



LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LTAC)
September 18, 2020 - Friday – 8:30 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mayor Don Anderson called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Lakewood Mayor Don Anderson, Chair; Chelene Potvin-Bird, President/CEO -- Travel Tacoma; Phillip Raschke, Board member - Lakewood Playhouse; Linda Smith, President/CEO – Lakewood Chamber of Commerce, Jarnail Singh – Comfort Inn & Suites; Jessica Christensen – Holiday Inn

Members Absent: Asuka Ludden - Best Western Lakewood Motor Inn

City staff present: Tho Kraus, Assistant City Manager; Manny Cristobal, Finance Supervisor

PUBLIC COMMENTS - None.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL - The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously

2020 GRANTS STATUS & FUND BALANCE – Tho Kraus, Assistant City Manager/Admin Services

Ms. Kraus briefly described the authorized uses for lodging taxes in the City of Lakewood (the City): 7% lodging tax is collected by the City of which 4% is designated for tourism promotion while the other 3% is restricted for capital-related projects owned by the City. She announced that \$1,237,354 is available for allocation in 2021, where \$869,292 is anticipated to come from 2020 revenues. She stated that the total amount requested is \$707,250, comprised of \$605,400 in noncapital requests plus the City's \$101,850 annual commitment to the McGavick Center lease, while the total amount available is \$869,292. She also informed that 2020 participants reported \$142,393 in anticipated savings from the 2020 allocation. She ended by stating that all in all, there will be an estimated \$400K remaining at the end of the year after 2021 funds are granted as requested. Chair Mayor Anderson asked to clarify the two buckets of LT funding available. Ms. Kraus explained that there are tourism/marketing funds and capital funds and that these funds can be used for capital but not vice-versa. She added that there is no capital funding requested this year. Chair Mayor Anderson briefly explained the process of how funds are granted, the role of LTAC ("the committee") and the final ratification by the City Council. Chair Mayor Anderson also briefly recounted the impacts of the COVID crisis on lodging tax revenues. Ms. Kraus then shared the funding request schedule to be used as a guide during the award deliberations.

2020 GRANT PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS

Lakewood Historical Society (LHS) - Phil Raschke, Board member and Sue Scott, President

Ms. Scott thanked the committee for helping them and being around for "your museum" then introduced Phil Raschke who presented. Mr. Raschke shared a slide show "Your Lakewood History Museum – Preserving Yesterday and Educating Tomorrow." He reported that their new location has been remodeled as part of the Colonial Center project. He informed about the passing of their former Treasurer, James Curley. He announced that there is no successor yet but they have a bookkeeper helping them out. He stated that despite COVID, the LHS continued to be active this year in the following areas 1) membership

renewal drive which brought in generous donations; 2) completed Phase 1 and 2 of major upgrades of their facility including the film room; 3) published a comprehensive museum brochure which included all museums in the area; 4) also published a special issue of the Prairie Gazette. He then showed before-and-after photos of their new remodeled offices and described the planned Phase 3 improvements. He also detailed their operating results for 2020 and their budget for 2021, which calls for \$59.5K in spend that will result in a shortfall of \$35K, the exact amount they are requesting the committee.

No questions from the committee.

Lakewold Gardens (LG) – Susan Warner, Executive Director, Cassandra de Kanter, Grants and Resource Specialist.

Ms. de Kanter kicked-off their presentation. She stated that they are trying to maximize their availability for event hosting. She reminded the committee that they are statutorily limited as to the number of events they can host and they have maxed out this quota. She announced that they have hired a new events coordinator and communications coordinator. Ms. De Kanter then Introduced Ms. Warner who took over the presentation. Ms. Warner began by thanking the committee for last year's funding which they partly used to improve their social media presence. She mentioned that they are doing fine overall despite the COVID crisis because they have, received generous government support. She revealed a change in their mission and vision statements and that they are aligning LG with the American Public Gardens Association movement to expand programmatic offerings into the arts. She stated that, while they love weddings, they are also looking to host other non-traditional social events. Ms. Warner highlighted Winter Garden Poetry Series which had expanded hours. She reported that they have virtualized most of their content due to COVID, such as, "Music from Home" with internationally renowned pianist Nyaho. She also reported that, while a month late, they were able to hold "FairyFest" under the current social distancing rules. Ms. Warner also disclosed that they have been received significant Artwork donations. She reported that the "Winter Solstice" event was cancelled due to supply chain issues caused by economic crisis but they plan to hold the event next year. She stated that they are asking for \$60K to continue partnerships, improve social media, and planning for "Winter Solstice Lights".

