



Travel Information Council
1500 Liberty St. SE, Suite 150
Salem, OR 97302

MINUTES

Council Meeting

Monday, June 12, 2023
Salem, OR & Virtual Meeting

Members Participating: Bob Garcia, Chair (in-person); Mike Card, Vice-chair (virtual); Matt Preston (virtual); Rich Riggs (in-person); David Warren (virtual); Valerie Wilson (in-person).

Excused: Eliza Canty-Jones; Ed Washington

TIC Staff Participating: Elizabeth Boxall; Diane Cheyne; Beth Dehn; Michelle Roth; Heather Swanson; Jessica Carbone.

Call to Order/Introductions: The quarterly public meeting of the Travel Information Council was called to order by Chair Garcia at 9:30 a.m. Introductions were made for the record.

Approval of the Agenda and Order of Business: Council went forward with the agenda as presented.

Business Meeting

Approval of the March 13, 2022, Council Meeting Minutes:

Riggs made a motion to approve the March 13, 2023 minutes as submitted. Wilson seconded. Vote 6-0.

Public Comment: None.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee: Councilor Canty-Jones was unable to attend the meeting.

Heritage Trees Committee: Councilor Washington was unable to attend the meeting.

Historical Markers Committee: Garcia said the Historical Marker Committee met on May 2, 2023. There has been progress on several marker projects. The revision of the Jesse Applegate marker in Yoncalla is complete. The wood for the marker is currently being routed in the ODOT sign shop and should be installed in late summer or early fall. Garcia said work continues with the Klamath Tribal Council on the proposed text for the Upper Klamath Lake marker. Approval of the final text will go before the Marker Committee at the August meeting. Feedback has been received from the State and US Geological Survey geologists to update the geological theories on the Prehistoric River marker near Bend. Garcia reported the committee is in the process of recruiting new members. Gwenn Baldwin

rotated off and independent historian David Hedberg has joined the committee. Hedberg is also a member of the Heritage Tree Committee and is highly recommended by Councilor Canty-Jones and Dr. Katy Barber. The Salemtowne volunteers' appreciation lunch has been rescheduled for August 1.

Rest Area Committee: Card said the Rest Area Committee last met on June 1. Heather Peck is working on creating a booklet of each rest area and its needs. Card hopes this tool will give Councilors a good idea of the condition of each of the rest area, help prioritize the remaining capital funds, and help messaging to the legislature about funding needs. Card said that currently there are not enough funds to complete projects already listed as a priority. Card said that Heather Peck has been taking part in discussions dealing with state and federal work groups about expanding trucking parking.

Chair's Report: Chair Garcia the Executive Committee has met recently to discuss the annual performance evaluation of the Executive Director.

Staff Reports

Agency Update: Boxall said the agency has been working on the Governor's list of agency expectations and legislative tracking. The Governor's list is a total of 15 expectations. TIC currently meets six of those expectations, has submitted two, four are in progress, two have not been started, and one does not apply to TIC. While TIC is not required to do a financial audit as stated, it does conduct an annual financial review instead. The two items submitted recently were an IT plan and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan. Staff are currently waiting to hear if the plans as submitted meet expectations or if additional components need to be added. Boxall said there have been a record number of bills to track this legislative season. Approx. 90 active bills are being tracked currently. As the session wraps up, Boxall will update the Council on any bills that have an impact on the agency. Boxall gave a small summary of the bills being tracked and their potential impact on the agency. Staff are currently in the process of annual performance evaluations. Boxall said she is consulting with two other small agencies who are staffed by two people regarding a potential sublease for available space in the office.

Finance: Roth said the accounting department has been working hard the last quarter and completed six months of financial statements. As of today, there is only one month to catch up on. The accounting department is looking to redistribute some work if possible and bring on some temporary help as year-end approaches. Two new accounting standards will need to be implemented for this fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. Roth is not sure how significant the new standard will be. Roth said as of the March 2023 reports, the agency is still showing positive retention of \$579,000. This is strongly driven by interest income. As of March 31, 2023, the agency has earned a total of \$321,000 in interest. Roth said at the beginning of the month, a \$3.5 million-dollar three-month CD was purchased at 4.75% interest. At the beginning of July, TIC will receive the annual amounts from ODOT of \$9.6 million for operations and \$1.3 million for capital funds for the next fiscal year. Roth said that the Finance Committee will discuss strategies for investing those funds at the August meeting. Card asked why the spring rest area all staff meeting was not held in March. Swanson said that the meeting was canceled due to the Rest Area Administrator position being newly filled, but there is a meeting scheduled for October.

