

**WHATCOM COUNTY
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

County Courthouse
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #108
Bellingham, WA 98225-4082



Jack Louws
County Executive

**WHATCOM COUNTY
LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, September 18, 2017
322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
10:00 – 12:00**

Meeting minutes
(draft)

LTAC Members: County Executive Jack Louws, Chair

<u>Tax Recipient</u>	<u>Tax Collector</u>
Drew Schmidt	Mollie Pike
Guy Occhiogrosso	MegAnne Offredi
Sandra Ward	Vacant

~~Strike through~~ means not present

Staff Present: Tawni Helms

Welcome/Introductions:

Executive Louws welcomed the members and the public and asked for introductions from the committee members as well as the funding applicants present. The agenda was reviewed and the first order of business was to welcome the new committee members, Mollie Pike of the Snowater Association and MegAnne Offredi from the new Holiday Inn. Both were introduced to the group and thanked for their willingness to serve.

Executive Louws provided an overview of the current Lodging Tax Fund Balance. The Convention Center (Lodging Tax) Fund has a projected year-end balance of ~\$1.2M. Revenue is projected to be \$678k in 2017 and \$625k in 2018. Annual expenditures continue to match or exceed annual revenues. The goal is to have enough reserve to support a new restroom facility in Birch Bay. Executive Louws suggested the committee consider setting the 2018 funding limit up to \$675k for eligible projects and to authorize a 5% contingency (\$33,750) for unanticipated projects that may come forward throughout the year. Committee members were in agreement with that proposal.

Presentations:

Funding applicants were asked to present if they chose. The presenters were invited to present their proposed funding requests.

1. Allied Arts – Kelly Hart

Recommend: \$2,500.

- Request funding support for the Whatcom Cultural Festival
- They are coordinating with Fairhaven Inn and Holiday Inn to block rooms
- Questions were raised about private fundings, lots of in-kind contributions

2. **Bellingham Festival of Music – Karen Berry** **Recommend: \$12,500.**
 - Asking for more sponsorship for their 25th Anniversary celebration
 - 3 sellout events in 2017 growth potential with bigger ad campaign
 - Added hotel packages people stayed in hotels

3. **Bellingham Whatcom Chamber of Commerce & Industry – Guy** **Recommend: \$25,000.**
 - Support for operations and production of resource guide
 - Committee requested the completion of the guide in 2018
 - Discussion regarding Chamber event calendar and Tourism’s calendar

4. **Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism – Sandy** **Recommend: \$290,000.**
 - 24/7 Countywide tourism
 - Work with all partners in the industry
 - Requesting additional funding for cultural heritage tourism plan implementation
 - Working on sports marketing

5. **Birch Bay Chamber – Randy Parten** **Recommend: \$100,000.**
 - Request goes towards Visitor Center Operations and Marketing
 - Activities, multi-day events sponsored by dues and fees raise bed/head tax revenue.
 - State Park pays into Lodging Tax Fund.
 - Building lease cost is increasing substantially

6. **Cascadia Film Festival – Cheryl Crooks** **Recommend: \$10,000.**
 - First year event was very successful people came from all over the globe
 - High praise for the event lots of good feedback – quality program
 - Funding request for outreach marketing

7. **Bellingham Scottish Highland Gathering – Heather Richendrfer** **Recommend: \$11,000.**
 - New management, new vision for highland games event
 - Year round events include; highland games, Reel competition and dance competition.
 - Experienced director of legacy Scottish events

8. **Ferndale Chamber – Ann Serwold** **Recommend: \$12,000.**
 - Funding from Ferndale Lodging was questioned
 - They generate business for county hotels
 - Double check funding

9. **Lynden Pioneer Museum** **Recommend: \$5,000.**
 - 85% of visitors are from outside of Whatcom County
 - Coordinate with birch bay condos buy 1 get 1 free passes
 - Spoke about several upcoming events
 - Funding directed toward marketing/advertisement

10. **Mt. Baker Visitor Center – Rebecca Boonstra** **Recommend: \$100,000.**
 - 5-6K visitors served annually, approx. 10% of the number of visitors to the Mountain.
 - \$100k is the funding allocation the Visitor

11. **Pickford Film Center October** – Susie Purvis/Ariel **Recommend: \$5,000.**
- 50 title lineups for the festival
 - 11th year of this successful event. Linked to 11 cinemas in the NW
 - Working with hotels for package promotions
12. **Sustainable Connections** – Sara Southerland **Recommend: \$30,000.**
- Promote tourism through edible experiences
 - 1200-1600 tourists for farm tours
 - Creative – leverage partnerships
 - Requested Bellingham LTAC none consider the program/event to be County oriented
 - Encourage the community to build the Whatcom Food Festival
13. **Whatcom Events** – Anna Rankin **Recommend: \$30,000.**
- Competitive environment now with multiple recreation events growing industry
 - No Mud to Suds race in 2017
 - There's more draw from outside
 - A lot of data provided at the time of event registration
14. **Whatcom County Parks & Rec Foundation** – Daniel Tepper **Recommend: \$15,000.**
- Although numbers were down the second year event was very successful. The exceptionally hot weather likely had an impact on participation. Still crunching the numbers from the Labor Day event.
 - A question was raised why they are pursuing paying lodging tax fees for the overnight campers. Mr. Tepper said he would look into the requirements for charging that tax.
15. **Whatcom Symphony** – Ramona Abbott **Recommend: \$12,500.**
- Confidence in reaching and bringing in out of county people
 - Working with hotels for overnight packages
16. **Whatcom County Glacier Restrooms** – County sponsored **Recommend: \$9,000.**

Allocation Deliberations:

Executive Louws asked for any other questions of the presenters. There were none. The committee deliberated on the funding requests emphasizing sustainability and county tourism. After final consideration and deliberation the motion was made to recommend funding in the amounts listed above **for a total of \$669,500 with a 5% contingency in the amount of \$33,475.** Sandra Ward moved and Guy Occhiogrosso seconded the motion. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:10