LTAC member Smith asked for clarification on when Winter Solstice will be held next to which Ms. Warner confirmed that this year's event is cancelled and next year's is currently under planning.

Historic Fort Steilacoom Association (HFSA) – Joseph Lewis, Secretary

Mr. Lewis began by giving a history of Fort Steilacoom. He noted that Fort Steilacoom is the oldest attraction in Lakewood (since 1983) and has been in the National Historic Register for 170 years. He described their unique situation where the State owns the land and buildings where the Museum is sited with HFSA under a long-term lease which they pay for through their volunteer service. They cannot use LTAC grants for capital and so they only use the LTAC grants for publicity and promotion. He reported that they were closed down during the pandemic and this year's revenues have fallen dramatically as a result. He reported that during the downtime they have been planning on improving customer experience, expanding their social media presence, upgrading their website by uploading their archives, and hosting virtual programs. He informed that DSHS recently released a master plan for a reconfiguration of Western State Hospital which will be favorable to the Museum in terms of improved access. He also mentioned that HFSA ordered logoed and regular masks for their customers and employees. He warned though that he is not sure how many volunteers, among the eight that they had pre-closure, will return when they reopen. He declared that they are asking for \$12K in grant funds which is at the same level as the prior year.

Chair Mayor Anderson expounded on the Master Plan for Western State Hospital noting that it is still a fluid situation in terms of funding, design and zoning. He added that it is more desirable if the City can gain control over the historic area which will be a great adjunct to Fort Steilacoom Park. Mr. Lewis added that the plan actually gave some needed publicity to the Park.

Asia Pacific Cultural Center (APCC) - Faaluaina Pritchard, Executive Director

Ms. Pritchard began by wishing the committee well. She stated that they are requesting \$15K to help put up the annual Samoan Cultural Day for next year. She stated that the APCC event was traditionally held at the same day as Summerfest but they prefer holding their event at a different Saturday in July – they plan on holding the 2021 event on the last Saturday. She provided 2018 demographics which showed the increasing population of Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. She reported that they had to cancel this year's live event but was able to do it virtually which became a success on its own. Ms. Pritchard stated that the grant will be used for hosting the 11th Samoan Cultural Day in 2021, paying for the project venue, equipment rental, supplies, and janitorial services and providing \$5K in allowance for guest lodgings in mostly Lakewood hotels.

No questions from the committee.

Lakewood Chamber of Commerce – Tourism - Linda Smith, President/CEO

Ms. Smith thanked the committee for being there today. She started by saying that they are requesting \$95K for their tourism and events promotion services and that they are appreciative of LTAC support through the years. She reported that according to the WA Hospitality Assn, state-to-state travel will be down for the next two years, which is why they quickly pivoted by directing their campaign to focus in-state travel. (Technical difficulties prevented Ms. Smith from sharing their promotional videos which highlights their newly created in-state drive itineraries.) She next described their advertising activities this year as they continue their role as lead destination marketing organization for the City. She stated that their focus is on individual and family travelers and promoting drive-tours as a wide-open, clean and safe travel activity. She stated that they will continue to produce more destination videos and tourism collateral materials, such as, as brochures, events calendars, attractions and services inventory.

No questions from the committee.