Heritage Programs: Dehn said the Heritage Tree Committee met in April for the annual tree dedication. The dedication was held in Newport at the Yakona Nature Preserve with about 30 attendees. Dehn said there is a subcommittee of Heritage Tree members working on a plan to complete deferred maintenance at the Grove of the States. The subcommittee is working alongside our

partners at the Oregon Department of Forestry and State Parks conducting some needed structural pruning and the creation of landscape rings around each tree to avoid the trees being nicked by lawnmowers. Dehn said work is about a quarter of the way completed, with a goal to be completed by the end of summer with better annual maintenance in future years. Garcia asked if sponsors need to be found for the Grove. Dehn said that the big question going forward is what the long-term plans look like, but the main goal right now is to create the tree rings and complete the structural pruning. Dehn said that the Salemtowne volunteers are heading out on their first maintenance trip of the summer. They will work their way down the valley through Springfield and then Hwy 97 to Klamath Falls. Dehn said that Oregon Trail Kiosk is wrapping up its design phase and she is working on grant applications and reporting to get funding covered for the third phase.

Sign Program: Cheyne said that the program is healthy. The overall average customer service rating is 1.27 and she said this is mostly due to the TIC sign crew. The crew is fast and on top of things. Riggs asked if the average time on the wait list was reported accurately at 11.9 years. Cheyne confirmed with the 18 customers that were removed from the wait list in the last quarter that 11.9 years was correct. Riggs commented that he was reminded of how important the highway signs are on his recent trip to Australia where they don't have signs like these on the roads. Cheyne said the program is still losing more customers than gaining currently. The category seeing the biggest decline is hotels and campgrounds. These venues are all run by pre-booked reservations. Cheyne said another trend that is affecting business is winery customers are shifting to reservation systems for their tastings instead of inviting walk-ins during certain hours. Pre-booked reservations during limited days do not meet the requirements to have a sign.

Rest Area Program: Swanson shared the status of the rest areas' current performance measures as they stand with almost a year's worth of data. The five measures include DEQ monitoring and testing, water quality monitoring and testing, operating supply cost per visitor, and TIC staff responsiveness to Opiniator alerts. Swanson said that all the scores provided by traveler feedback are above average. The top scores provided were for safety. Garcia asked for the information to be provided year over year to track trends or see improvements.

Action/Voting Items:

- **Officer Elections:** Boxall presented the officer elections of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and the At-Large Member of the Executive Committee. Boxall said that even though Canty-Jones could not join the meeting today, she asked to be considered for the Chair position. Canty-Jones has requested a change in committee assignment. After 10 years on the Historical Marker Committee, she would like to sit on the Rest Area Committee. Garcia nominated Mike Card as Chair, Canty-Jones as Vice-Chair, Riggs as Secretary, and Wilson as At-Large member. The Council then discussed the duties of each position. There were two nominations for Chair. Boxall asked the Council to vote and the council elected Mike Card as Chair with 6-0 Vote.

Wilson made a motion to approve the proposed slate of officers:

- *Mike Card – Chair*
- *Eliza Canty-Jones – Vice-Chair*
- *Richard Riggs – Secretary*
- *Valerie Wilson – At-Large Member of the Executive Committee*

Garcia seconded. 6-0 Vote.

- **Proposed Sign Fee Increase:** Cheyne said the letters informing all customers of the proposed 3% sign fee increase were sent on April 5, 2023. Cheyne said that nine responses were received, one of which was positive. Riggs said that nine responses out of 1,596 emails and 68 letters show minimal concern.

Wilson made a motion to approve the 3% sign fee increase, effective July 1, 2023. Riggs second.

Card commented that the 3% increase is not very large compared to what inflation has been and he supports the 3% increase considering the cost increases that the agency has had. Garcia said that the Finance Committee has a robust discussion on the subject and supported the 3% increase. *6-0 Vote.*

- **2023-25 Budget Adoption:** Roth said that after the proposed budget was approved by the Finance Committee and at the last Council meeting, a public hearing was held on May 1, 2023. There was no public comment received.

Card made a motion to approve the 2023-25 proposed budget with a change in net position for fiscal year 23-24 of \$85,448 and for fiscal year 24-25 of \$1,281,046. Wilson seconded.

The Council then discussed the State's ongoing negotiations with the unions on cost-of-living adjustments for the next biennium and its potential impact on the budget. Garcia said as negotiations continue adjustments may be necessary after the budget is approved.

6-0 Vote.

- **Multnomah Falls Kiosk Replacement:** Cheyne said this project has been five years in the making. Staff have finally found a vendor to take on the project of redesigning the Multnomah Falls Kiosk. Cheyne said ROMTEC builds the pieces needed for the kiosk in their factory and then deliver and reconstructed on-site. ROMTEC will start working on the pieces in December and then in the Spring of 2024, the site work will be complete. Staff is asking Council to approve an expenditure not to exceed \$164,864.70 to replace the Multnomah Falls Kiosk. Garcia confirmed there was 10% built into the estimate for contingencies. Cheyne said that when Mike Bryant reached out to Multnomah County for estimates on permitting costs, it was estimated that the permits would cost about \$1,000. Cheyne said that once the contract has been signed the prices are locked in and won't be raised.

