



# Travel Information Council

1500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 150  
Salem, Oregon 97302

## MINUTES

### Council Meeting

Monday, March 8, 2021

### Zoom Meeting

1500 Liberty St. SE Suite 150, Salem, Or 97302

#### **Members Participating:**

Bob Garcia, Chair; Mike Card; Mike Marsh, Vice-Chair; Ed Washington; Eliza Canty-Jones; Valerie Warren

**Members Excused:** Susan Steward, Secretary; Julie Brown

#### **TIC Staff Participating:**

Jim Denno; Diane Welter; Daphnee Legarza; Jessica Carbone; Heather Swanson

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**Convening:** The quarterly public meeting of the Travel Information Council was called to order by Chair Garcia at 9:34 a.m. Introductions were made for the record. All Council members were present by zoom. All staff members were present in the office.

#### **Business Meeting:**

#### **Approval of the December 14, 2020, Quarterly Council and February 25, 2021, Special Council Meeting minutes:**

Minor typographical corrections were made to the December 14, 2020, minutes.

*Marsh moved approval of the December 14, 2020, minutes as corrected and the February 25, 2021 minutes as submitted. Washington seconded. The motion carried.*

**Public Comment:** None.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Finance Committee:** Marsh said the finances are solid. There is positive retention of \$84,000 better than budget, and year-to-date was \$630,000 better than budget. The Debt-to-Equity ratio has decreased. There are no past due accounts over 90 days and all accounts over 60 days are on payment plans. There are no open capital projects over budget. The agency's investments continue to earn interest, but interest rates continue to decrease. Marsh thanked Welter and staff for their work on the proposed 2021-23 budget.

**Heritage Trees Committee:** Washington updated the Council on the three new trees accepted into the program. These three trees bring the total number of trees in the Heritage Tree program to 79. The Eddyville Redwood was planted by Israel Fisk Eddy in the 1880s. His grist mill, grocery store, and post office were integral in building this community, then called Little Elk. When a railroad which aimed to make Yaquina Bay the terminus of its transcontinental route wanted to cross Israel's land he agreed, but only if the depot was renamed "Eddyville". In Central Oregon, there is the new Williamson-Abbot Expedition Ponderosa. In 1855, the Williamson-Abbot Expedition camped here while surveying the Deschutes Basin for possible railway routes, using existing Native American Trails. In Lincoln City, there is the Nuuk-wii-daa-naa~ye' - "Our Ancestor". This tree is a remnant of an ancient coastal TIC Quarterly Meeting Minutes 3-8-2021 (approved 6-14-2021)

forest cared for by indigenous people since time immemorial. Oregon industries logged most of these giant trees at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reserving this tree to seed a new forest. In 2018, the community named the tree Nuuk-wii-daa-naa~ye' in the local Siletz Dee-ni language – to honor its importance to the community past and present. Committee member, David Hedberg, is a documentary filmmaker and has volunteered to make short, 3-minute videos for this year's class of trees. The recent ice storm did some damage to a few trees, but so far, we have not lost any.

**Historical Markers Committee:** Garcia said the Beaver Hill Marker Project Committee has selected an Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife site on Beaver Slough as the marker location. ODFW is excited to be part of the project and the local tourism folks are already planning to include the site in tours they are developing. The Beaver Slough site has been newly developed over the last few years for paddling year-round and hiking in the summer months. The Oregon Coast Visitors Association has pledged \$5,000 toward the marker project and they are helping to raise the additional \$2,300 needed to complete the project. The Ruben Shipley Marker Project has been approved by the committee. The committee is working with the City of Philomath to erect the marker in Newton Creek Park. Philomath Mayor Chris Workman is an enthusiastic supporter, and we expect the site to be approved soon. This marker has full funding pledged by the Corvallis chapter of the NAACP. The Broughton's expedition marker now has a new name, "River Highway". Its revised text has been approved. Committee member David Porter worked closely and diligently with contacts at the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. The marker will need to be installed by Coral Construction due to the extremely rocky ground and the current marker's location is close to the edge of a cliff going into the river. This will add additional cost to the project. The committee has completed revisions of the previously identified "high priority" markers. They are now working on identifying the next set of markers to review.

**Rest Area Committee:** Card said staff is doing great work in the rest areas. The preemptive tree work done at French Prairie alleviated a lot of possible damage that could have happened during the recent ice storm.

**Executive:** Chair Garcia said the committee has not met since the last meeting but will be planning a meeting soon.

**Chair's Update:** Chair Garcia congratulated staff on their work during the recent storm and keeping rest areas open during difficult times.