(The committee recessed for lunch at 11:55)

Travel Tacoma Mt. Rainier Tourism & Sports (TT) - Dean Burke, President/CEO

Mr. Burke started by stating that their ask this year for LTAC funding is \$100,000 which is down from last year's \$120K request. He added that they are returning \$26,393 from this year's budget and looking for further savings before the year is over. He mentioned that this year they have diligently invested in an aggressive stakeholder communications plan by sending biweekly news to committee members and interested parties and have been monitoring audience engagement and feedback. He gave a refresher of their rebranding efforts from last year, the reason for the name change and the use of the all-encompassing "Mountain-City-Sea" moniker. He then proceeded to talk about the Geofencing application that they implemented during the pandemic to aid in their recovery effort. (Geofencing is the use of GPS or RFID to create virtual geographic boundary which lets an App to trigger a response every time a mobile device enters or leaves a particular area). He said that the tool gathers and analyzes geographic, demographic and psychographic data from visitor activities. He then showed various samples of charts generated by the App. He expressed his excitement about the App's capability to target not only past visitors but also "look-alike" potential customers. Mr. Burke then described TT's core pillars which are: leisure, conventions and meetings, and sports, although warned of potential priority shifts due to COVID.

He stressed that their strategy is to continue to encourage independent travelers to go into our community and collaborate with our attractions as they open-up, with the attraction promoters working with TT for lead opportunities.

No questions from the committee.

Lakewood Sister Cities Association – Gimhae Delegation - Connie Coleman-Lacadie, President

Ms. Coleman-Lacadie thanked the committee for always considering Sister Cities for LTAC grants. She mentioned that similar to last year, they have two different grants for two events that tie-in together. She shared a concern though that in 2021, the timing of events may become an issue as the delegation may prefer not to take part in large events. She asked for flexibility in next year's schedule. She stated that they are asking for \$16,350 for 2021 as they expect a larger delegation next year. She concluded by thanking the City for accepting the City of Gimhae's gift of PPEs and masks earlier in the year. Chair Anderson noted the details of the aforementioned donation and its disposition and added that he and the City Council were fully appreciative and that Sister Cities really add value.

No questions from the committee.

Lakewood Sister Cities Association – International Festival - Connie Coleman-Lacadie, President

Ms. Lacadie next presented the international festival event and reiterated the need for flexibility in the scheduling for 2021. She mentioned they are exploring ideas of having a different venue or timing as the Summerfest, such as, holding it in Colonial Square, or rescheduling to coincide with Farmers Market, where they can be more creative in presenting the international flair to Lakewood citizens. She is requesting \$7,550 for the international festival.

No questions from the committee.

Lakewood Arts Festival Association - Robert Lawrence, Chairman

Mr. Lawrence announced that they had to postpone their festival due to COVID restrictions which left \$10,000 in savings to the LTAC fund. However starting Oct 2020 through the 10th Arts Festival in Oct 2021, they will sponsor a biweekly program on their website, Facebook and Suburban Times with articles about upcoming films and interviews with artists and authors. Mr. Lawrence mentioned that they have already booked the McGavick Center for next year's event. Mr. Lawrence stated that they are encouraging more attendance to the festival by adding new talents and activities, such as, Filipino dancers, Nisqually tribe display and dancers, green screen and film exhibits, Pierce County Library exhibits, professional puppet show, military art exhibits, etc.

Chair Mayor Anderson asked what the attendance was at the 2019 event. Mr. Lawrence recalled 1200-1500 with 60 artists and over 40 authors, and stated that it has been improving every year.

No questions from the committee.

City of Lakewood PRCS – Summer Concert Series - Sally Martinez, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

Ms. Martinez reported that the Summer Concert was cancelled due to COVID although they did the planning activities this year. She mentioned that they were able to invite and schedule seven bands in different music genres before the cancellation. She stated that they are looking forward to the 2021 event and that their venue, the Pavilion at Fort Steilacoom Park, will allow them to comply with COVID restrictions. She shared a slideshow from last year which showed the activities that they created for their guests and stated that these events are needed by the community especially at this time. She reminded

the committee that these concerts are free to the community; old to younger, all cultures and with all abilities. She next mentioned that they engage with Asia Pacific Cultural Center to provide entertainment and bring in food trucks. She closed by stating that they are constantly exploring ideas on how they can pivot in terms of event offerings under this environment.

Chair Mayor Anderson asked if they anticipate maintaining or enhancing the quality of invited musicians with this grant request. Ms. Martinez responded that they will maintain the same level and plan on using the same musicians as they've already been extensively vetted. The 20K request will be used to pay for the musicians and the rent of porta-potties for the event.