Riggs made a motion to approve the not-to-exceed expenditure of \$164,864.70 to contract with ROMTEC for the replacement of the Multnomah Falls kiosk.

Garcia said that there was \$120,000 budgeted in the fiscal year 2023-24 and 2024-25 for kiosk replacement or repair and the return on investment is 50 months or four and a half years. Cheyne stated that the Multnomah Kiosk is in the worst shape of all the kiosks, due in part to the harsh environment it faces in the Gorge.

Wilson second. 6-0 Vote.

- Opiniator Contract Renewal:** Swanson presented the information provided by the Opiniator software program. Garcia asked what other methods are available to obtain traveler feedback. Swanson said that travelers can respond by phone and email, and that in the past rest areas had a paper comment card that travelers could fill out, but it was not a reliable source of information as they were sometimes misused. Garcia commented that the program is a very efficient tool to obtain feedback from travelers and to contact rest area staff to respond to issues that arise in the rest area. Staff requested that Council approve a new contract with Oberon 3 for Opiniator services. The current contract began on September 7, 2018, and expires on September 30, 2023. The new contract would have the same deliverables (outside of the system setup) to cover the next five years. The current contract pricing was a monthly amount per location that increased each year. There are currently 39 locations, as some of the 25 rest areas are double-sided.

Year	Monthly per side	Monthly total	Annual total
1	\$48.72	\$1,900.08	\$22,800.96
2	\$51.64	\$2,013.96	\$24,167.52
3	\$54.74	\$2,134.86	\$25,618.32
4	\$58.03	\$2,263.17	\$27,158.04
5	\$61.51	\$2,398.89	\$28,786.68
		Contract total	\$128,531.52

These prices represent a 2% increase in the first year, then a 6% increase in subsequent years. They reflect increases in data storage and systems costs, as well as phone system costs, and technical labor on the contractor's part. Swanson said the contractor has been very responsive to all requests to expand the program to fit rest area needs.

Riggs made a motion to approve a five-year contract with Oberon 3 to continue receiving Opiniator services for a total expenditure of \$128,531.52. Wilson seconded. 6-0 Vote.

- Vehicle Purchase Request:** Swanson said that the rest area program began setting aside operational funds into a vehicle replacement account in July 2021. The agency owns 26 of these trucks and leases the remaining 16 from DAS Motor Pool. Four F150s were ordered in August 2022 to replace the highest mileage (over 185,000 miles) trucks that need replacement soon. Swanson asked the Council to approve the purchase of four more trucks for a not-to-exceed expenditure of \$161,000. This request was approved by the Rest Area Committee. The purchase of these trucks would ensure the continued replacement of aging trucks and movement toward the goal of TIC owning its fleet, rather than leasing DAS vehicles, which provides long-term operational savings. The original goal of replacing four trucks per year, based on vehicle usage, fell behind due to supply chain issues and the increasing cost of vehicles. Swanson said there is currently \$307,000 available. Of that, \$153,724.48 will pay for the four trucks ordered in August, upon their arrival, leaving \$153,275.52 available for the purchase of available trucks. Garcia asked if it is more economical for TIC to own its vehicles than to use DAS-owned vehicles. Swanson confirmed that there are considerable savings.

Riggs made a motion to approve the expenditure in the amount not-to-exceed \$161,000 to purchase four Ford F-150s pickup trucks. Card second. 6-0 Vote.

New Business

Other Announcements:

Boxall provided an update on current rest area capital projects. Boxall said that The Maples is 95% complete and fully open to travelers with just a few punch items to be completed. The restrooms have been upgraded and expanded to include two new companion restrooms. Other work completed includes expansion of pavement rehab, concrete work and ADA ramp upgrades, pavement expansion enhancing the turn radius for larger trucks, and adding five new parking stalls. The Memaloose design is 95% complete for ADA and main restroom upgrades and complete pavement rehabilitation. The bid package is being finalized for the Department of Justice review. Staff anticipates that the project will be out for bid in approx. 30 days. The work on the pavement could start as early as the second week of September 2023. The restroom building upgrades at Santiam and Sunset are 100% complete. Boxall said that the Sunset Paving Design is 90% complete. Staff are finalizing the bid package and draft materials for DOJ review and anticipates going out to bid in approx. 30 days.

Executive Session

10:54 am – Garcia moved the meeting into executive session pursuant to ORS 192.60(2)(i) to discuss the performance evaluation of the Executive Director.

11:13 p.m. – Garcia adjourned the executive session and returned the meeting to public session.

Riggs made a motion to approve a 3% merit increase based on outcomes from the annual evaluation of the Executive Director. Wilson seconded. 6-0 Vote.

Adjourn: 11:15 a.m.

Next Meetings:

September 11, 2023