### **Staff Reports**

**Agency update:** Denno said that there have been a number of challenging events that the staff has worked through over the past year. They have kept the rest areas open and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, faced massive wildfires, and more recently the rest areas in the Willamette Valley were hit by an ice storm. We employed our new agreed-upon process for dealing with a time-sensitive emergency where costs are anticipated to exceed the \$25,000 limit that requires Council approval. The Executive Director notified the Chair, Vice-Chair, and the Chair of the Rest Area Committee of the relevant facts of the emergency and reasons for project expenditures exceeding the \$25,000 limit. When the expenditure was endorsed by the Chairs, a full Council meeting was scheduled as soon as possible for Council approval of the expenditures. This allows the work to proceed, resulting in the agency being able to reopen the rest area more quickly. During the power outage at the office, none of our IT systems went down and there was no data loss. This was thanks to the work of our IT Manager over the last year. The Rest Area Supervisor at the Ontario and Weatherby locations is retiring. After interviews, an internal candidate has been selected. The Legislative Session will be virtual for the foreseeable future; no word on when or if the Capitol building will be opened to the public. The Department of Administrative Services has indicated that state offices will not open to the public until sometime in the fall. Denno thanked the staff for their dedication and professionalism. The staff works hard to complete tasks and projects as cost-effectively as possible. There is a high level of cooperation and mutual support among staff at this agency. Marsh asked if there was any legislation that would require electric charging stations in rest areas. The Transportation Electrification Infrastructure Needs Analysis (TEINA) is a workgroup that is engaging in a broad discussion of state infrastructure goals and needs relative to EV charging. No specifics are available yet. Changes will be needed in both the federal law and in allowable uses of State Highway funds before EV charging could be allowed in the rest areas.

**Finance:** Welter said that the CARES act expired on Dec. 30, 2020, so the agency is no longer tracking costs

with COVID. Planning has begun for the end of this fiscal year.

**Heritage Programs:** Von Domitz said that the program is very busy with active projects. It was originally thought that fundraising would be difficult, but that was not the case. She is very excited about the videos being created by Hedberg and hoping that this project may be expanded. HRA is working on the draft text for the panels of the Oregon Trail Kiosk Project.

**Sign Program:** Denno said that revenue in the sign program is being watched very closely. In recent years revenues have increased about 3% per year. Due to the factors that have impacted businesses over the last year, the budget for the next biennium projects no increase in revenue. Small businesses have suffered substantially, and the proposed budget for the 2021-23 biennium includes no increase in sign fees. The program lost more customers than it gained last year, but some losses were offset because of waiting lists for available sign space in some locations. Sign revenue will continue to be monitored over the next couple of months and if the projection needs to be modified, we will discuss that with the Council before adopting the budget. The contractor that coordinates the information kiosks let us know that he has had an increase in customers, and he believes business will continue to improve.

**Rest Area Program:** Swanson presented Opiniator program results from the 2020 calendar year. The 2020 people counts were 15% lower than our 2019 numbers. The program's use declined by 28%. Staff is predicting an increase in these numbers in the coming year as travel begins to open. All the scored metrics rate average or above. Safety conditions have the highest score of 4.2. Legarza gave an update on the continued work due to storm damage at French Prairie Rest Area. Southbound French Prairie remains closed. Bartlett Tree Service is beginning their work removing one large Oak and any trimming that needs to happen over 70 feet. It is planned to have the rest area open by the end of the week if everything goes as planned. There are three projects in the design phase. Staff is in discussions and negotiations with three engineering firms to establish professional services agreements. CK3 will be submitting bid documents for ADA companion room expansion, ADA ramp upgrades, and pavement work at Baker Valley, Deadman Pass, and Charles Reynolds. Kittelson and Associates will be submitting bid documents for ADA companion room expansion, ADA ramp upgrades, and pavement work at Memaloose and The Maples. NV5 will be submitting bid documents for the pavement only at Sunset. Once negotiations are complete all these contracts will come before Council. North Santiam Paving has completed the construction of the 12 ADA ramps in both sides of the rest area and poured half of the concrete slab of the front truck lot of the northbound side and completed the prep work for the front lot of the southbound side. The entire project is scheduled to be completed by the end of April. The crew is currently ahead of schedule. The in-house remodel work on the auxiliary restrooms at Oak Grove is on budget and on schedule. It is scheduled to be completed by the end of April.

### **Action/Voting Items:**

- **2021- 23 FY Proposed Biennial Budget:** Welter presented the 2021-23 FY proposed TIC budget. The proposed budget was created in consultation with the Finance Committee based on assumptions approved by the Council. Garcia thanked Welter for her work. The agency's budget is more structured, and the assumed inflation rate is more conservative.

*Marsh made a motion to approve the 2021 – 23 proposed biennial budget for public comment. Canty-Jones seconded. The motion carried.*

- **Skid Steer- Track Loader for French Prairie and Santiam Rest Areas:** Legarza said that with the recent fires, snow, ice, and windstorms it has been a struggle to keep up with all the required clean-up from trees and other debris. The staff must rely on contractors and their equipment to accomplish the work. A skid steer is twice as powerful as a tractor and can be maneuverable in smaller spaces. The skid steer is a versatile piece of equipment that will address many needs within rest areas. It will be shared between French Prairie and Santiam but can also be trailered to other rest areas to help with in-house project work.

*Washington made a motion to approve \$65,000 for the purchase of a skid steer, track loader, trailer, and the needed attachments. Canty- Jones seconded. The motion carried.*

**Next Meeting:**

June 14, 2021- Zoom Meeting, Salem, OR

**Adjourn:** 11:27 a.m.

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