Lakewood Playhouse - James Venturini and Heather Hines – Co-Artistic Directors

Mr. Venturini announced that Mr. John Munn resigned as one of the Playhouse's artistic directors last July and he and Heather Hines are now the managing artistic directors going forward. He thanked the committee for their continuing support. Reported that they provide programming 365 days a year with full-production, education programming, readings and special events. They rent space in Lakewood Towne Center for their classes. Moved entire fall productions online through 2021. They will adapt to the conditions or restrictions that the State allows. They will use the grant award to market the online productions and are planning just in case they can open doors again in 2021. Stressed the importance of strong marketing under the current environment to make audiences aware about their status and online activities. He showed samples of their print marketing materials and will continue to make them in combination with online advertising. He is aware about the impacts of COVID on the City's lodging tax revenues and ensured the committee that they will spend their grant wisely.

LTAC member Potvin-Bird stated that Mr. Venturini brought up a good point about room collections being down, then asked him to remind the group how the Playhouse tracks where customers come from. Mr. Venturini said that they do a lot of demographic surveys using their subscriber list or their larger email contact list. He added that their hiring of talent and designers from big cities outside of Lakewood potentially adds these individual's families and contacts to the Playhouse's target audience which can in-turn add lodging revenues from the highly coveted "over 50-mi. radius" market.

Chair Mayor Anderson wished them well and hoped they can open in the near future.

City of Lakewood PRCS – Farmers Market - Sally Martinez, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

Ms. Martinez happily announced that the Farmers Market has been designated an essential business. She shared their new promotional video for 2020. She stated that they switched their location to Steilacoom Park and required vendors to be 10 feet apart to comply with COVID prevention requirements. She commented that because the new venue is bigger and more spacious, they were able to get more vendors to participate than last year. She showed photos of their 2020 season held at the new location and heralded the success they achieved in contrast to farmers' markets in the region which had to downsize due to the new restrictions. She added that they have extended the market into the fall season as there is still demand for it. She then detailed the changes that they implemented this year, such as, new signage to orient customers on the new venue and to ensure compliance with the restrictions, created new advertising which billed the event as the "All-New Farmers Market", added a makeshift drive-in movie which allowed them to promote the Farmers Market to the movie patrons, and secured additional liquor licenses for new wine vendors. Ms. Martinez also highlighted the amount of sales generated this year which is significantly higher than last year's. She stated that next year they want to hold the market in two locations because of its popularity.

Chair Mayor Anderson asked what the overall attendance will be this year compared to last year to which Ms. Martinez responded that daily attendance will be doubled.

City of Lakewood PRCS – SummerFEST - Sally Martinez, Parks and Recreation Coordinator.

Ms. Martinez started off by reporting that SummerFest was cancelled this year due to COVID. For the benefit of new LTAC members, she showed video promotions that they had for the 2019 event. She said 2019 was an extremely successful event according to testimonials from the food vendors. She mentioned that they are planning changes for 2021, such as, holding a 3-day event in lieu of a 1-day festival which will benefit them as some potential sponsors, like Pierce County, are willing to provide funding for a 3-day event. She also mentioned that they have a team in place planning for next year's event to be held under COVID restrictions. In the meantime, Ms. Martinez stated that they are increasing their advertising campaign by continuing to focus on JBLM families of service men and women, using radio more as this targets the coveted audiences from beyond the 50 mi. radius, working harder on soliciting sponsorships and take advantage of their continuing interest despite COVID, and cross-marketing with other tourist organizations, such as, Farmers Market, Lakewold Gardens, Sister Cities, and Asia Pacific Cultural Center.

No questions from the committee.

