

Hells Canyon Chamber of Commerce

Minutes for Meeting of December 8, 2020

Held via Zoom • 7:00-9:00pm

Financial commitments are highlighted in green, action items in blue.

Present: Pres. Becky Kaaen, Sec. Bill Schuhle, Treas. Lauri Bryan, Timothy Bishop (Travel Baker County)

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were used as an outline for this meeting.

Finance Report

The report shared by Lauri showed a current balance in our general fund of \$4,554.50 (including about \$1,000 in memberships/renewals – Anthony Lakes, Sarah’s Richland Cafe, Jerry Schwab Insurance, Alpine Alarm, and Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally are new) and in the fireworks fund of \$1,050.

Business

Wigwam Burner Info Wayside Mileage Signs: Bill reported that Whitey had talked with Bill Wilson and that he was very interested in the project. He will be producing a couple of different design samples for us to look at in the near future. He would do the sign shaping and routing of letters and it would be up to us to fill in the letters with paint and then put the final finish on the whole sign. Bill Schuhle showed a sample of a possible black & white rigid plastic sign that he said could be had for about \$7.00 each. They would likely need to be replaced every five years or so, so wouldn’t have the longevity of the wooden signs. He also had a concern about mounting them securely to the round pole such that they wouldn’t flap in strong winds and work themselves loose. The actual destinations and mileages to be included in the new “sign stack” are still to be determined. Timothy said that TLT grant money might well be available for the project. Application would need to be made 60 days before project start at the latest.

Downtown Valentine Hearts: Becky will begin contacting prospective heart buyers right after Christmas and Cindy will have ads in the HCJ when appropriate. Shelly Wilson will be accepting heart payments at her Cornucopia Coffee House. Painting will take place the second or third week in January and the hearts will be hung at the end of January.

Lodging Guest Restaurant Guide: Becky said this project is on hold “until things thaw out” travel restriction-wise.

Timothy’s Report: Timothy said it’s a challenge marketing the area when our county is currently classed as an “extreme risk” area COVID-wise. They are helping out with “shop local” campaigns, but mostly concentrating on marketing outdoor recreational activities such as snowmobiling and “aspirational” promotions getting folks thinking about travel in 2021.

Much of Timothy’s work lately has been concentrated on updating Travel Baker County’s digital presence, including a completely revamped web site including better access to digital archives and up-to-date links to local business partners and travel, recreational, and regulatory information providers as well as newsletters providing both business training resources and visitor information. He’s also been working on integrating with the newly-updated Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA) web site.

TBC’s Flickr page has really taken off, averaging almost half-a-million image views per month for a while now. 70% of site followers are international, likely planning for post-Covid travel which is exciting. 20% are travel media personnel likely downloading images for publication. In responding to Flickr comments – which he spends about two hours a day doing – Timothy has had to use Google Translate for about 60% of those responses. He says the revamped web site will be much easier to update on an ongoing basis.

Becky asked about lodging taxes being collected from Air BNB’s/VRBO’s and Timothy said that was happening, with property owners having the option of having the online booking site collect and pay the tax or to do it themselves with most opting for the former as there is less bookkeeping involved. He said the largest growth in tourist accommodations is in the Air BNB/VRBO arena and most of these are in outlying areas of the county, emphasizing the fact that marketing now needs to be more county-wide vs. the more traditional Baker City-centric approach. During this Covid period, these properties are proving more attractive to visitors wishing to have privacy, “lay low”, and be off the beaten path.



HCCC Membership Benefits: Becky wondered about our current policy of giving equally prominent and complete listings, on our web site (and in our brochures), to both Chamber member and non-member businesses. Timothy shared that other organizations such as ours will have a business directory, listing all relevant businesses in the area, but only member listings get an address, phone number, and web site link.

Wild Bill's Wall Murals: Lauri spoke with Jon Hanley who provided samples of his work and an idea for Wild Bill's which she really liked. His pricing estimate was \$2,800-\$4,500 depending on the condition of the wall and the amount of prepping required. She's also contacted Trevor Durr, but not heard back from him with more info.

Bill shared that an online billboard printing company could do an 8'x 8' print for \$50-60 that could be mounted on a double panel of plywood and then installed. Even more intriguing, he thought, was the idea of having a single, huge 10' x 25' print that would cover the entire wall and could be stretched in front of the intervening posts so they would not be an issue. Pricing on high-density material at maximum print quality was \$362.50. He noted that, in addition to possible photos or a photo montage, such a panel could also be made from an artist's smaller creation scanned and blown up to billboard size. Longevity with sun exposure would likely be 2+ years at which point the look could be refreshed with new images. Becky suggested that at that pricing, and with some grant funding, we could possibly install several large images a different establishment around the area.

Timothy has worked with many communities who have done murals and had some words of caution. Maintenance issues with a painted mural include the wall(s) and painting itself plus possible issues with the building (leaky downspouts, etc.) which the building owner would be responsible for and which could be problematic. He personally recommends going the painted-on-the-building route and said a \$2,500 grant application to TLT would likely be looked upon favorably. Both Vale and The Dalles have mural societies and have installed numerous murals, panel-mounted in Vale and painted-on-the-building in The Dalles. They've found that legal contracts with the owners of the businesses involved have been critical in terms of maintenance, when the building changes hands, etc. He agreed with Becky that contacting those societies and learning from their experiences would be most valuable. He also suggested reaching out to Brownsville in the Willamette Valley where some of his own work restoring "ghost murals" (historic advertising) was part of prepping the town for the filming of "Stand By Me". **Becky agreed to contact the Vale society and Lauri will contact The Dalles society to learn what they can.**

Phil Wreden's Flickr Page: Bill said that after learning of the extensiveness and traffic on Timothy's Flickr page, he wasn't sure that there was much point in considering taking over Phil's page for the Chamber as was mentioned at our last meeting. Timothy recommended starting our own Flickr page as an image archive that could include things, like snowmobiling, that he doesn't cover in his photographic rounds. He cautioned us on uploading photos from non-Chamber photographers as the photos should be public domain (as are all the Travel Baker County images) and this can get sticky legally.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 2, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Schuhle, Secretary