out. For some smaller events, those windows are generally a little bit shorter.

Commissioner Penilton thanks Jeff and Megan for their work and asks how many conferences were lost in the last few years. Jeff states that for 2023, the convention business has been very good as they walk potential clients through any of their safety concerns. The situation on the streets is never what they expected – it is better. Once we can get them here to view it, they generally are very excited to hold their event here.

Commissioner Penilton asks about Travel Portland's working relationship with the City of Portland. Megan indicates that Portland is in the throes of shifting their city government structure. They stay in contact with local elected officials as well as future people that are running for office.

Commissioner Hill asks about the negative media attention and if Travel Portland is able to counter those perceptions and asks about the survey that Travel Portland completed. Megan indicates that the survey has been happening since 2018 and goes out to a selection of about 1200 individuals along the west coast. They're able to sometimes correlate the media attention when reviewing survey results. Once the strategic communications firm is onboard, they will plan more traditional efforts to sit down with editorial boards in partnership with the City of Portland.

Commissioner Patel asks if family groups and convention groups are tracked separately. Jeff states that they are trying to work with meeting planners and specific social media partnerships for limited-service hotels.

Commissioner Penilton asks if they can share what efforts are happening with local hotels. Jeff states that there are 13 hoteliers that serve on their board and that they often meet with local elected officials to discuss the efforts underway to clean up the downtown. Commissioner Penilton states that he has seen those efforts and that they are paying off.

Todd states when working with or hosting media, once they have seen and visited Portland themselves, their experiences have been terrific. Overall experiences have been amazing. Sometimes the lifestyle section is battling the front page. The work the Travel Portland team is doing to battle those negative perceptions is noticed and making a positive impact. Travel Portland should be applauded and celebrated for their work.

Stakeholders, Partners and Public Statements

Chair DiNovo states that on Wednesday, November 22, 2023, the Commission Meeting notice was posted to the Commission Meeting webpage on Travel Oregon's industry website. Notice was also sent via Travel Oregon's industry communications and the agenda and link to the livestream were also 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 regarding Oregon's travel and tourism industry. She reminds attendees that a comment form lives continuously on the industry website.

No public comments were received ahead of the meeting, but we do have someone here to share some comments.

David Duncan of Greyline and Pink Trolley Sightseeing states he would like to see Travel Portland and Travel Oregon to create a friendly zone for tour operators and commercial drivers to drop their guests in a safe and welcoming way.

Commissioner Penilton agrees with Mr. Duncan's comments and thanks him for sharing today.

Commission Business

Chair DiNovo confirms that the Commissioners received their meeting packets and had the opportunity to review the contents including the financials.

Chair DiNovo informs the group that Vice Chair Willitts conducted interviews for those interested in serving on the Finance Committee. Commissioners Stephenson and Penilton have been selected to serve on the committee.

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

Vice Chair Willitts thanks Commissioners Penilton and Stephenson for joining and participating in the financial committee.

The fiscal year-to-date financials (FY24) were included in our Commission materials and have been posted to the Industry Site.

Vice Chair Willitts states that in looking at current FYTD, as updated during the financials call November 20th, through November we have received \$21.1M in Transient Lodging Tax (TLT), or 48.3% of the current \$43.7M budget. Year-over-year, TLT is down 4% compared to the same time frame FY23, with Q1 and Q2 running slightly behind forecasted numbers. The TLT funds we receive are based on the Oregon Department of Revenue's timing and processing of the tax returns.

Compared to FY19, TLT is up 24% after adjusting for the change in the tax rate.

Vice Chair Willitts asks for questions or comments. There are no questions or comments.

Commission Action

Approval of Minutes

Chair DiNovo asks if the Commissioners had the opportunity to review the June 12 & 13, 2023, minutes. Commissioners indicate they have reviewed.

Chair DiNovo asks if there are any questions or corrections. With none, she asks for a motion to approve the June meeting minutes.

Commissioner Gremmels moves to approve both sets of meeting minutes.
Commissioner Stephenson seconds the motion.

Chair DiNovo asks all in favor to say aye. All Commissioners say aye.

Chair DiNovo states that this approves the June 12 & 13 Commission meeting minutes and that they will be posted to the industry website.

Portland Central City Task Force

Todd welcomes and introduces Vince Porter, Governor Tina Kotek's Economic Development Policy Advisor. Vince provides the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation regarding the work of the Portland Central City Task Force and discusses the subcommittees (lists): Community Safety, Livable Neighborhoods, Housing and Homeless, Taxes and Services, and Central City Value Proposition.