City of Lakewood Communications – Imaging Promotions 2020 - Shannon Kelley-Fong, City Senior Policy Analyst; Becky Newton, Economic Development Manager

Ms. Kelley-Fong thanked the group for their commitment in serving in the committee. She then introduced their "Build It Better Here" imaging campaign and stated that continued funding will raise the level of awareness of Lakewood and its attractions, create economic activity in terms of retail sales, and increase events attendance and hotel-motel overnight stays. She shared that visual content is increasing in importance as most people, according to a study, prefer digital images than static text. She reported that they are in continued partnership with Hemisphere to deliver media content for their programs and are therefore requesting additional funding, 50K in 2021, to continue this momentum. She disclosed that the funds will be allocated as follows: \$46,760 to continue building the website for the campaign, \$2K for professional photography services, and the rest for additional hardware and software to improve quality of videos and digital content. Ms. Kelly-Fong stated that the goals of the program and campaign are to change the perception of Lakewood by emphasizing the positive, to increase outreach through targeted ads, to increase hotel stays by promoting events and attractions outside of the South Sound to encourage overnight stays (50+ mi), and to increase tourism via internet ads to attract out-of-state visitors. She also showed some metrics that are in place to track number of visitors and/or clicks to the website and that the results so far have been positive. Ms. Newton added to the presentation and informed that the City has some new hotels to promote: Town Place Suites and Comfort Inn Suites, which just recently opened and Whispering Suites which is under construction. She added that the City's proximity to and relationship with JBLM brings a lot of business events and families which adds to long-term and short-term lodging stays and their campaign will be instrumental in promoting the City to this segment. She stated that COVID has forced them to pivot on some of their targets and activities and Hemisphere has allowed them to be flexible.

No questions from the committee

Lakewood Chamber of Commerce – Nights of Blue Lights

Ms. Smith began by stating the “Nights of Blue Lights” started last year. She discussed the reference to the blue lights where blue was the favorite color of Mary Cordelia Davis and how the City in the past had used blue lights for annual Holiday festivities. She mentioned how “Nights of Blue Lights” resurrects this unique tradition which is intended to attract visitors during the holiday season and boost tourism and sales activity. She showed photos of establishments that displayed blue light decorations in the past year. She next related that the Chamber is planning on creating tour packages next year which features the “Nights of Blue Lights” in combination with other City attractions in that season.

GRANT FUNDING DECISIONS

(Group deliberations commenced to determine the amount of grants to be awards).

Basis for Awards and Other Recommendations

- Historic Fort Steilacoom Association (HFSA) - The committee agreed to grant the full requested amount of \$12K with a suggestion that HFSA reexamine their current marketing mix to move farther away from print media by working with the City and other partners who can provide them the technology.
- Asia Pacific Cultural Center – LTAC member Potvin-Bird reported that the Tacoma Dome is shutting down the Ex Hall and moving events to the Convention Center next year; and , while the APCC is looking to move back to Lakewood, the impacts to the City will be farther out in the future. Chair Mayor Anderson remarked that the APCC had added new and attractive programs to their event and suggested granting the full request. The committee approved the full amount of \$15K.
- Travel Tacoma (TT) – LTAC member Smith stated that she was impressed with TT’s Geofencing application with its ability to track customers and visitors activities and behavior to create metrics that allow for effective and efficient marketing. The committee discussed the potential for the technology to be shared with the other tourism partners. The committee granted the requested amount of \$100K.
- Lakewood Sister Cities: Gimhae Delegation – Chair Mayor Anderson shared his assessment that there is more to Sister Cities than heads-in-beds right now, although positive impacts to tourism will still come in the near future. He praised the City of Gimhae for their recent generous donation of PPEs and masks to the City. The committee approved the full request of \$16,350.
- Lakewood Sister Cities: International Festival – LTAC member Potvin-Bird reviewed that together with the Gimhae delegation, their total request this year is the same as last year. It was noted that Sister Cities have not submitted reimbursements to-date on their 2020 grant and did not inform the City of the amount of savings. The committee approved the requested amount of \$7,550.
- Lakewood Arts Festival – LTAC member Raschke stated that the festival helps put Lakewood’s name in the forefront. The committee agreed that the pivot to online and social media offerings has potential to grow the market as people stay home more because of COVID. The full amount of \$13,500 was awarded.
- Lakewood Historical Society – LTAC member Smith stated that the museum remodel was beautifully done and that the timing of COVID was unfortunate. She said that interactive displays provide a form

of “edu-tainment.” Chair Mayor Anderson stated that while the museum is not a main attraction, it provides a valuable complementary activity. The committee granted the full amount requested of \$35K.

