

Visit McMinnville
Board of Directors Meeting
December 18, 2019

Board Attendees: Erin Stephenson, Maria Stuart, Emily Howard, Kellie Menke, Courtney Cunningham, Ellen Brittan, Jeff Towery, Cindy Lorenzen, Ty Rollins

Absent: Jen Feero, Dani Chisholm

Staff Attendees: Jeff Knapp, Kitri McGuire

Guests: Scott Hill

Knapp called the meeting to order at 9:35 am.

Knapp presented the minutes from the November Board of Directors meeting. Brittan moved to accept the minutes as presented. Cunningham seconded. Minutes were accepted unanimously.

Knapp presented financial documents, including the balance sheet, P&L, and budget. Knapp noted that variances in the October financials represent spending on the New York media event. Visit McMinnville's line of credit currently sits at \$0, and VM has \$75,000 in reserve, as requested by the City.

The annual financial review from Bernards & Assoc. was received yesterday; Knapp and Brittan will present the review at the January Board of Directors meeting and will deliver a copy to the City once accepted by the Board.

Lorenzen moved to approve the financials as presented. Stuart seconded. Financials were approved unanimously as presented.

Stephenson reviewed last month's Board discussion on contract renegotiation with the City, and reviewed the discussion held with Council members at the December 10 City Council meeting. Stephenson reminded the Board that by our current contract, VM or the City needed to make a statement of intent to open renegotiations before December 31.

Stephenson noted that the Council discussion left VM's options more open to find a potential path forward that works for both the City and VM to work together. VM's Board will be able to discuss those paths during the January Board meeting and Strategic Planning meeting.

Towery agreed with Stephenson and felt Council's direction was in alignment with the direction he had given. He will provide a letter of agreement to Stephenson on what steps both parties will do next.

Menke felt the opportunity with Council was to open the conversation, nothing was supposed to be decided on that night, and she feels positive about the outcome.

Hill was at both last Board meeting and the Council session, and felt discussions with Council were in alignment with what was discussed at the Board meeting.

Towery and Menke felt Councilor Stassens, who was absent at the December 10 Council session, would have been in agreement with the rest of the Council. Menke felt the Councilors would benefit from an attorney's read of the law. Hill felt Councilors will need to know this to have educated discussions about future infrastructure needs.

Knapp will be meeting individually with Councilors Geary and Garvin this week. Stephenson noted that the bigger conversation is not about what CAN McMinnville do with TLT dollars. It's about what SHOULD we do for the betterment of the community and economic development.

Stephenson noted that the article reporting the Council session in the *News-Register* was not accurate in many respects.

Towery noted Council is less than a year into the economic development strategic plan, and that VM should keep reinforcing connections back to the plan to encourage the Council to push higher level strategic plans forward. There is a balance between making topics "feel right" and also supporting with data and facts.

Menke asked if there would be any focus on studies to bring new hotels in our community. Knapp agreed that the community needs this data, which is currently missing from the City's UGB consumer needs data. Those are studies VM could accomplish, and it would fit within our purview. A study would cost ~\$15,000, but VM should be aware that the information, in addition to benefiting the City, could potentially benefit VM Board members; Stephenson suggested VM finds a community that has had a DMO pay for a similar study to set precedent.

Towery stated the ordinance says there needs to be a TLT advisory committee to make decisions like this. There is a code requirement, it just went dark. Stephenson noted that when VM was formed that committee became the VM Board of Directors, per Candace's suggestion at the time.

Towery suggested that the advisory committee is recreated to keep VM out of decisions similar to the hotel study. Stephenson suggested the Board discuss the topic at the Strategic Planning retreat; both agreed creating committees for committees' sake may be a bureaucracy level that is not needed.

Rollins said he has experience with hotel studies, and the picture they paint is generally correct. Shelf life of these studies are good until the economic picture changes.

Knapp suggested Destination Development should be the overarching theme of the Strategic Planning meeting. Stephenson agreed; noted that VM's situation has changed (more funding, different landscape, etc.) and the Board owes it to itself and the City to discuss the future. Who are we and who should we be for our community to meet the needs of the City's strategic plan.

Stuart suggested creating definitions for terms like Destination Development, et. al., so all involved are speaking the same language. Brittan asked that staff and Board members review the budget to make sure it accurately reflects the work being done in admin, development, and marketing.

Stephenson noted VM also needs to review the Bylaws to make sure they reflect the direction the Board chooses in partnership with the City, prior to the Strategic Planning meeting. She noted we cannot create a new agreement with the City without all of these reviews and discussions, and she suggested VM retain an attorney to thoroughly review Bylaws. The Board supported this direction.

Strategic Planning Session:

- Focus on strategies moving forward to inform direction of organization
- Identify needed changes to bylaws
- Focus on Destination Development – what would that mean for VM?
- Clearly differentiate a Destination Management Organization vs Marketing – get info from Travel Oregon on this difference
- Knapp send out Bylaws & information on Destination Management Orgs in advance
- Knapp to get facilitator & arrange location/catering

Knapp suggested he meet with the City prior to the next Board meeting to determine a timeline of next steps. Towery agreed.

Rollins suggested coming prepared to the January Board meeting, prior to strategic planning, with answers from an attorney (or have an attorney on-site to present answers). Brittan suggested having TO present there as well to save time at Strategic Planning day.

Knapp suggested engaging MEDP in the conversation, as including business recruitment efforts in VM's future work could be in alignment with them. Hill suggested VM also involve MEDP board members in the process, and that Theresa Smith could be a good candidate.

The strategic planning meeting is January 27 starting at 9am at the McMinnville Fire Station..

McGuire gave a marketing report. Website hits were even in November 2019 with November 2018. Social media engagement remains steady, with VM's blog posts garnering the most engagement, which drives people from social to VM's website. Media impressions YTD are at 2.2 million, which is 700,000 above YTD goals. McGuire reported on current advertising placements and spoke on the 'journey' VM is taking consumers on, from awareness of our destination to booking a visit.

McGuire is working on a special project with McMinnville, Tennessee, and will report back to the board on current grant efforts and progress on this project.

Updates:

- Group sales: Rachel is the point person for Oregon Pinot Camp as it moves its HQ to McMinnville. VM will be working on a branded brunch activation for campers in downtown.
- Yamhill County commissioners are working with their attorney to create a YCTP advisory committee.
- Knapp updated Board on a WVVA situation; Travel Oregon requesting \$500,000 of their budget over the next 2-3 years to support the Oregon 2021 event. Knapp will report back as he hears more.
- Knapp is meeting with SEDCOR tomorrow.
- Hiring process for Marketing Coordinator is down to final interviews; VM intends to make an offer by the end of the year.
- The Oregon International Air Show is coming back in 2020.

Cunningham reported that WVVA is building a house for Habitat for Humanity in McMinnville and is developing a foundation.

###

The meeting was adjourned at 11:38am.

The next meeting will be held on January 15 at 9:30am at the Visit McMinnville offices.

Meeting minutes recorded and respectfully submitted by Kitri McGuire.

###