



# Hotel Motel Tax Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

10/9/2019

3:00 - 4:30 PM

SeaTac City Hall Council Chamber

**Members Present:** Councilmember Stanley Tombs; Cathy Heiberg; Brandi Mitchell; Richard Scherzinger; Jeff Bauknecht; Wendy Morgan;

**Members Absent:** [Click or tap here to enter names.](#)

**Staff Present:** Aleksandr Yeremeyev, Economic Development Strategist; Steve Pilcher, CED Director; Joe Hodgson, Police Captain;

**Others Present:** Katherine Kertzman, SSRTA; Ken Stockdale, Crowne Plaza

**Commence:** 3:05PM

**Adjourn:** 4:30PM

1. Introductions – All	Councilmember Stanley Tombs, Committee Chair called the meeting to order at 3:05PM
2. Review and Approve Minutes of September 11, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as Written <input type="checkbox"/> Approved with Modifications <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Approved
3. SeaTac Police Department Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational Update Captain Joe Hodgson provided an update on the current activity in the City. There were no significant spikes in activity, rather a reduction overall.  Discussion of transients coming into the area for use of bathrooms and shelter mostly around the airport light rail station. This activity seems to be increasing related to the weather turning colder. The group discussed that such activity increases during darker periods of the day/year. With disruptive persons, usually mental health issue or substance abuse is involved. Hodgson reassured the group to reach out if there are any concerns going forward.
4. Funding Process Update / Discussion	Chair Stan Tombs, Steve Pilcher, and Aleksandr Yeremeyev, facilitated the continued discussion regarding the funding process. A few areas of concerns were expressed. 1. Interest in having some component of performance based funding, prorated. Others mentioned it may be challenging for applicants to estimate the outcomes accurately.

2. Scope of Work may include value to the City for exposure, for placement of logos, hotel room night counts from hoteliers, and other categories of evaluation criteria.

Discussion of how to measure performance and what the components of the performance should be. Also discussed that lodging tax dollars are intended for tourism promotion of the area and amenities in the area. It is not a direct count of heads in beds, but rather tourism promotion of the area.

The group spoke about the track record over the decades showing that funding has been successful, but tightening up the process may be desired. A hotelier member, discussed room block, reservations and other potential milestones.

Other criteria may include: "Does the applicant organization have a website, did they promote on the website. Consumer spending impact estimates, etc.

**Discussion of performing a professional tourism destination assessment of the City of SeaTac.**

The group indicated that similar discussion of what the tourism/traveler demand generators are and what they could be have reoccurred over the past 25 years, and have not been able to pin down anything massive - the airport is the driver of the economy.

The Issaquah triathlon was brought up and the impacts were summarized

Currently, 1.3 days average is the length of stay in SeaTac. The travel is regional, short-term stays. Probably 3-4 night stays are not a likely target.

Biggest need is around weekend activity. Late September to April is when there is the largest need for travelers and tourism in the City. Some potential target examples include: dance groups, 200-500 groups, all types of dances. Families, and hobby groups.

Using a destination specialist firm may help analyze and discover opportunities. Kertzman mentioned that the SSRTA is engaging with Digital Edge who focuses on similar objectives.

A hotelier shared how his hotel guests behave. Observing the social media conversations, people use light rail. Travelers who used rent a car to go down town, now hop on the light rail to avoid the traffic nightmare and parking fees in downtown. Sports fans are coming in and staying in SeaTac, and going in to town for Huskies, Baseball, Seahawks, BlueJays, etc.

	<p>Again the group reiterated that the demand generator is the Airport. Length of stays is currently around 1.2-1.3 days.</p> <p>Scherzinger shared his conclusion of what is SeaTac's city center plan update outcomes may include: Business association for owners or a possible business improvement district; suggesting that instead of recreating something we do not have, embrace what we do – the international airport. Therefore, the focus should be on what weekend and shoulder season opportunities exist.</p> <p>The group suggested building on existing events and amenities and then expanding on that. Discussed having a destination expert analyze what is actually possible in the existing environment and analyze what is possible beyond that. Outcomes may analyze: Is another staff person needed to take on the task of chasing other lodging tax funding applicants? Or spend time talking to potential funded organizations and making them aware of potential funding and opportunity? Or pursue venue/amenity development that attracts shoulder season and weekend travelers.</p> <p>Kertzman mentioned that the City has to be heavily engaged in destination analysis as outcomes/recommendations are likely going to have impact on City resources/needs.</p> <p>Group discussion of a need for a destination assessment of the existing tourism landscape / tourism attracting amenities landscape, what is missing and what capacities exist. Primary focus should be given to weekends and the shoulder season September to April. Possibly evaluate event holders are who are often people who are passionate about a theme and they organize activities around their passions.</p> <p>Motion to pursue a professional assessment of our City of SeaTac tourism promotion opportunities. Motioned and seconded. Approved unanimously. Work with SSRTA on a Destination Assessment. Connect with existing groups that are operating in this area. Extensions of things that are already going on, and identifying who this region is in regards to tourism. Expand on existing activities, festivals in Seattle or the area.</p> <p>Staff to work with Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority (SSRTA) to explore/perform such analysis. Apply for lodging tax dollar funds with SSRTA managing the application/analysis project in collaboration with the City.</p> <p>Considerations: Sporting events hub, SeaTac ACLAC committee may want to be involved in the process.</p>
<p>5. Pipeline / Future Applicant Pool for Lodging Taxes</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion</p> <p>Details included under section 4. Takeaways include implementing contracts with evaluation criteria and some level of performance based funding accountability for applicants funded with lodging tax dollars.</p>

Discussion	
6. Fund Balance Strategy Discussion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Details included under section 4. The Destination Assessment work will help inform the direction/strategy of where reserve funds may be spent most effectively to improve overall tourism attractiveness of the City.
7. Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority Update	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational Update Kertzman provided an update on the RTAs operations and current initiatives. Mentioned 5-year succession planning, Staycation concept and brand awareness as well as the Secrets of Seattle Southside – November efforts.  Initiatives and actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay, play and then fly. King 5, YouTube, and other channels.</li> <li>• Hardcover Seattle Southside Travel Planner 2 years.</li> <li>• Tear away map requested by hoteliers and Museum of Flight</li> <li>• \$1.1 M of media buy. Google gave \$1M of free advertising by mistake = ROI was very high.</li> <li>• Enewsletter has 17,000 subscribers of quarterly newsletter.</li> <li>• News Media FAM tour. 425 business magazine is coming October 25.</li> </ul> Engaging Digital Edge for group travel assessment. Partner Services Meeting going on now at Crowne Plaza to inform the budget toolkit for what the partners will do for next year.
8. Smith Travel Report / WA Department of Revenue Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational Update General Statistics provided. Supply is impacting revenues and profitability. This is true for the greater market.
9. City Updates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational Update / Discussion
10. Other Business	
11. Adjourn	Adjourned the meeting at 4:30 PM.  <i>The next regular meeting will be held on 11/13/2019 in the City Hall Council Chamber</i>