- Final recommendations will be unveiled on Monday, Dec. 11 at the Oregon Business/Leadership Summit.
- Vince discusses the PCCTF's Vision Committee Statement – "Central City is the region's revitalized gathering place. Its people and places attract and welcome visitors from across the city, region, state and the world. They come to attend events, indulge in world-class food, play in the parks, celebrate culture, and cheer on their team. It's a gateway for visitors to Forest Park, the Willamette Valley, mountains, waterfalls, and the Pacific Ocean."
- Defining which neighborhoods are defined as "Central City".
- The role Travel Oregon has in working with partners to revitalize the Central City.
 - Activation programming and investments

- How Travel Oregon can help provide some meaningful investments into Central City over the coming year to drive visitation back into the city core.

Todd thanks Vince and states that he will be in attendance at Monday's summit and will look forward to seeing those recommendations.

Chair DiNovo thanks Governor Kotek for her leadership in

Vince states that the Governor is committed to bringing people together to find solutions.

Commissioner Ponzi asks if there is anyone serving on the Task Force from outside the Portland area.

Vince states that they were actually a little bit surprised on how many people were interested in serving – whittling it down to 47 was hard. There are surveys and opportunities to hear from others. Statewide comments are to see what we can do inside the defined Central City because we know those will be positive impacts that spread throughout the state.

Commissioner Ponzi states that having others with a different lens might be helpful.

Vice Chair Willitts discusses that throughout the state there is conflict around livability and tourism and asks if there is alignment in these topics.

Vince states that we do see and are trying to find the balance between supporting those who live in communities and welcoming visitors. A lot of local effort and energy around helping with this Central City effort.

Commissioner Stephenson states that what happens in Portland does affect the rest of the state. Erin asks if there is an effort to bring locals (Oregonians) back to Portland by way of changing their perception when they see the negative media.

Vince states that we need to be talking more optimistically about Portland by communicating those good aspects of what is happening. There are community engagements happening including Wieden & Kennedy's campaign of "Portland is what we make it". We all need to show up and demonstrate commitment to Portland.

Commissioner Patel states that he lives in the downtown area and that often people don't want to visit due to safety concerns.

Commissioner Hill states that while there have been safety concerns, over the last several days he has seen an increased presence of police and safety people.

Vince states that there is an effort at the statewide effort to increase safety presence along with local efforts as well.

Commissioner Penilton thanks Vince for attending today. David states that he's very pleased by the Governor's engagement on these efforts. David asks if there is a timeline on the Governor's expectations.

Vince states that the Governor has many expectations to move these efforts forward including having state agencies involved in meaningful ways.

Commissioner Penilton states that as a small business owner they are impacted every day and the recommendations from the task force will make a difference.

Commissioner Youngblood thanks Vince for spending time with us today. He states that we need to be doing an effective job of communicating this out through our 7 regions on what the efforts will mean to the state. Prior to the pandemic, Portland's TLT was over 40% of all TLT. Scott thanks Vince for conveying the Governor's expectation for that joint efforts to bring together partnerships. Scott discusses the efforts of Portland's Clean and Safe program – a nationally recognized effort to support and enhance hotel safety district to make sure we are creating a welcoming environment so that Travel Portland and Travel Oregon can help communicate out that Portland is safe. None of this is successful without the Governor's support and Scott thanks her for her efforts.

Vince states that this is a real opportunity and need. Recommendations are not going to solve every problem but identify a more robust way for public and private partnerships to support Portland.

Todd states that Oregon's travel and tourism industry has felt Governor Kotek's commitment to our state. The Governor showed her commitment to the state through her One Oregon tour to engage with the tourism industry. Todd shares the honor it was to sit down and hear the Governor's thoughts on Travel Oregon's 25-25 Strategic Plan and budget. On behalf of the grateful Commission and industry – thanks Vince for being here today.

Chair DiNovo recesses the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

Chair DiNovo reconvenes the meeting at 10:47 a.m.

Activation and Revitalization of Central Portland

Todd introduces Scott Bricker, Director of Destination Services, who provides the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation on efforts underway for Portland's recovery. Scott discusses the following:

- Destination Ready and Competitive and Recovery Grants including support of signature events and activations
- Partnering with Prosper Portland and funding for specific focused activations.
- Funding for key neighborhood activations

Scott introduces Billie Moser, VP International Tourism & Strategic Projects at Travel Portland. Billie who continues with the PowerPoint and discusses Travel Portland's efforts underway including:

- Visitor services to enhance visitor experiences
- Visitor centers in Portland and their new brochure program
- Community engagement, education and networking

- Creating new programs including infrastructure grants to enhance visitor experiences and drive leisure demand, large event sponsorships to drive leisure demand, partnership with Prosper Portland's new event office. Billie discusses the importance of partnership with Events & Film office.