- Lakewold Gardens (LG) – Chair Mayor Anderson provided some history about LG where a previous change in leadership did away with wedding events as their main service, but recently reversed course due to LTAC influence. LTAC member Potvin-Bird remarked that wedding events, even if LG did the maximum allowable, do not generate as much in lodging stays. The committee reduced the award to \$50K.
- Lakewood Playhouse – Chair Mayor Anderson asked why they still have operating expenses this year when they were not putting on productions. LTAC member Potvin-Bird reviewed the Playhouse’s spending proposal and reported that the plan is a mix of social media, website, radio and print advertising. LTAC member Raschke commented that the Playhouse will need extra marketing effort after being shuttered to entice audiences to come back. The committee approved the full amount of \$25,000 but Chair Mayor Anderson commented that they can come back to reassess the determination if necessary.
- Chamber of Commerce - Night of Lights – Chair Mayor Anderson asked to be reminded of how the funds will be used to which Ms. Smith explained that funds will be used for purchasing decorative lights and installations. The committee approved the requested amount of \$25K.
- Chamber of Commerce (CC) - Tourism – LTAC member Raschke stressed the important role of the CC with its involvement with the City. The committee approved the requested amount of \$90K.
- Summerfest – Chair Mayor Anderson stated that they need to support Summerfest because of their explosive success in the past. LTAC member Raschke mentioned that Summerfest has an established reputation now and is well-known throughout the City. The committee approved the requested \$80K.
- Farmer’s Market – Ms. Potvin-Bird stated that farmers markets are great for the local community but they don’t generate hotel-motel stays that much and so the \$50K ask may be too high. The committee decided to award \$35K.
- Imaging Promotions – Ms. Potvin-Bird asked whether the program has other sources of funds to which Chair Mayor Anderson replied that they are funded by the General Fund and LTAC grants. She also noted that most of their awards goes to ad development in contract with Hemishpere. The committee reduced the award to \$40K instead of the requested \$50K.

A summary of the award determinations is given below.

LAKEWOOD LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

2020 Requests for 2021 LTAC Grant Funds Applicant	Funding Request		Recommended Funding	
	Non-Capital	Capital	Non-Capital (4%)	Capital (3%)
	Available Balance		\$ 298,892	\$ 266,212
Lakewood Historical Society	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ 35,000	\$ -
Lakewold Gardens	\$ 60,000	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ -
Historic Fort Steilacoom Association	\$ 12,000	\$ -	\$ 12,000	\$ -
Asian Pacific Cultural Center	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ -
Travel Tacoma - Mt Rainier Sports	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$ 100,000	\$ -
LSCA - Gimhae Delegation	\$ 16,350	\$ -	\$ 16,350	\$ -
LSCA - International Festival	\$ 7,550	\$ -	\$ 7,550	\$ -
Lakewood Arts Festival Association	\$ 19,500	\$ -	\$ 19,500	\$ -
Lakewood Playhouse	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ 25,000	\$ -
Chamber of Commerce - Nights of Lights	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ 25,000	\$ -
Chamber of Commerce - Tourism	\$ 90,000	\$ -	\$ 90,000	\$ -
CoL – SummerFEST	\$ 80,000	\$ -	\$ 80,000	\$ -
CoL – Farmers Market	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ 35,000	\$ -
CoL – Summer Concert Series	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -
CoL – Imaging Promotions	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$ 40,000	\$ -
	\$ 605,400	\$ -	\$ 570,400	\$ -
	Subtotal	\$ 605,400	Subtotal	\$ 570,400
CPTC McGavick Center (Committee, Annual Payment)	\$ -	\$ 101,850	\$ -	\$ 101,850
	\$ 605,400	\$ 101,850	\$ 570,400	\$ 101,850
	Total	\$ 707,250	Total	\$ 672,250

LTAC member Raschke moved to accept the final allocation and LTAC member Potvin-Bird seconded.

With no further discussions, the motion to approve the recommended amounts was passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT - Chair Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Minutes:



 Manny Cristobal, Finance Supervisor (Preparer)



 Mayor Don Anderson, Chair