Billie discusses specific investments to fund activations and events totaling \$1.3 million. Billie thanks Scott Bricker for his work and collaboration.

Billie discusses additional investments such as the Ticket to Dine restaurant promotion, sponsorships to support diverse communities, and investments in local strategies.

Billie thanks Scott Bricker, the Travel Oregon Welcome Center team and Michelle Woodard for her grants expertise and support.

Berk Nelson, Manager of the Office of Events and Film, introduces himself, his coworker Ness Zolan. Berk shares the goals of the office including assisting with permitting and event space clean ups. Berk acknowledges that many key stakeholders are in the room attending the meeting.

Berk shares their strategic objectives to foster a vibrant central city and commercial districts by retaining and increasing commercial activity and supporting small businesses in the central city. Priorities include attracting more visitors through events and activations, renovating of the public realm and support for regional cultural organizations and anchors.

Berk introduces Ness Zolan. Ness recaps the events action table goals to revitalize Portland. Two major goals included forming an office of events and film to aid event producers. The second goal was to invest in events. The action table started with 12 but has now expanded to over 500 people with quarterly meet ups with a steering committee of 5 individuals.

Ness shares about Every Wednesday activations and event production services. Ness shares major event investments. Ness expands upon their grant programs with 151 grants awarded. The Scale Up grant program details are shared with awardees to be announced soon. Ness thanks Travel Oregon and Travel Portland for their support.

Berk thanks Travel Oregon and Travel Portland for their sponsorship of the outdoor ice rink at the base of the Morrison Bridge.

Christina Fuller introduces herself as the Festiva Director of the Waterfront Blues Festival and the c-owner of Fuller Events.

Christina shares some of the impacts of the Waterfront Blues Festival and what it means to the city of Portland:

- 45,000+ fans across 4 stages
- Collaborations with Mike Bennett, Hillsboro Hops, Sunday parkways, and more
- Fans include 67% from Oregon of which 80% are from the Portland metro area
- 15% of fans are new to the festival

- Statistics of attendees
- Focus on local and regional musical acts
- Good news about increased foot traffic

Christina thanks Travel Oregon and Travel Portland for the event support and investments.

Todd thanks all presenters and Scott's leadership in the event and investment space.

Chair DiNovo shares her gratitude for the Waterfront Blues Festival, the Travel Portland God News newsletter and the Office of Events and Film.

Commissioner Penilton asks if there has been a shift in visitation to the Blues Festival since COVID and shares his appreciation for diverse cultural offerings.

Commissioner Hill asks about technical assistance marketing and PR program at Travel Portland. Billie answers it is part of the Scale Up grants and how technical assistance fills gaps in event producer needs.

Commissioner Patel shares his appreciation for events in Portland and how they keep him in Portland.

Todd thanks the presenters.

Regional Cooperative Tourism Program & Wine Country License Plate Regional Distribution Program RFP Update

Todd introduces Harry Dalgaard, Director of Regional Services.

Harry shares a PowerPoint presentation providing the Commission with an update on the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP) and the Wine Country License Plate Regional Distribution Program (OWCLPTPP) RFP:

- Quarterly business review meetings with RDMOs
- Dashboards and reporting
- Agreed upon procedures report
- Collaborative regional investments program
- RCTP designation protocol and history
- RCTP and OWCLPTPP RFP planning to open in March 2024 with Commission action in June 2024

Chair DiNovo thanks Harry and asks why the RFP needs to happen together. Harry answers that the administration of programs closely mirrors each other and often have the same organization executing on both.

Commissioner Youngblood acknowledges the responsibility the Commission and Travel Oregon has to designate the organizations that will be responsible for these funds and thanks the staff.

Other Business

Chair DiNovo acknowledges another recent piece of Travel Oregon's work with the competitive grants application process led by Michelle Woodard and Louisa Mariki which awarded \$3,611,089.00 to 56 entities across the state. In total, Travel Oregon received 113 full applications, requesting \$7.5 million in funding by the application deadline of September 15.

Chair DiNovo shares her gratitude for the agency collaboration (involving 36 Travel Oregon staff touch points) to get these funds out the door to communities across the state.

Chair DiNovo takes the opportunity to congratulate Commissioner Ponzi on her recent appointment to the Oregon Wine Board.

The next meeting will be in March, just ahead of the 2024 Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism in Salem.

Chair DiNovo thanks the staff and our local partners for a wonderful meeting and adjourns the meeting at 11:42 a.m.